

# Home and Garden

## Creating a calm and harmonious home through feng shui

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Nichi Bei Weekly

Millions of people across the United States are continuing to contend with orders to shelter-in-place in their homes amid the great tumult and loss caused by the coronavirus crisis. The *Nichi Bei Weekly* interviewed feng shui consultant Reiko Nakayama by e-mail to help readers nurture a sense of calm or positivity in their homes.

**Nichi Bei Weekly: Please provide a brief description of feng shui, and share some benefits of incorporating these principles into one's home.**

**Reiko Nakayama:** Feng shui ("wind-water," or *fu sui* in Japanese) is the ancient art of placement to create harmony in a space. When the energy of a space is harmonious, it's positive, inviting, calming and nurturing. You want to stay there. Conversely, if the energy is negative, it's uncomfortable to stay there. You may not be able to put your finger on what is making you feel uncomfortable, but you know intuitively that you want to leave as soon as possible.

Qi (*chi*) is what animates living things and makes them move. It also flows in spaces, tending to move faster in straight lines and more slowly in curved paths. Energy which follows a curved path is more beneficial and positive. The longer and straighter the path, the stronger the qi flow becomes. It eventually becomes too strong to be of benefit, and becomes negative. For example, have you noticed that in long narrow hallways, you tend to walk faster, or on a straight, long street, you want to drive faster? The qi flow is carrying you along.

Feng shui is about creating positive energy flow in buildings and gardens. By implementing feng shui adjustments, you can enhance energy for career opportunities, better health, family harmony, good relationships, building wealth, and for other aspects of life.

**NBW: What areas of their homes would you encourage people who are just learning about feng shui to focus on?**

**RN:** Focus on making your home inviting by maximizing qi (*chi*) flow. What you see as you enter and leave your home is very



**A WELCOMING HOME** — Feng shui consultant Reiko Nakayama points out the wide, inviting entrance, plants by the door, wind chime, chair and table, at the entrance of this home. photo courtesy of Reiko Nakayama

influential to your qi. For example, is the path from the street to your home straight, narrow, and bending at right angles? Or does it curve gently around shrubs and flowers? Overhanging branches, thorny shrubs, and hedges taller than waist high symbolize a life path crowded with obstacles. Make sure that the path, whether straight or curving, is clear and free of thorny, overhanging shrubbery. Then energy can easily flow into your house.

Having two paths converging to your front door increases the qi flow into the house. When you leave the house, you have options on which way to go, increasing your opportunity. Add a second path to your door by placing stepping stones or building an additional walkway.

**Front door:** The front door is the main gate of qi, where qi enters the house. Even if you normally use a different entrance, such as the garage, the front door is still considered the main entrance. Use the front door at least once a day to promote qi flow. As you approach your front door, do you see recycling bins, sports equipment, piles of shoes? Take away these items and organize only what you need on a daily basis. To attract qi, hang a wind chime, bell or flag, and place healthy plants or a water fountain alongside the door.

**Entry hall:** Once qi makes it to your front door, encourage it to stay and circulate. The entry way should be well lighted, clear of obstructions, furnished with a small table and a vase of flowers or a table top fountain, if space allows.

Mirrors on the wall will open up a narrow space, as will pictures with some depth to them, such as a mountain scene.

**NBW: What are a few tips people can implement in their homes to cultivate a calming and harmonious space, particularly now that many people are spending most of their time at home?**

**RN:** It's interesting that most people, when decorating their homes, concentrate on the public spaces, such as the living room, family room, and kitchen. Rarely do they have time, energy and money left to decorate the bedroom. This approach is exactly the reverse of what they should be doing to create energy and harmony. The bedroom should be painted a restful color. Lighting should be soft and relaxing. Place the bed on the wall farthest from the door, with the head of the bed against a wall, and not under a window. The foot of the bed should not be in line with the door, nor should the bed be crossing the door at a right angle. This is a particularly vulnerable position. You should be able to see the door when lying down on the bed, without turning your head. Furniture should feel comfortable and not cramped. If the room feels crowded, remove a piece of furniture and notice the difference. Work on your computer, phone, or hobbies in another room. Keep the bedroom a sanctuary.

