

commit to projects, set aside personal obligations—all in the name of professional growth. Besides, initially it's so darn fun.

However, when the honeymoon phase starts to fade, it will seem like all you're doing is working. This is because you have set a standard that is hard to back away from. Working nights, weekends, spreading out all over the house, taking calls in the wee hours—it starts to feel and look as though you're living in your office. Your life gets out of balance.

It's not that a home office is a bad idea, but the business needs to have structure in order for you to find a sense of balance, poised between who you are at work and who you are in your personal life. In Feng Shui, we highly recommend that the office be contained in some way—in a room where the door can be closed or in a part of the house that is separate from your personal space. This gives you a physical as well as psychological message that you are in control of your space/life rather than the message that things have run amok.

Having a home office has the potential of splitting your focus when work things start to mingle with personal things. Finding a birthday card you meant to send to your uncle mixed in with a client's file or a business receipt in one of your cookbooks is a sign that boundaries are crossing. There's confusion, chaos, often culminating in a crisis. A business that is left to its own is a lot like having a new puppy. Until a system of confinement and discipline is in place, the business can scatter the energy of those who live there and the energy of your home.

Although a home prefers the activity of someone working there as opposed to being left alone day after day, it is not and was never intended to be a work place. I consulted

with a young man who had bought a home and turned the whole place into an office. He left his house each morning and went to work—at another house. Bedrooms were set up as individual offices for employees, the dining room was the conference room, and the living room was his office. He was very proud of the makeover he had accomplished with this house-turned-business.

Although it seemed his business was initially very successful, there was arguably a disconnect between inside and outside, since it looked like a residence but inside it had an entirely different focus. In addition, there was a struggle between what the structure was intended to be when it was built and what it was trying to be now under different circumstances. So he not only had to deal with keeping his business afloat but he also had to manage the subtle tussle that was occurring within the walls. No surprise to me that, after a few years, his business failed and he had to sell the house as a foreclosed property. That's not to say I haven't seen many successful businesses being operated out of a home, but for the majority of them the enterprise was managed and contained.

### **The Spirituality of Your Space**

Perhaps the most poignant and meaningful influence your home can give you comes from its sacredness. Although the compass of our expectations is not pointed towards the discovery of holiness at home, this is where we can most easily create and access it. Everyday architecture can indeed provide a connection to your soul; it can renew your spirit and inspire you; it can be the vessel of reverence that you unconsciously reach for.

Whether growing up with a church, synagogue, or temple as a regular place of worship, it's not hard to define what a traditional sacred space looks like. Visiting cathedrals in Europe or Buddhist temples in China, there are certain unwritten criteria that seem to go along with a spiritually elevated place. We walk more slowly, we talk more quietly, and we often cover our heads. The space is clearly transformative, making it easy for anyone to move inward and take in the feeling and magnificence that are held within the walls.

Although you wouldn't want your home to duplicate this exact experience, there is a way to create a home that reenacts in a stepped-down version the lofty exaltation of a cathedral. According to Joseph Campbell, your home can become a sacred space when everything in it becomes symbolic—"mythologized," to use his word. In other words, it can feed your soul. It can become a prayer that is offered up on your behalf. Finding ways to intentionalize and spiritualize your space can result in a whole and holy home.

Returning to the Tao Te Jing statement that you can "know the whole world without leaving your home," your space is not only an arena of information but also a well of spirituality. If it's truly a sacred space, being at home would be revitalizing and renewing for your spirit and you would feel refreshed and balanced. The potential for tapping into the spirituality is profound and can be the ultimate reason you live where you do. Finding the inner sanctuary of your home, like finding your inner child, can open you up to the temple that you are along with a direct connection to your own destination.

Sacredness may be found in a specific place in your home. An obvious and common symbol of spirituality is an altar or

an inspirational religious picture. People place special objects on their altar, all of which have meaning in some way—and all of which feel holy to them. A picture can offer the same experience whether it's of a saint, the Christ, Kuan Yin, Buddha, Gaia, a master, or something from nature. However, both of these options confine the sacred to one place or area. I propose that holiness is not limited by these physical reminders, although they are helpful, but instead can permeate and reflect out from the ordinary parts of your home as well.

Whether buying a rug, picking out a paint color, or selecting artwork, finding reverence is the argument for selecting only those things that inspire you. The word "inspiration" is derived from a combination of French and Latin words that means "taking in spirit." The question to ask is if that rug or that color or that piece of artwork lets you take in the essence of spirit. It's a different question than we would normally pose since our choices are usually driven by whether it matches the rest of the space or how much it costs or whether someone else will like it. Instead we should ask is: Will we be inspired by our selection? Will we be "spirit-ized" if we integrate it into our home?

As a Feng Shui consultant, too often I find someone in the family who has no place in their home to call their own. This is usually the female, but not always. She shares her bedroom with her spouse and her office with the kids. There is no one place she can designate as her place where she can be inspired, where she can find her soul. The sheer realization of this void often touches upon an ache that has never found conscious expression until that moment, but when brought to the surface brings with it some tears and determination to make a change.

A space that is sacred points toward reassurance and trust.

You can count on it. It makes you feel whole and safe. Nothing will harm you here if your space is truly holy. Whether this sacredness is confined to a room or a shelf, or even a corner, everyone needs a place that reflects to them the divine. When you're in the influence of your sacred space, you're infused with something beyond your own conscious mind and you find your strength and your clarity. You're inspired.

This sacredness occurs when the objects have your meaning and your intention as their driving force. Everything is chosen with care and has a common purpose—to lift you up spiritually. It doesn't mean you're striving for a Zen look nor does it mean everything has to be "in place" all the time. But when you're overwhelmed for whatever reason—work, relationships, money issues—then you have lost the sacred connection to your space.

Sometimes deliberately remembering the intentional parts of your space is enough to reconnect. Busy lives cause everyone to lose track of themselves. It may take only a moment to look around at the physical and symbolic sanctity to remember the divine. Sometimes sacredness can be reestablished in daily or weekly rituals. Call it Conscious Cleaning or Divine Dusting or Sacred Sweeping—a simple, common activity can not only uncover the sacred in the space, but can also have a spiritual component themselves.

An example of spiritual cleaning occurred years ago when I visited a church in a small English village, on my way to somewhere like Bath or Salisbury. I saw the spire as I approached the village so decided to check it out, plus it gave me an opportunity to get out of the car for a few moments. I went inside and took a seat in the back of the church. I was

the only one there, until two women came through a side door with a bucket, rags, and a broom. For nearly 30 minutes I was mesmerized as I watched them carefully and quietly clean the church. One took the broom and gently worked her way through the rows of seats, straightening the hymnals and retrieving a couple of forgotten items.

The other worked at the altar, carefully wiping off the various statues and candles. She moved the items with reverence and precision. Sometimes she used a dampened cloth, other times she switched to a dry one. I'm sure she had a good reason for her procedure since it was clear to me this was not the first time either of these women had done this work. They didn't shout back and forth, but would walk over to the other and whisper if there was something to be said. I was mesmerized by their thoroughness and their patience. For a long time after that, I didn't vacuum without thinking about how those women would have done it. It caused me to slow down, be careful, and very intentional. It may have been my imagination but when I vacuumed in that way it felt like the carpet stayed cleaner longer.

In my opinion, if all homes were a reflection of spiritual sanctuary, we would easily move to world peace. Unfortunately, there's work still to do on this front so we all need to create holiness at home as our effort in the cause to create a whole global community.

### **Your Home is Your Family**

One of the definitions of the word family is "household." We maintain hope that our family, whether our family of origin or an extended one, will accept us as we are and encourage us on