



FENG SHUI

FOR STAGING AND DESIGN

GUEST AUTHOR LINDA LENORE





Day 17 -

PRACTICAL FENG SHUI

QUICK INTRODUCTION FROM AUDRA

I have long spoken of the emotional connection in each room of the home and Feng Shui follows along this practice. I have been disappointed when listening to Feng Shui “experts” speak on incorporating Feng Shui into staging because too many times it crosses over the fundamental staging principle that the room must appeal to the masses. In fact, I’ll never forget going to a Feng Shui and staging seminar where the instructor recommended hanging crystals from the ceiling for better chi movement...as you can imagine this completely goes against staging! That’s why I am so excited, honored and privileged to introduce you to someone who truly understands Feng Shui and how it relates to home staging, my long time friend and Feng Shui Master, Linda Lenore!

I’ve known Linda and her family since I was a young girl (over 35 years ago). Even then, Linda’s home was impeccable and much of her style and decorative interest is what helped to inspire my path into the field today. Linda is extremely accomplished as a published author, tremendous speaker (at many venues including the ASID conferences) and has written a wonderful book I highly recommend you read if you are serious about Feng Shui She became a Feng Shui expert before anyone had even heard of it! Despite her amazing background, she is very approachable, transparent, warm, caring, funny and a pleasure to befriend, so I encourage you all to get to know her more through her website at: <http://www.LindaLenore.com!>



I want you to know that Linda, who is possibly the most, respected Feng Shui Master and teacher in the country is generously giving you her incredible insights which in any other venue would cost a ton! She has offered to create this module because she is passionate about her topic, staging, teaching and I'd like to think holds a special place in her heart for me. She even designed the module true to the past modules in that there are numerous pages that serve as easy printouts for your clients! I especially love the "Staging Tips for Different Cultures and Communities" cheat sheet on page 8 and each printable room-by-room page with photos.

She is going to take a more practical, Western approach to the basics of Feng Shui because there are wonderful truths to incorporate into your redesign and staging work using Feng Shui while others (like hanging crystals in the entry) just won't work at all. My hope is that this module will be an introduction to helping you understand the basics of Feng Shui, and if this is a direction you would like your business to go, entice you to take it further by contacting Linda directly at her website. Enjoy!!

Thank you, thank you, thank you Linda! You went above and beyond what I asked!

Audra Slinkey



INTRODUCTION FROM LINDA

The ancient Chinese practice of Feng Shui (pronounced “fung shway”), which literally means “wind” (Feng) and “water” (Shui) has been widely used in Asia for thousands of years, and is now increasingly popular in the West. Across the US and around the world, thousands of people are discovering how simple changes in the selection, color, and arrangement of their furnishings can help improve the energy of chi within their homes. This, in turn, creates supportive environments for fulfillment and success in all aspects of their life.

There is an emotional connection in each room of the home, which can be bad, good, neutral, or in some cases a combination of these. Feng Shui principles help us grasp some of the elements of design and architecture that create feelings within us on levels we may never have imagined. Following the practice of Feng Shui can contradict some of the staging know-how with which we are so familiar. So walk the fine line and know that buyer’s emotions – and BELIEFS - come first when it comes to staging, especially for targeted consumers from a particular culture. I have found you rarely, if ever, can change a person’s belief without actually talking to them or providing them with written proof and examples. We will be exploring a few of the beliefs as part of this module.

When Audra and I were first discussing this module, we both had interesting stories pertaining to “traditional Feng Shui” solutions - how it challenges staging and good design.

Audra shared, “In fact, I’ll never forget going to a Feng Shui and staging seminar where the instructor recommended hanging crystals from the ceiling for better chi movement...as you can imagine this completely goes against staging!”

A similar “in-person” experience happened to me. When my daughter, Melanie, and her husband, Marc, were looking for a home a few years ago, I often wandered through an “Open House”. One day I walked into a Mediterranean-style house not far from where I live. Much of the furniture was Mexican in style and manufacturing, which blended nicely with the architectural style of the home. What didn’t work were the 8 or more crystals hanging all over the kitchen, dining room, family room, and living room as well as the 5 “Ba-Gua” mirrors by doors – both inside and out. Even though it was still a “hot real estate market” at the time, the home sat for almost a year before being sold. It didn’t FEEL right! AND the crystals and mirrors didn’t look right!

“Good Feng Shui” and “Good Staging” are common sense based!

It took about 4 years of studying and doing Feng Shui before I understood it enough to bring it into a more practical format. I remember presenting at several conferences and conventions in the early-90’s with the title, “Feng Shui: A Practical Western Approach.” (In fact, I came across an old tape from one of them not long ago.) These Western approaches to Feng Shui basics hold some wonderful truths to enrich your redesign and staging business. On the other hand, some (like hanging crystals in the entry) just won’t work at all. Our hope with this module is to introduce you to, and help you understand, basic Feng Shui. And, should you desire more knowledge for personal or professional reasons, may it entice you to journey further – like traveling the Orient Express - for intrigue and beauty.