In your work area, clear the room of distractions. Desk placement in the office is as important as bed placement in the bedroom. It's best to place the desk so that you sit facing the door with your back to a solid wall signifying support. Avoid placing the desk so that your back is facing the door. Have a good desk lamp in addition to overhead lighting. Not having good lighting will cause eyestrain and headaches. Your chair should support your back. If it's too far from the desk, use a pillow to support your back. Place healthy plants in the corners opposite the door to activate the wealth

and marriage qi. Plants also clean the air and give off oxygen which helps your thinking process. Avoid placing an open bookcase directly behind you. The shelves give off negative qi, which may make you tired or give you a headache or a backache, depending on where the shelves are. Place a water bowl, fountain or vase containing water near the front of your office. Clear, moving water symbolizes wealth and opportunities, ideal for a work space.

If your home or office doesn't fit an ideal feng shui arrangement, do not despair. There are feng shui adjustments or cures for almost any situation.

**NBW: Are there changes people can make to help them to feel energized?**

**RN:** Of course, clearing clutter helps qi flow, helping you feel energized. Having more energy starts with a good night's rest. If you have trouble falling asleep, or feel tired even after a night's sleep, look around in your bedroom. Correct placement of the bed is the most important factor in promoting a sense of safety, otherwise a person's qi is upset, making the person nervous, and affecting relationships and performance at work. TVs, exercise equipment, computer desk, hobbies, non-leisure reading are distracting and keep you from relaxing. If you must have a television, cover it up at night, and try not to view it just before going to sleep. Do not store things under the bed. They disturb your sleep.

Practice meditation, tai chi, qi gong, or yoga to balance your energy, in addition to daily exercise.

**NBW: Can you offer some tips for people who want to declutter their homes, but aren't sure where to start?**

**RN:** Clutter blocks qi, causing it to stagnate and become negative. Seeing stacks of papers, clothing, broken and unusable items drains your energy. Decluttering your entire home can be overwhelming. I recommend starting small, and when you have completed the first area of the house, the qi will start flowing and give you energy to tackle the next area. Start with the front porch or front hall, if you don't have a porch. Remove everything from the porch and only put back what you need every day, such as a chair, small table, doormat and a shoe organizer. Add plants, wind chime, or water feature. Then proceed to the entry hall. This area should be clear of clutter as well. Do not use the area behind the door (this applies to all the doors in the house) to store items that will prevent the door from opening fully. The door should swing open at least 90 degrees to allow energy, and thus opportunities, to flow through.

Shall I even mention stuck doors? Repairing doors that stick will help you get unstuck, too.

Once you have cleared the main entry, continue with small projects: a bookcase, the dining room table, the desk. Is the bookcase stuffed full to overflowing? Remove half the books, and arrange the remaining books in alternating stacks, on their sides and standing upright, with the spines facing outward. Leave some space between the stacks. Being able to see the back wall of the bookcase gives a sense of space, making the room seem bigger, and symbolizes having room for new things in your life. Hint: group books together by color, rather than by subject or author, and they immediately look organized.

Go to where the clutter is, such as a closet, dresser, or desk, instead of trying to make over an entire room at once. If you feel you are ready to declutter the garage, try eliminating clutter by category, such as gardening tools, or clothing. Do not hang on to things that are outdated, expired, or of no use to you. They lower your qi. That includes items that you "might need someday," since you will have the resources to obtain what you need, when you need them.

**NBW: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

**RN: What happens during a consultation:** When I arrive at the location, I observe the surroundings of the building. I look at the lot shape, the slope of the lot, the roads, nearby buildings, land and water formations, trees, and other influences on the property. I meet with the clients and discuss their current and future life concerns and plans, their general health, and problems they wish to address. I relate this information to the areas of the home corresponding to the various aspects and aspirations of life, such as career, wealth, health, children, and marriage, to name a few. As I walk through the property with the client I make suggestions for adjusting the qi.

Furniture arrangement is one way to adjust energy flow, but not the only way. Adjustments include crystals, mirrors, plants, water fountains, flowers, fish tanks, wind chimes, and bamboo flutes. They scatter, deflect, activate, or attract qi, depending on the intention.

During this time of social distancing, I am offering consultations via phone, e-mail, FaceTime, Skype and Zoom. Photos and architectural plans (are) welcome.

Feng shui can improve the quality of your life, give you energy, and uplift your spirits.

For more information about Nakayama, visit <http://fengshuibyreiko.com>, call (408) 396-9402 or e-mail [reiko@fengshuibyreiko.com](mailto:reiko@fengshuibyreiko.com).



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