

Oh My Aching Back

February 2012

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Clearing the Clutter

The Psychology of Place Inside and Out

Shirley Vanderbilt

What's cluttering your life? Is it the stuff in the corner of the bedroom, or the stuff in the corner of your mind? What are you tolerating that keeps you from expressing your true self? Authors Bruce and Lou Stewart say that clutter--both in our environment and our mind--is stagnating, blocking the free-flow of energy, or chi, in our homes and lives. Whether we're detouring around a box in the living room or repeating a negative pattern in our head, it's time to clear the path.

In their new book, "Your Way Home--The Psychology of Place Inside and Out," the Stewarts present a unique approach to clutter-clearing by combining Lou's expertise in feng shui

bring balance between the inner and outer sanctums by clarifying our core, or essential self, and allowing our environment to reflect and support our core values.

Making the Connection

When the Stewarts first blended their feng shui and NLP skills together in workshop presentations, they noticed it was easier for people to clear their environment when they were connected to their core.

"It really is a cycle," Lou says. "The environment and our core are reflections of one another. When we know our core, it's much easier to

*Tension is who
you think you
should be.*

*Relaxation is
who you are.*

-Chinese Proverb



Clearing space--inside and out--can help us get in touch with our core selves.

with Bruce's mastery of neurolinguistic programming (NLP). While feng shui has to do with external placement and structure, NLP is a psychological approach that addresses our internal structure of mind, body, emotion, and spirit. With feng shui, we can free energy flow by rearranging the room; with NLP tools, we can do the same thing with our mind. The goal is to

understand our environment." But it's a chicken and egg thing, actually. Either one can work as a start.

Also a bodyworker, Lou says, "What feng shui and NLP do for the body's environment is so similar to what a massage will do for the body, flushing

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Office Hours and Contact

Transition Bodyworks

Annie Coomes LMT

-928-499-0867

Mon-Fri 9:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Sat & Sun by appointment

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the system of blockages. When I go through a person's home or office, what I'm doing is very similar to when I first put my hands on a client." In the process of combing through to find blockages in the environment, she will ask the client about particular objects. "Nine out of 10 times it is incongruent with who they want to be right now. They've gotten numb to it, and it sticks out just like a knot in a muscle. The energy is different."

NLP recognizes that each of us has developed our own individual style of communicating and processing information which results in the patterning in our brain and the ways in which we express ourselves through language and body movement. Sometimes our set patterns do not support who we are at our essential core, but we can change that. Through the core work of NLP exercises, Bruce says, you can discover what you truly identify with and have a better understanding of yourself. At that point, you may find that your goals for your life have changed. It's this clarity of sense of self that is essential to creating an environment that supports and nourishes who you are and what you value in life.

You don't have to be trained in feng shui or have a personal consultant to implement the concepts of this ancient art, nor is an NLP practitioner required to help you find your core. Throughout their book, the Stewarts offer practical exercises for applying the principles of NLP and feng shui to begin the clearing process. "In feng shui, when the chi of an environment is balanced, it allows the movement of the occupant to be well supported, just like when circulation is pumping well and is unclogged," Lou says. "With NLP, it's the same thing -- running through patterns in the mind, flushing out old phobias and patterns that are either negative or destructive."

Ready to Start?

If you're ready to start clearing out the clutter, there are some simple ways to begin. The Stewarts define clutter as "anything you no longer use, love, or need." So if you don't use it, but still love it, keep it. Keep your target areas small, and limit the time you spend at the task to avoid feeling overwhelmed. And as you examine your "stuff,"

consider how it fits with your core, your essential self. Does it support who you are at this moment, or is it a reflection of something in the past you're ready to release? Is the item pleasing to your senses? What fits with your individual way of experiencing the world?

"If you're particularly visual and like arts and crafts, you feel more comfortable with that around," Bruce says. "Someone who is very kinesthetic may not care how it looks but will want the chair to be comfortable."

Once the path is cleared, you can use the principles of feng shui to further enhance harmony and positive flow in your life. But the process involves more than hanging a mirror or installing a water fountain. As with NLP, it has to do with our core self and our intention. "Where attention goes, the energy flows. That's what it boils down to," Lou says.