ROOTS AND PROGRESSION OF FENG SHUI

Exploring the origin and transformation of Feng Shui through the millenniums can help you gain insights on how, when and where to implement it in your business and personal life. Many cultures incorporate it, or similar arts and sciences, to help them interpret their environments – what makes it “feel” good, raising a person’s vitality, attracting fortunate blessings, and calming weary souls.

In ancient Asia, Feng Shui was originally used to locate auspicious geographical settings for the tombs of emperors. It was thought that if the bones of revered ancestors were located well, current and future generations would prosper. Through the years the practice spread beyond the emperors to all those of wealth and power.

Today this practice is used throughout the world with many memorial parks redesigned and reconfigured to not only support belief systems of the Asian communities, but different cultures throughout the world. The more auspicious, or good, the site appears to be, the more costly the site. This has become an important marketing tool and specialty within this industry, especially as our world becomes more diverse and “globally aware.”



FLYING STARS SCHOOL

Once the site had been selected, elaborate charts of “Flying Stars” were examined to determine the best orientation for the structure, as well as the best time for the burial. The “Flying Stars” are the celestial bodies of the sun, moon, and planets. These “stars” are translated into numbers that change regularly in a specific pattern based on the Chinese calendar. Some number combinations are good, while others are thought to be unlucky.

Nowadays, in addition to the selection of the burial site, the Flying Stars method is used both for new construction and to identify fortunate and unfortunate influences within an existing home. Using this method requires getting an accurate compass reading, knowing the exact date of construction of the building (and any major renovations), and determining the facing direction of the home. In practicing the traditional Flying Stars method of Feng Shui, you may find that you get different compass readings at different places around a home and that it’s impossible to determine which one is correct. Sometimes the “mouth of chi” is not the front door. This, too, can throw everything off. If you don’t know when the home was built or remodeled, it can add to the difficulty in determining the correct “stars” pattern.

There are many variables within the Flying Stars method, making it challenging to calculate and use, so it takes many years of study and practice to become proficient.

In exploring Feng Shui, you may choose to learn more about this method (down the road) since it is a wonderful school of Feng Shui to add to your designs as it truly balances, on a micro level, the living spaces within a building.

BA-GUA SCHOOLS

Some of the most well-known, popular and westernized schools of Feng Shui utilize a Ba-Gua, which is an eight-sided object (“Ba” means “eight” and “Gua” means “side”). This Ba-Gua (now sometimes depicted as a square with 9 smaller squares placed within it in a 3-square-by-3-square pattern) is a “map” representing the various areas of life, elements, numbers, colors, and even seasons of the year. In some cases they even include parts of the body. Incorporating this school in your staging puts the psyche at ease on several levels.

Some Feng Shui legends say this Ba-Gua pattern came from the back of a tortoise, while others claim it is based on the Tri-Grams derived through the I-Ching, which “is one of the oldest of the Chinese books and a symbol system used to identify order in random events,” according to Wikipedia. The information displayed in the square version of the Ba-Gua actually comes from these Trigrams.

Several of the schools that use the Ba-Gua System are tied to various religious beliefs and include rituals and/or ceremonies as part of their practices. Usually these are learned as part of the “in-person” training through a Master, although there are a few books sanctioned by these Masters where the rituals have been shared.

CLASSICAL SCHOOLS

Other schools of Feng Shui look at the directions the house is facing, but not to the degree, literally, that Flying Stars addresses. Over time, one discovers a similarity with other homes that face the same directions. Within these schools you will find some cultures prefer the front door facing south or east. Others may want the bedroom to receive the morning eastern sunlight, while still others may want a kitchen in the east, northeast, or south area of the building.

Land formations around the home play a major role in the “feel” of a home. This school is often termed Landscape, Landform, or Form School Feng Shui. A modern day equivalent of Form School issues would be the location of a home within the master plan of a tract development. For instance, if the home is located in the middle of the block, it is seen as a better location in eyes of the Asian buyer. A corner home will be missing protection. And the well-known “top-of-the-T-intersection” home has often set for many months – even in “hot” real estate markets - in communities with predominately Asian buyers due to its inauspicious location and resulting energy.

Originally, in addition to auspicious locations for protection and support, the desired placement of the building would be a location where it would be protected from the elements as much as possible. Henceforth, some of the traditional guidelines, directions, and advice are based on climate and geography from Asia. Basically, they would want to take advantage of the natural setting to keep it warm during the cold times of the year and cool during the hot months.

This way of thinking is very similar to our modern-day knowledge of passive solar design. With passive solar design, we position a building to allow the sun to heat the building during cooler months (using a variety of techniques), while at the same time we shade much of the home from intense sun exposure through shade trees, awnings, or extended overhangs during the hot seasons.



INTUITIVE SCHOOLS

Then there are the intuitive approaches to Feng Shui. For instance, if you were purchasing land to grow crops, where would be the best place to locate your home and plant your crop? Sometimes you think this would be common sense, but if you are not aware of how energy flows, especially water, you might choose a site that would flood. This particular type of common sense, yet intuitive, Feng Shui is known as Water Dragon Classic Feng Shui.

