

## Ancient Angle On Good Fortune

### Feng Shui experts try to ‘cure’ sources of bad energy as homeowner wonders if she did anything right.

It's chilly Wednesday morning when Dee Johl and Dolly Sidhu arrive at my door. Co-owners of World of Feng Shui, a specialty store and consultancy service based in Vaughan, they are here to analyze my house; to “read” it, so to speak, and impart some feng shui advice.

Feng Shui has been described as the ancient Chinese practice of placement and arrangement of space to achieve harmony with the environment. Formerly dismissed as rampant superstition, its concepts are increasingly embraced by Westerners seeking to enhance their success and happiness – outcomes that feng shui (pronounced fung shway) is said to provide. In the last decade, feng shui lite (its original mysticism largely downplayed) has become a hot buzzword in the fields of décor and architectural design.



The underpinning of feng shui is the concept of qi (pronounced chi) the energy that is thought to exist in all things, animate and inanimate, connecting all of nature, mankind included, in a vast cosmic flow. It can be positive (sheng qi), bringing luck and happiness; or negative (sha qi), causing misfortune and misery.

The goal of feng shui is to regulate the flow of qi within your home, activating the good energies and neutralizing or deflecting the bad. In theory, you can control your wealth, health success and personal relationships through judicious use of feng shui.

Johl and Sidhu – one an interior decorator, the other a real estate agent – have been feng shui devotees for many years. Both hail from Malaysia. Moving to Toronto in the 1980s, they did private consultations but, as Sidhu points out, it wasn't easy finding the merchandise to support the practice of feng shui – in those days, Canadians barely knew the term.

In 2004, on separate vacations home to Malaysia, fate brought them both in contact with the World of Feng Shui, an international franchise created by fellow-Malaysian Lillian Too, who has almost single-handedly brought awareness of feng shui to the western world.

Too, who holds an MBA from Harvard, writes books and publishes a bi-monthly magazine, and her 55 boutiques are franchised in 17 countries, with further expansion planned this year. She also offers feng shui certification training to people like Johl and Shidhu, who may then bid for franchises of her World of Feng Shui brand.

Johl and Shidhu completed their training in 2005, and launched their enterprise, last May. In my house, they begin by taking compass readings to determine the “facing” of the building, a crucial detail for their analysis. Qi enters through your front door and it’s important to know whether, in any give year, your entrance is likely to be assailed by good or bad energies – also known as Flying Stars.

Feng shui experts have calculated that in the lunar year beginning tomorrow, very bad energy will fly in from the northeast, while the southwest will be the luckiest sector. My front door faces due east, which turns out to be propitious.

Johl and Sidhu whose consultations start at \$500, also ask about the scope and timing of any renovations, in order to determine the “period” into which the building falls. There is some debate as to whether my house is a Period 7 or 8; I hope they get it right, since the rest of their analysis will hinge on the answer.

The women jot down the birthdates of me and my sons for our Auspicious Directions charts and for the Natal Flying Star Chart of our home. They tour the house, trying not to shake their heads or purse their lips too noticeably.

I know for sure they’ll disapprove of my bedroom-cum-office, since it’s not considered good feng shui to mix the two. I’m taken by surprise, however, by their dismay over my kitchen.

It faces west. This, apparently is bad – sure to bring about discord in the marital relationship. And because the “fire” energies in a kitchen are so strong, the area cannot be activated or negated by feng shui “cures”.

I have two options: renovate drastically or live elsewhere.

Neither is my current life-plan. Moving right along.

A few days later, Johl and Sidhu are back with their report and a medley of possible cures for my problems.

As expected, my bedroom is a danger zone: mirrors facing the bed, computer and TV

screens and “poison arrows” (sharp angles and points) galore. The women are horrified by the belt of machine-gun bullets hanging on the wall (long spent, I hasten to add, and very old, an offbeat souvenir of my youthful travels.) Even the ceiling fans is a no-no. “It’s slicing you,” Sidhu points out.

They recommend I repaint the bedroom in shades of pale pink (I hate pink) to suppress the violent metal energy from the facing of the room and to arrange rose quartz crystals to enhance my relationships.

My younger son’s room is blue (his favourite colour). It should be green, since blue – symbolizing water – is “destructive” to the fire energies of his south facing room is green. It should be white (which) it was, before I painted it green) to enhance its metal energies.

Have I done anything right? Doesn’t seem so.

My living room needs to be repainted in pale green to enhance the wood energies. Numerous “cures” – three-toed toads with gold coins in their mouths, a laughing Buddha, a picture of a tranquil mountain – are recommended to encourage a (much needed) inflow of wealth and to curb “quarrelsome energies and legal issues.”

The women advise me to hang a wind chime in the centre of the house to counteract a Flying Star combination that may bring misfortune and accidents. I should also leave lights on constantly over my hydro bill) to counteract the evil shaqi that will be seeking to enter this year.

How do Juhl and Sidhu reach all these conclusions? The answer is very complicated and illustrates the need for a trained practitioner.

Feng Shui has been so popularized that most people are aware of a few simple concepts involving wind chimes and crystals and rules such as not sitting with your back to a door or sleeping beneath an exposed beam. Some dabblers learn how to superimpose the Bagua – an octagonal diagram that is representative of the most basic level of feng shui – onto a floor plan of their home and shuffle their belongings around to suit.

It’s a generic approach, harmless – but akin to skating on the surface of a frozen pond with no awareness of the untold depths below. A true feng shui practitioner studies its mysteries for years, referring to the I-Ching and Tao, and various aspects of Chinese mysticism.

In order to advise a client wisely, precise and complex mathematical calculations must take into account his/her date of birth, and the movement of the different energies in his home and in the cosmos at any given time. A feng shui "master" can plot your luck literally hour by hour, from any direction.

Johl and Sidhu do not practice feng shui at that rarefied level. But they've studied the ground work areas of Compass and Flying Star feng shui, Chinese astrology, the Four Pillars Destiny Chart and the Eight Mansions method of analysis. They can (in theory) determine where some one's luck is coming from, which are auspicious and in auspicious directions and what to do to enhance or activate positive forces.

It's not any easy task; my charts took them two days to prepare. Their mentor, Lillian Too – who will bring her annual Feng Shui Extravaganza Roadshow to Toronto for the first time on Feb.25 – readily concedes that feng shui isn't all that is needed for success; hard work is two thirds of the story.

"But if you have one-third (of your luck) tied up, that is a big thing. And it's so easy to do."

Her one-day workshop will give tips on "How to get rich and stay safe in 2007," the Year of the Fire Boar, which she predicts will be a year of great turmoil, but also of great opportunities. Health, she says, will also be a big issue.

As we ended our conversation, I joked about the need to do some housecleaning before Johl and Shidhu arrived for their consultation. Too's response, delivered with a touch of asperity, was perhaps the best advise of all: "A dirty, cluttered house is bad energy. You don't need feng shui to tell you that!" Touche.