"As we focus our intentions, then our conscious and subconscious mind can connect, and when they connect with our body and our emotions and our spiritual core, then the intention is strengthened significantly." Think of it as a vinyl record with no grooves. "There's no music," she adds. "What our intentions do is they create that pathway on the record. So then we have the choice: Are we going to make it a smooth groove or a bumpy groove? Intention is our tool."

Bodywork is the perfect complement for this process, helping to center, ground, and clear the body and mind. Clearing the clutter helps you excavate your true self and the person you want to become.

For more information on clearing the clutter, contact Lou and Bruce Stewart at info@louandbruce.com or visit their website at www.louandbruce.com.



Using feng shui in your home can facilitate a tranquil environment and a calm mind.

Prevent the Afternoon Slump

Some Tips for P.M. Energy

Jerry V. Teplitz

If you're like most people, you've experienced the afternoon slump. You know the feeling -- it's only 2 p.m., yet you feel drained. Fortunately, you can employ methods to reduce the slump's frequency and shorten its duration.

DRINK WATER.

Your body uses water even if you're not exercising. If you wait until you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Keep a water bottle handy all day.

AVOID SUGAR AND SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES.

While a mid-afternoon candy bar may give you a quick rush, it actually worsens the slump. Instead, choose protein-rich foods and complex carbs.

EAT SMALL MEALS.

Have six small meals over the course of the day instead of three large ones. Big meals cause the digestive process to divert blood from your brain to use in the digestive track.

EVALUATE YOUR LIGHTING.

Most offices are lit with cool, white

fluorescent tubes, which have a terrible effect on how people feel and function at work. A better option is full-spectrum, fluorescent tubes.

TAKE TIME FOR WALKS.

Walking gets your blood circulating, helps you breathe better, and stimulates your brain due to the increased blood flow. Take a 5- or 10-minute walk during the day.

MEDITATE.

Meditation is great for rejuvenating your body. By meditating for 15 to 20 minutes twice a day, you're keeping your body continually energized and rested.

TAKE TIME TO BREATHE AND STRETCH.

Deep breathing exercises give you an energy boost. Also, stand up and stretch to increase blood flow and stimulate the lymphatic system.

HANDLE NEGATIVITY.

Negative people and images can have a draining effect on your energy. Make a conscious effort to stay positive.



Avoid the drain office settings can bring on.

Hibernating is for the Bears

Plan to Stay Fit This Winter

Winter's here, and you've moved your running shoes to the back of the closet until April. Yet that piece of pumpkin pie has your name on it.

With the onset of colder weather, shorter days, and snow-covered streets, we eat more and exercise less, waiting for the spring thaw to get back in shape. Instead of having to make New Year's resolutions to lose holiday weight and join a health club, why not set goals to stay fit this winter?

MOVE FITNESS INDOORS

Winter is the perfect time to start a weight-training program. When it's sunny and warm in summer, you'd rather be outside cycling or rock climbing. When it's snowing, why not

lift weights for 30 minutes during lunch? Statistics show that more people suffer heart attacks in winter from shoveling snow, often because they're out of shape. With regular strength training, you'll be able to shovel that snow and get a head start with outdoor sports when spring comes around.

WALK OUTSIDE ON WEEKENDS

Going for a jog or walk during mid-day when the sun is high is a great time to get outside and catch a few rays. Be sure to dress warmly, wear sunscreen, and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is most common in colder months when you're less aware of fluid loss.

TAKE A DANCE CLASS

Accept that invitation to the New Year's

Eve celebration and take a class in ballroom dancing. While you're dancing, you're not hanging around the buffet table or the bar, and your waistline will thank you for it.

REDISCOVER ICE SKATING

Whether it's on a frozen pond or at a rink, ice skating provides seasonal exercise opportunities, especially good for the legs. And it's great fun, bringing out the kid in all of us.

CONSIDER SNOWSHOEING

Snowshoeing is just a matter of strapping snowshoes onto your boots and walking. Snowshoes make hiking trails and snowy city parks accessible and can be rented from sporting goods stores at a relatively inexpensive price.

*Sometimes the
most important
thing in a whole
day is the rest we
take between
two deep
breaths.*

-Etty Hillesum

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY! GIFT CERTIFICATES
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Transition Bodyworks

209 1/2 N Alarcon St
Prescott, AZ 86301-3101



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