Another example of intuitive Feng Shui has to do with the flow of wind, thus placing a building so it's protected from storms or constant exposure to wind. Remember the words "Feng" and "Shui" refer to "wind" and "water" respectively. These are powerful natural forces with which we deal and it is best to learn and understand how they influence our dwelling and our lives.

Still additional intuitive Feng Shui schools exist. They may not have names, yet you know when something isn't right. Ever wonder why a person who cleans your environment rarely puts things "back where they belong?" They are there for a short period of time to remove the dust and dirt. They aren't "in tune" with the object, room, or who you are within that space.

Now I understand why my mother was always moving things around until the object and the room "felt right" to her.

As we explore some of the tools and knowledge of this ancient Asian art and science, remember it has evolved over thousands of years. It is not stagnant. It is about "flow" and "energy." Our lives are changing faster than ever before in the history of mankind. To take this knowledge and contain it in any form would be a disservice to all. What is written are only "guidelines".

Feng Shui is a “living art form”, designed to help people create balance in their lives by better understanding the natural world and how its force shapes their lives. By taking control of their environments, a person responds to their dwelling on a molecular level - physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually - thus achieving the health, happiness, relationships and prosperity they desire by living in harmony with their environments.

LINDA LENORE’S BACKGROUND AND PERSONAL INTRODUCTION TO FENG SHUI

Many of you are probably wondering who I am, why I’m writing this (instead of Audra), and how I became so passionate about Feng Shui. Since we want to get into how Feng Shui applies to you – your business and your life – I’ll give you a brief overview. Please feel free to contact me at: <http://www.LindaLenore.com> to learn more or email me at: Linda@LindaLenore.com to ask questions or make comments.

As a child, I loved to create. At the age of seven, I was “paid” to make crafts for a craft manufacturer to see if a child could read and follow the instructions. In exchange, I received more crafts of my choice. About the same time, my grandmother taught me to sew in her drapery workroom and my father had me working on the remodeling of the house – pulling electrical wires, installing plumbing, nailing chicken wire for stucco, painting walls and trim, installing tile, and, by the time I was twelve, I was nailing shingles on the roof. That started me on a lifetime of working with my hands and beautifying homes.

Then, in 1970, I moved into the same neighborhood and met Audra’s family. Our families became very close – my children spending time with Audra’s family and vice versa. Audra’s mother and I both loved decorating and did many things together along that line. In the 80’s, several ladies and I started an interior design business. Only trouble was the college we attended didn’t teach the basics to run a small business. Does that sound familiar to anyone?

Shortly thereafter, and very fortuitously, I received a brochure about an interior design conference focused on “Running the Small Design Firm.” I signed up. After walking the trade show floor in 4”-high, pointed-toe shoes for six days and suffering from information overload and over stimulation from products, I sat down in the auditorium awaiting the next presentation. It turned out to be a presentation on Feng Shui, about which I had never heard. This was about 25-years ago.

The next part I share with you has a lot of emotions attached to them, and although they have softened through the years, still affect me - and might affect you.

Professor Lin Yun proceeded to enter the auditorium followed by several other individuals. When he began to speak, he would only speak in Mandarin. A translator did the best he could to explain in English what was being conveyed. Most of the time there were pre-drawn transparencies placed on the overhead projector. Towards the end, Professor Lin Yun drew a floor plan of a house and bedroom arrangement, claiming it could cause a child's death. The similarity to my home was uncanny! AND my son, Jeff, had died just a few months earlier. Jeff was 13-years-old when he died of a malignant brain tumor.

Could a house or bedroom configuration actually cause a child's health to deteriorate, especially to the point where the child might die? What could possibly be the reasoning behind this? How could this person – Master or not – have known to share this example during a presentation that was supposed to be “design related” in an auditorium where I was sitting in attendance?

Weird? Definitely! Did I believe it? Talk to me in person! Changed my life? Absolutely!

The journey had started. I sought classes, but without the development of the Internet and few masters in North America, it was about six months before I found even one. As a skeptic, I couldn't learn enough, fast enough. This is not an acceptable mindset for studying Eastern wisdoms. I now know I offended many a master and their disciples through my ignorance, stubbornness, and impatience. It was not intentional.

What has been intentional has been a driving desire to learn, to understand, and to figure out why all these things have happened the way they did, when they did. But alas, I can only guess that this has been my life's journey to my life's purpose.



It's led me to study with 22 masters around the world; to become a Feng Shui Master my self in 2002 in the Canary Islands; to explore what it takes to create healthy environments for over 15 years (ultimately becoming a Certified Green Building Professional); to become a teacher to professionals from all walks of life including interior designers, realtors, and professional organizers; and, to appear in the media through newspapers, magazines, Internet sites, to write articles and books, appear on national radio, to have part of my life story on Lifetime Media, and share ways to "Create Your Emotional Home" on the Hallmark Channel's "New Morning" program.

