

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



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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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.

No Pain, No Gain?

Bodywork Doesn't Have to Hurt to be Effective

Cathy Ulrich

Some people believe massage must be painful to be effective. While some modalities may be intense, this doesn't necessarily translate to a knuckle-biting experience. In fact, painful bodywork can be counterproductive. If you can't breathe comfortably, want to tighten up, make a face, or curl your toes, the technique is too much for you. Your body will go into a protective mode and actually block any positive change.

"No pain, no gain" just doesn't have to apply when it comes to bodywork. Be sure to provide feedback to your practitioner so that you're on the same page. Think of it as a "scale of intensity." On my scale, zero is not touching you and ten is pain--not the worst pain you've ever felt but the place where you want to hold your breath, tighten up, make a face, leave your body. That's a ten.

You shouldn't ever have to be in a pain range to get results, and be sure to let your practitioner know if you're in an

eight or nine range. They may stay at that level if that's where the therapeutic value will be attained, but again, only if it's manageable and you're not tightening up.

And every single client is different. Not only do individuals all start in different places, but their bodies respond differently, and their pain thresholds are extremely varied. What one person finds heavenly, another calls torture.

If it does feel too painful, be sure to tell your therapist. Usually, a practitioner can simply slow down to ease the intensity without losing therapeutic value. Sometimes, if you are nervous or stressed, just remembering to breathe will make your body more open, and you'll remain comfortable.

Bodywork needn't be a test of how tough you are. By giving your therapist appropriate feedback and understanding that painful techniques aren't really helping your body heal, you'll have a

great experience in the session and feel better afterward.



Therapeutic massage actually feels good.

Massage for Old Injuries

Ancient Injuries Don't Have to Make You Feel Old

Art Riggs

Injuries such as chronic back pain, trick knees, and sticky shoulders are not necessarily something you just have to live with. Massage techniques might hold the key to unlocking this old pain.

Will Massage Help?

The benefits of massage will depend on the extent of the injury, how long ago it occurred, and on the skill of the therapist. Chronic and old injuries often require deeper and more precise treatments with less emphasis on general relaxation and working on the whole body. Massage works best for soft tissue injuries to muscles and tendons and is most effective in releasing adhesions and lengthening muscles that have shortened due to compensatory reactions to the injury. Tight and fibrous muscles not only hurt at the muscle or its tendon, but can also interfere with proper joint

movement and cause pain far away from the original injury.

Therapists who perform such work often have specialized names for their work--such as orthopedic massage, neuromuscular therapy, myofascial release, medical massage, etc.--but many massage therapists utilize an eclectic approach combining the best of the specialties.

It Works!

A recent Consumer Reports article ran the results of a survey of thousands of its readers and reported that massage was equal to chiropractic care in many areas, including back and neck pain. Massage also ranked significantly higher than some other forms of treatment, such as physical therapy or drugs.

If that nagging injury persists, consider booking a massage. Be sure to discuss the injury with your practitioner: How did you receive the injury? Have you reinjured it? And what exactly are your symptoms? Often, the body compensates in one area to protect another that has been traumatized, and this can create new problems.

Discuss the issues with your massage therapist. (Sometimes just talking about old injuries can play a significant role in the healing process.) Together, the two of you can work to determine a treatment plan.

I know it's an unpopular view but I love the New Year. I do not mean being crammed into a sweaty party and screaming at midnight (though you may have found me at this very scenario in my younger years). I love the possibility it brings for a fresh change, a new start, or even just a look around and the decision that there is nothing I wish to change.

This year, my partner and I rang in the new year on floor pillows near our fireplace, cuddling our furry loves and each other, and daydreaming of the travels we would start taking again in 2022. And it worked. The excitement of simply talking about new adventures on the horizon has crept into our daily life again, and some of the daily stress we've been feeling through 2021 has fallen from our shoulders. This newsletter's main article gets into other ways to take a look at your life, decide what you want to stay, and determine what has fulfilled its purpose and maybe can go.

The rest of the newsletter hits on recent questions from clients. Take a read, and let me know what specific questions this brings up for you regarding our sessions and your health goals.

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