

Happy New Year



February 7, 2008 marks the beginning of the Chinese lunar year 4706 – the Year of the **Earth Rat**. The Rat is the first of the Chinese astrological animals in the twelve year cycle and is associated with the **Water** element. Since it occupies the first position, Rat years represent the transition of energies from the previous 12 year cycle to the next. For many of us, that suggestion brings thoughts of growth, adventure and new opportunities. For others, the prospect of change is challenging, for we like to hold on to what we know and can predict. In either case, what better time to take inventory of our surroundings? This puts us in a better position to decide if we are enhancing or sabotaging our chances for achieving our goals in the coming years.

Though not the most exciting tenet of Feng Shui, I remind my clients every year at this time to start making changes by removing their clutter. Clean out closets, drawers, refrigerators, pantries, storage sheds, desks and offices. Make room on the book shelf for all the new books (and knowledge) you will acquire this year. Clear time on your calendar to develop relationships with people who bring you joy (not sap your energy). Streamline your workload by making everything you need on a daily basis accessible. Clean mirrors and crystals and bring daylight to the dark corners of your home, office or business. Clearing stagnant energy in any of the life areas of your home or office (*Career, Knowledge, Family, Prosperity, Fame, Health, Relationships, Children and Benefactors*), creates a warm reception for new energy to expand there.

Like Feng Shui, the Japanese aesthetic of *Wabi-Sabi* represents a way of life that, over time, cultivates appreciation for the natural elements, the seasons and organic beauty. In his book on the subject, Leonard Koren writes: "*Wabi-sabi is a beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. It is a beauty of things modest and humble. It is a beauty of things unconventional.*" The Japanese tea ceremony exemplifies wabi-sabi. In the ceremony, emphasis is placed on the simplicity of the surrounding environment, limiting distractions and concentrating purely on one's enjoyment of the tea. In the midst of planning our busy lives, we dash through our days multitasking and wonder where the time has gone.

During a consultation, I ask about the history of a place, a piece of furniture or artwork in a client's space. Since achieving perfection is not the goal of Feng Shui, it is appropriate to use and display pieces that represent beauty to you. While a broken mirror in the Relationship area of your home or business might indicate a "split" or fractured view of that part of your life, a worn but comfortable loveseat or pair of chairs could happily invoke memories of wonderful relationships or cooperative business partnerships. When I look closely at my own dining room table, I see all the imperfections and scratches that have accumulated over the years. But they carry the energy of meals shared with generations of family and friends, stimulating conversations, celebrations and occasions both happy and sad.

Our ancestors lived close to the land and understood the influence the five elements (fire, earth, metal, water and wood) had upon each other and upon their surroundings. They felt rewarded for their hard work with fresh water, calm winds, shelter, food and fair weather. Since we've advanced both technologically and economically, we tend to accumulate objects that reward us for our work in different ways. Larger cars and homes (which require more fuel and furnishings), more clothing and electronic equipment actually removes us from our natural environment. We surround ourselves with objects designed to make our lives easier (which effectively manages to free up more time to work). We have wireless "hot spots" in our homes, offices and coffee shops. Technology keeps us "connected" at all times, enabling us to have conversations with more people in more places more often. We compensate for the pace of our busy schedules with exercise and yoga classes, and seek out quiet time for a walk or meditation. This brings us full circle. Are we are forgetting to enjoy the tea?

As you welcome the New Year and transition from the twelve-year cycle that began on February 19, 1996, take time to look back on how your life has changed in those twelve years. Then imagine the new course you will set beginning today. Examine your footprint on earth then and now, and do what is necessary to simplify your life. Eliminate toxic chemicals from your environment, recycle what you use, conserve energy and spend time reacquainting yourself with nature. Enjoy the tea.

Wishing you an abundance of peace, prosperity and good ch'i.

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