Many blessings have been bestowed on me through this pathway of knowledge. My desire is to share this knowledge with you so you benefit – along with your clients. Then it will turn the devastating deaths, divorce, and diagnoses I've experienced into a devotion of design and dreams-come-true for you and those you touch.

Blessings, Linda Lenore



WESTERN FENG SHUI AND STAGING/REDESIGN APPLICABILITY – LINDA’S PERSPECTIVE

In the 25 years I’ve been consciously including Feng Shui principles into my life and design, I have literally fought – internally with body, mind, and spirit - with many aspects of Feng Shui. When I was told to “hang beads in the doorway,” as an interior designer I couldn’t fathom doing this even though I was living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Maybe we could get away with that in the 60’s or at that time in the Haight-Ashbury District of San Francisco, but it certainly wasn’t fashionable in the 1980’s for the general public of Silicon Valley. And my own spiritual and religious practices were in total conflict with the teachings with which I was being exposed.

Yet, the introduction I had been given to this ancient philosophy made it emotionally impossible for me to leave it alone. A curious thing started to happen. Our designs were winning awards and our business was growing faster than our peers. A closer look uncovered wisdoms of common sense, good design, and a natural order underlying our designs. The spaces just felt good! So word-of-mouth advertising was growing our business.

I’ve always loved looking at houses. At one time I thought I would become a realtor since I was always spending time at Open Houses. But giving up my evenings and weekends to make a sale was not to my liking. To this day I love to go to homes – critiquing the flow of the floor plans, the architectural features and details, the craftsmanship, and the interior design. Most of the time I think “What were they thinking when they did this?”





All of these parts of the WHOLE HOME should work together for the betterment of the occupants. I feel our egos often get in the way of us creating better environments. I have one master who says, “Architects will have a lot of Karma to which they must atone. They are creating disastrous homes - causing relationship issues, financial demise, health issues, and undermining the overall well-being of the occupants.”

At first I thought this was rather harsh, yet, with time, I have seen so many sad and bad things happen to people, it causes me to wonder. Since I’ve been doing Feng Shui for so long (I think I’ve done around three thousand consultations) I’ve seen patterns recur long before the masters explained them. There is a much deeper correlation to our home than our Western society attributes to our mind/body/spirit connection. So in staging or redesigning a home, I will be giving you Feng Shui principles, perspectives, and practical pointers to help you prevail over some of the many challenges I’ve encountered. And no matter what, please do a quality job. The reason I say this is due to a couple of rather recent experiences I have had.

In one, the home had been quickly almost thrown together to get it on the market. The paint job was poor, repairs had not been made to very noticeable items, and the staging was dismal. Although priced well for the location and condition, it sits. Whereas, another home geographically close to it had been given lots of TLC. It had not been updated – in fact, they didn’t even give it fresh paint. But they did clear it out, staged a few rooms, and followed several of my suggestions I’ve included here. The house sold with multiply offers the first week it was on the market. Pride from a “job well done” can often set the stage for “Good Feng Shui” helping to sell a home or make it a home they would “love to live in!”

SOME STAGING TIPS FOR DIFFERENT CULTURES AND COMMUNITIES

Feng Shui Beliefs – Colors

- Yellow represents good health
- Red brings fame and fortune
- White increases the chance of offspring
- Black improves career
- Blue helps gain knowledge
- Green brings family happiness
- Purple attracts wealth

Important: Do not suggest a house be painted white for Asian buyers as they associate it with death. Do not use white chrysanthemums – in pictures, floral arrangements (live or silk).

Colors – Other Cultures

- Red – Good luck – Asian
- Green – Lucky – Hindu
- Blue – Lucky – Moslem
- Red pen or ink – Korean
- Red – Mourning – Ghana
- Black – Mourning – Western cultures
- White – Weddings – Western cultures
- White – Mourning – China
- Black – Weddings – China
- Purple – short-lived happiness – Japan
- Purple – Death – Brazil & Mexico
- Brown – Funerals – Persia
- Blue – Death - Syria

Important: People from Peru, Mexico, or Iran have similar meanings to yellow flowers as Asians do to the white chrysanthemums. Steer clear of their use in those communities.

Important: Filipinos are an exception to the Asian aversion to the color white. With their Spanish-connected history, their belief is more like Westerners. They associate death with black.

Important: Never set a table with four (4) place settings in a home in an Asian Community as the number four in their dialects sounds like their word for death. Set it with three place settings, or five or more. A exception would be in a Filipino community where the number three (3) sounds like death.

UNDERSTANDING THE BA-GUA ENERGY MAP

The Ba-Gua is a map of the energy, or chi, in our environments. It represents the areas of our lives, what kind of energy is most compatible in those areas, and how these energies within our homes can affect each specific aspect of our life experience. The Ba-Gua Map, which is an energy map depicting the life situations located within our built environments, can be used for any kind of space - the whole building or home, a room, or even smaller units of space like a desk or tabletop.

