

HOME

A home (or office) in total harmony

Feng Shui, the ancient Chinese art and science of placement, seeks to restore balance in our lives

Dr. Teresa Lawrence said it was good fortune when she spotted an ad in *The News' Gusto* section five years ago advertising a Feng Shui class. "I am not 'Lotto lucky,' but because I took that class I was able to tap into something that was life-changing," explained Lawrence, the director of curriculum and staff development in the Clarence Central School District.

In the Feng Shui class, the school administrator became the pupil, quickly immersing herself in Linda Ellson's lessons on the ancient Chinese art and science of placement. Ellson, a licensed real estate agent and a certified Feng Shui practitioner, realized that Lawrence was an eager student.

"I did an in-depth analysis of her home and we also worked in her office at school," recalled

Ellson. She used a Pa Qua, an octagon map of a home or office that interprets Feng Shui sectors in a space or a given room. Lawrence's suburban home was transformed so that she and her two children, Anna May, 12, and 11-year-old William, would be linked to their surroundings in harmony. "It's about paying attention and being in rhythm through the flow of chi, the universal life-force energy," said Ellson, adding that decorative solutions are used that incorporate the five elements of wood, water, fire, earth and metal, in addition to symbolic objects that work with the energy.

"I had been recently divorced so I was in a position to rediscover and reinvent myself when I started using Feng Shui. It was a segue to capitalize on energy that's already there," said Lawrence.





The orange/beige color of the walls represents both fire and Earth.

“This is all about trying to find ways to make life harmonize in a crazy, demanding world. Some Feng Shui is better than no Feng Shui.”

— Linda Ellson, certified Feng Shui practitioner

“In Teresa’s home, for example, we put her office in the northeast part of the house because she was working on her Ph.D.,” Ellson said. “That direction represents knowledge, information and the intention to continuously learn and grow.

Partnership and relationship rooms typically face southwest. In this house, a pair of crystals is placed there along with two heart-shaped objects and there is a picture of a couple. “In the kitchen, we focus on earth, wood, fire — her table is green and has the wood element, a red wall hanging is prominently displayed,” explained Ellson. “In Teresa’s bedroom, we flipped the bed so that her head is on the west wall, representing that she is the head of the household. The mirror has been removed, the TV is completely covered with

a pink fabric and a plant in the corner represents growth and flow,” Ellson added. “Anna May now sleeps to the east because that auspicious direction, for her, represents wealth and achievement.”

Has any of this made a difference in Teresa Lawrence’s busy home and work life?

“I am enjoying great success; good things are happening around me,” she said. “Is it coincidence? Maybe, but for me Feng Shui makes sense. You still have to get up and go to work; this is a method to tap into Earth’s natural energies. “Whether it is at work or at home, it enhances those environments, harmonizing and allowing me to be able to feel the flow of energy and be naturally in existence,” Lawrence noted. “Linda came to my office twice to do an assessment. I ultimately

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Facing west, this area represents children and creativity. Teresa Lawrence painted the child's chair. Linda Ellson's (left) suggestions brought harmony to Teresa Lawrence's (right) home.

moved to the northeast part of the building, and my chairs, desk and wall hangings—all meant to capitalize on the elements there.”

Ellson acknowledges that Feng Shui isn't for everyone. Her interest in this centuries-old practice was sparked by a book a friend sent her on the subject. “I had moved back to Buffalo from New York City in the mid '90s. The book explained the basics of Feng Shui, which I experimented with in this modest office I was working in, adding a fountain and some inspiring pictures” Ellson said. “I got two promotions and three pay increases in nine months. I was working with 75 people, who were not the



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The family's green dining table is made from wood, which represents growth.

touchy-feely type, but everyone would wander in and comment on how it felt and how that small space looked good. I read voraciously on the subject and decided to study at the American School of Classical Form Feng Shui in Vestal, N.Y."

When she became a realtor three years ago, Ellson thought applying Feng Shui theories could only be an asset. "I think it helps houses sell faster," she said.

While the principles espoused by practitioners are a constant, the looming winter season has unique harmonizing elements. "I surround myself with plants in the cold weather seasons. Plants bring

vibrancy, oxygen, something alive and natural to your surroundings."

She also recommends placing a "succulent jade plant, associated with wealth and abundance" in the southeast sector of the home. "I tell my clients to use full spectrum light bulbs in the winter to stave off the blues and help with concentration; also, spice it up with a fire element — red candles, for example. If you're feeling lethargic in the winter, light candles," Ellson advised. "This is all about trying to find ways to make life harmonize in a crazy, demanding world. Some Feng Shui is better than no Feng Shui."

See the "Top 10 Simple Solutions Using Feng Shui" on the next page.

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Top 10 simple solutions using Feng Shui

1. Be mindful of clutter.
2. Keep bathroom doors closed. Keep toilet lids down.
3. Whenever possible, sleep with your head against a solid wall.
4. Sleep in a bed built for two. Have two matching bedside tables and two matching lamps in adult bedrooms, for balance and equality between the couple.
5. Do not have water features in a bedroom like fountains or aquariums. They can contribute to loss of prosperity.
6. If it is broken, fix it!
7. Enclose your TV. This allows the family to focus on communication. Do not make your TV an altar in your home. Keep the TV out of an adult bedroom. Think romance, sanctuary and rest.
8. Remove or cover any mirrors in a bedroom when sleeping.
9. When placing furniture, a circular or octagonal shape is best. This allows communication to circulate and flow freely.
10. Think balance, yin and yang, in decorating. Find a happy medium with light and dark, heavy and light objects throughout your space. Make sure that it is neither too feminine nor too masculine.

— Taken from "Feng Shui Your World"



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