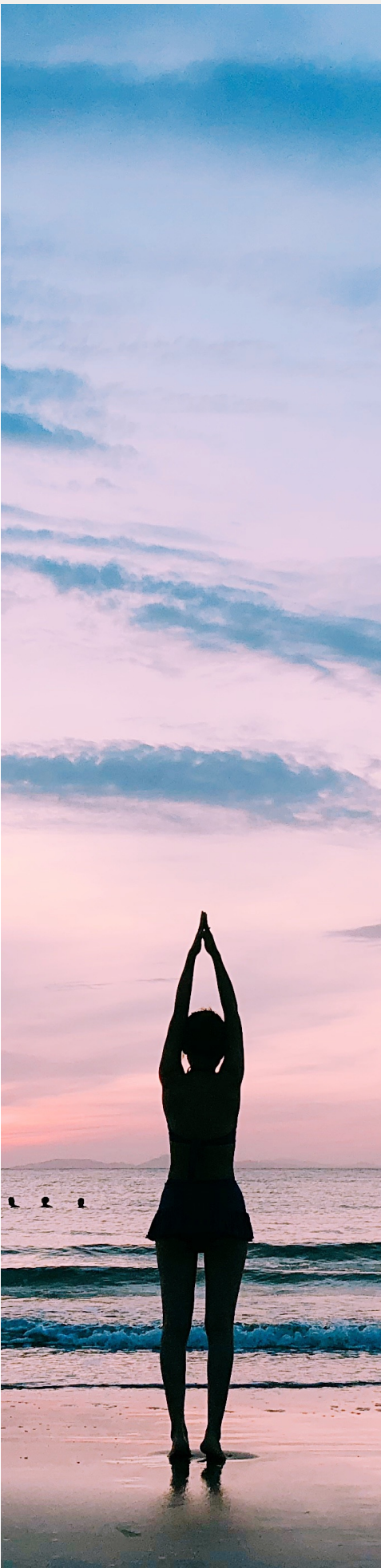


It is used as an overlay on the floor plan of the building, home, room, desk, or table. I use it in gardens and patios, within a shelf, and I've even arranged files in file cabinets and by category of books within a bookcase.

The practice of Feng Shui involves analyzing the chi of a home, diagnosing problems, identifying opportunities for improvement, and choosing the cures and enhancements that will be most helpful. The Ba-Gua Map is just one of many tools we use to decide what solutions is right for the home. From it we can determine if the room or space contains the right elements, colors, shapes, objects, etc., or if we need to change something.



Knowing which areas of the space will affect what aspects life – whether it's for yourself, a friend, or a client - enables you to make informed decisions about where to focus your Feng Shui attention and how to prioritize potential changes and enhancements. Having used this ancient wisdom for 25 years, I find myself inadvertently including it in many areas of my life – automatically. It has become second nature to just know what is not right without me even thinking about it.



This will happen to you also. First you might struggle to figure things out. I suggest you take a deep breath and relax. I often find when I teach my Feng Shui CEU (Continuing Education Class) workshops to audiences where creative individuals are in attendance, like an ASID (American Society of Interior Designers) Conference, art or design college/institute, or any other industry where the “right brain” is allowed to expand and play, the attendees make comments that they already do that. We do find when we encourage our intuition to be used, we “just know” when something is “wrong” and when it is finally “perfect!”

On the next couple of pages we have two Ba-Guas. They actually are the same, just different formats that make their usage a little easier under different circumstances. They contain some of the same information and some different information – again, it depends on how it is being used as well as from what school of Feng Shui it might have originated.

The main thing for you to know at this point is that the knowledge-career-helpful people side of the Ba-Gua will always be held closer to your body with the wealth-fame-partnership side farthest from our body when it is laid in a horizontal position. The way it works is by looking for the “mouth of chi” or the main doorway - usually the front door to the house, the door from the hallway into the bedroom, and the door closest to the front door for other rooms. This is the only doorway with which we are concerned and it will be located on the wall represented by the areas of knowledge-career-helpful people. The opposite wall (the wall farthest from the doorway) will represent the areas of wealth-fame-partnership. The actual “main-mouth-of-chi” door can be in any one of the three areas of knowledge, career, or helpful people.

EIGHT AREAS OF INFLUENCE

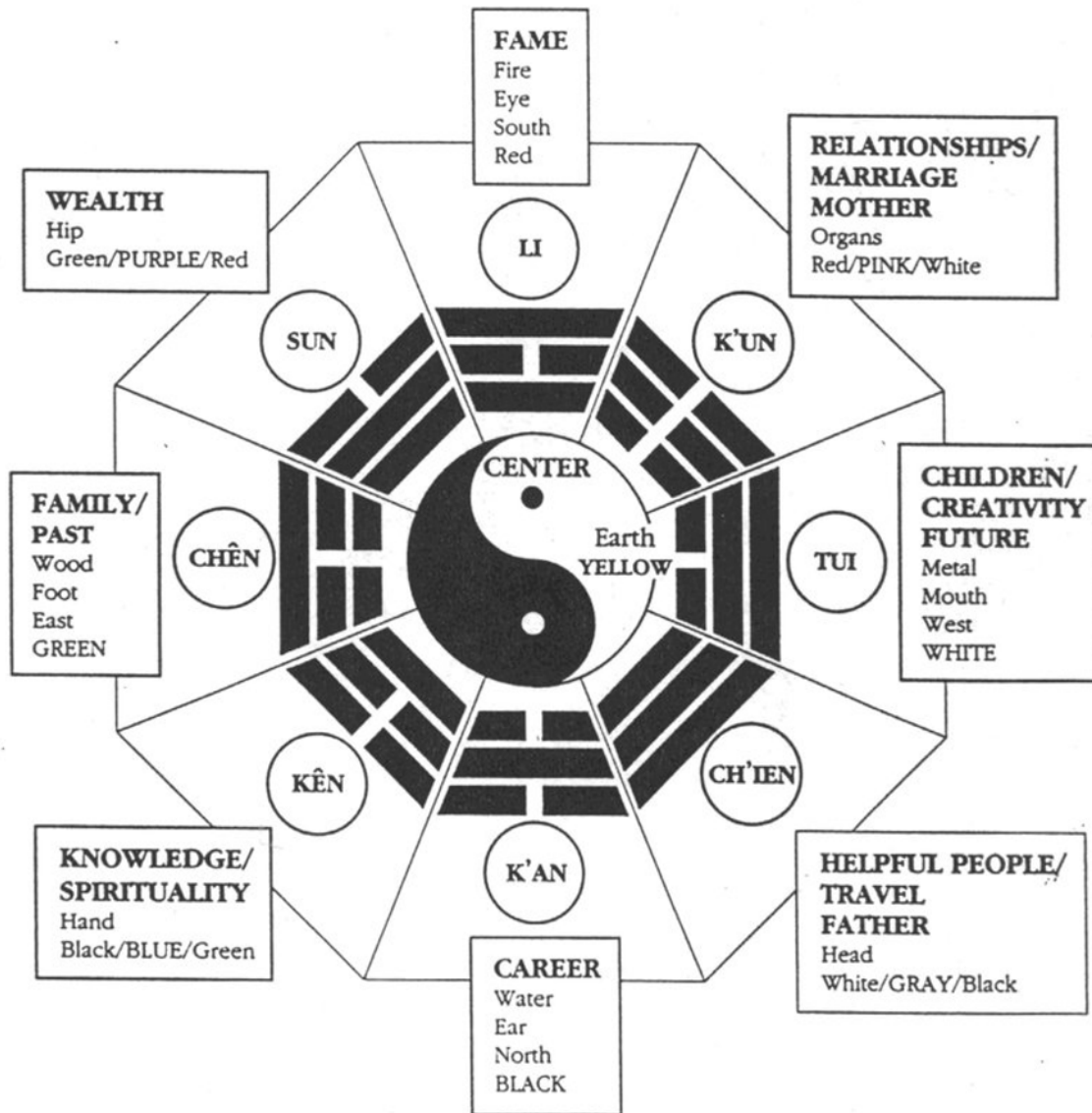
To use the Ba-Gua, we divide the larger square or space into thirds in each direction. This creates eight sections surrounded by a central area called the Tai Chi. The Tai Chi connects all the other areas, so anything that affects the Tai Chi will impact every other aspect of life as well. Here are better details of the eight areas, so you can understand the impact Feng Shui problems may have on homes, based on the location of the "life situation". The below diagram shows the primary meaning of each area of the Ba-Gua but here is further explanation:

- ✓ **Wealth** – "Fortunate blessings" in any form, not just financial; the ability to receive
- ✓ **Fame** – Your reputation and how others perceive you; your values, as well as self perception
- ✓ **Marriage** – Romantic relationships, business partnerships, connection to a Divine Source, and the ability to care for oneself: the mother and qualities associated with her
- ✓ **Family** – Relatives as well as close friends; it has to do with community in one's life
- ✓ **Children** – Things and ideas that you bring into the world; playfulness, also completing what you start and enjoying the fruits of those efforts
- ✓ **Knowledge** – Formal education as well as spirituality and self-awareness
- ✓ **Career** – Concerns the life path and social connections as well as work
- ✓ **Helpful People** – Also called Mentors/Benefactors, assistance you receive from others as well as support you provide; travel; the father and male authority relationships

EIGHT AREAS OF INFLUENCE



Another shape you may have seen the Ba-Gua map is octagonal like below:



When you are aware of the many different meaning of each area, or Gua, you gain greater insight into the potential ways that Feng Shui problems could be affecting your clients. For example, sha chi (negative energy) in the Helpful People area could show up as disagreements and conflict with a manager. Because this appears as a work issue your first thought might be to look at the Career area of your client instead of the male authority figure or mentor issues.

UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE FENG SHUI ELEMENTS

In Eastern cultures, the five elements - wood, fire, earth, metal, and water - define five different qualities of chi. They are sometimes called the five “transformations,” because each element defines a specific kind of energy and movement that can transform or change the chi of a space. Each element is associated with specific colors, shapes, and types of objects as seen in the above Ba-Gua maps. Here are the five elements and their associations, which you can easily connect to decorative elements:

- **Wood** – Upward, growing energy associated with all shades of green, columns, vertical stripes and any kind of plant or tree.

- **Fire** – Excited energy associated with reds and oranges; triangular and jaggedly irregular shapes; flames (like candles or a fireplace), lights and electricity.
- **Earth** – Settling, stable energy associated with browns and beiges and a higher vibration color of yellow; flat, square shapes; stones, brick and ceramic objects and vases.
- **Metal** – Contracting, introverted energy associated with white, gray and metallic colors (silver, gold, copper and bronze); round, half-round, and oval shapes; coins, metal, rod iron objects.
- **Water** – Flowing energy associated with blacks and blues; smoothly irregular shapes; liquids of all kinds and mirrors.

By adjusting the balance of the elements in a space using the colors, materials and shapes of objects associated with the element you can adjust the quality of the energy. Decorating with earth energy using stones and ceramics will help to stabilize and ground a space, while fire energy (reds and candles) will help to energize a space. Water energy (either in the form of real water or water imagery, color and art) enhances intuition and communication, while metal helps you tune out disruptions and helps decision-making abilities. There is a lot more detail to this subject that you can explore on your own by further reading but for now, I want you to know what they are and where they are associated on the Ba-Gua map for practical use.



YIN AND YANG

These two opposing forces - acting together - create energy, like electricity. They are in constant movement with each trying to gain dominance over the other. When one almost succeeds, it creates an imbalance and the pendulum swings the other way. One example I like is that of water. Still water is Yin and can become stagnant, while a stormy sea is Yang. A slow moving river can become Yang when it descends over rocks, becoming Yin again when it comes to rest or slows down.



INCORPORATING THE BA-GUA ENERGY MAP AND FIVE ELEMENTS INTO THE HOME

Now that you are familiar with the Ba-Gua energy map and five elements, you can use it to apply it to a home. There is a lot of confusion in Feng Shui about how to place the Ba-Gua map but I'm going to prescribe to the modern or Western view. The contemporary practice is to orient the Ba-Gua so that the lower edge (with the Career area in the center) lines up with the wall where the entry to the space is located (as the map states.) Since energy flows through doorways, you can use the Ba-Gua map for the home as a whole and then for each room as you enter in.

Note

This modern use of the Ba-Gua acknowledges the psychology of our relationship to our external environment; as we move into a space, what lies ahead of us (the Fame area) is associated with future vision, and what lies behind us (the Career area) represents the life path that has brought us to the present moment.

Hands On:

On a piece of paper roughly draw out the outline of your home and place the Ba-Gua map over it (Career side at the entrance, although the Career area may not be exactly where the door is located.) Do you have a sense of where the main areas of influence in your home are?

Consider the map in key areas of your home. These will be key places for Feng Shui cures and enhancements.

If the home or room is irregular in shape, you may have missing areas of the Ba-Gua. For example if a client is missing the Wealth corner of their home; it may be difficult for them to prosper there. How do you compensate? Define the missing area with a patio, hedge or fence, or use a mirror on that interior wall to visually expand the space.

You can use the five elements to enhance certain areas of the home and room. A small collection of objects and colors representing each of the five elements helps to balance the energy of a space. The best place for a five-element collection is in the center of the room like a dining room centerpiece.

Keep in mind that your first point of reference is the Ba-Gua energy map. For example, if a client is struggling with money issues, and wants to use Feng Shui to improve their finances, the first thing to do is use the Ba-Gua map to find the Wealth area of the home and each room.

Since you know that Wood is the element associated with the Wealth area and colors are dark greens and purples you could then add living plants/ trees and greenery to the furnishings and artwork to the Wealth areas to enhance it. Or change the color scheme to a green and violet combination.

Each element can create or reduce the strength of another, so you may want to do further study on this. Contact me, Linda Lenore, through my website <http://www.LindaLenore.com>.



UNDERSTANDING, ATTRACTING AND CONTROLLING CHI

I won't go into a lot of detail on this section because it's extensive and you can just as easily read the myriad of resources covering Feng Shui on your own. Now that you know a bit about the Ba-Gua and five elements, let's talk about Chi.

In the Western philosophy we have no concept of chi, the life force that moves in, around and through all things according to Eastern philosophies. Now whenever I think of Chi, I think of Star Wars and the phrase, "May the Force be with you!" It is the power of the sun, the moon, weather, all animate things, the living force within all human beings, and the quality of environments.

T'ai Chi movements - as a martial art form as well as an exercise form - encourages energy to move through our bodies. The practice of acupuncture unblocks stuck chi; while herbs are used to correct imbalances in our bodies - whether it's too much chi or stagnant chi. Feng Shui is often called "acupuncture for the home" since the purpose of Feng Shui is to move the chi and create balance in the environment; and sometimes the way we create balance in an environment is through the elements or Yin and Yang qualities, which we discussed earlier.

Feng Shui is about creating a positive and supportive atmosphere. If chi, which is the vital energy that flows through all things, can't get in and move around, chances are the home will feel stale and flat. It doesn't take much to liven up the chi in a home - encouraging it to flow smoothly throughout the space. Correct color here, a candle there and the space comes alive!



When the chi in and around the home is strong and fresh it supports a steady flow of opportunities and new energy in the life of the occupant. People who feel stuck in a dead-end job, have an unfulfilling relationship, or generally lack prosperity often live in homes where the flow of chi is blocked or restricted in some way.

The main “mouth of Chi” enters through the front door of the home, circulates through the interior and exits through secondary doors and windows. Since chi follows the same pathways that people use, make sure there is nothing obstructing those passages, thus blocking chi. Some of the things that can block chi from entering into the home, plus they’re staging no-no’s, are:

- Cracks or uneven paving stones in a cement path leading towards the front door
- Overgrown bushes or tree branches hanging in the path (cut them back)
- Inadequate lighting
- Unstable steps, decking or handrail
- Outdoor clutter (garden hoses, toys, bikes, and broken outdoor furniture and pottery)



FENG SHUI AND CLUTTER

Clutter! Just the words make eyes roll and a loud moan be heard throughout the room, whether I'm talking to a few or many. We all have it – some more than others. Sometime it is visibly seen and other times it's behind closet doors and in drawers. In fact, I joined the National Association of Professional Organizers (<http://www.napo.net>) in 1992 just so I would have good, reliable resources to give my clients who were dealing with clutter issues. It was through this wonderful organization that I found great friends, support teams for clients and myself who needed their services, and a wealth of information about clutter – causes, classic examples of it, and cures for it.

I've known times in my life where everything had its place and was in it. I've also known total disarray and the depression that comes with it. My observations have been that it is usually "life situations" that throw us off balance, thus creating an inability for us to deal with the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual issues of life. Then the clutter begins. My "life situations" have usually been health issues – mine or a loved one – or massive paperwork generators, like medical forms or legal documents. I feel our societal systems hit us hardest when we are weakest. How is a person to deal with life when all things come at us at once?

In staging, you may not get involved with people like this. Then again, often stagers are called in to help sell a house where a family member has passed, leaving the loved ones to clean up the home in order to sell it. They may be in a depressed state, grieving, and in total overwhelm. This situation requires compassion, empathy, possibly some counseling skills, great communication skills, and genius to pull it together. I've been involved with these more than once.

Then there is clutter formed by "negative energy". What's negative might be the person on the other side of the wall – like the co-worker next to you who always seems to argue, or the neighbor whose dog wakes you at night. It might be the sharp-edged projection in the ceiling or the strange angle where two walls meet at other than 90 degrees.

A main premise with staging is to make the house look "lived-in" without it looking too bare or too cluttered, so many of the things I would be telling my clients do not apply to staging a home. To name a few, things like: organize the closet and drawers in your bedroom; clean out and organize your kitchen cabinets; remove the expired medicines in your bathroom medicine cabinet; throw out old magazines and newspapers; and, file your paperwork. The owner will either have done most of these suggestions, if they are still living in the home, or have been removed completely as they have moved out. Yet, if some of these might still apply or be good for your own reference.

CLUTTER REMOVAL STRATEGIES FOR STAGING:

- "Welcome Chi!" – Minimize items by entrance, inside and out – make it look spacious
- Nothing sharp or pointed anywhere in, or around, the home
- Only pictures in hallways – no furniture (A few exceptions might be if the hallway is extreme large and needs movement – usually not the situation)
- No shoe racks FILLED with shoes or hat/coat racks FILLED with items by any door
- No more than 5 pots hanging on a pot rack in the kitchen
- No knives on the kitchen counter
- Minimal books and bookcases (judgment call) and leave some shelves clear
- Limit accessories to three on tables (also, odd numbers are best for most cultures)

SHA CHI AND REPAIRS

“Sha Chi” is a term used to describe “negative or harmful” objects, areas or features in our environment. These can be outside as part of the landscaping, on a neighboring property, or within the building. Often people don’t realize the effect even the most innocent appearing object or condition our surroundings might have on us. Broken items break down our self-confidence re-enforcing a sense of lack – lack of time, money, resources, or all three. Every part of a building represents a part of our body as well as a part of our life.

We are very visual; we’ve needed to be in order for our species to survive. Our subconscious sees something that’s not right and it eats away at us causing an ill-at-ease response, or dis-ease (disease). What appears to be minor will have a major long-term affect after years of dealing with something.

In staging, although there usually will not be illnesses that occur, it does make potential buyers uncomfortable on several levels – again, about which they are not even aware. A squeaky hinge on a door implies lack of maintenance. So where else is there deferred maintenance that I can’t see. It may also create in them an inability to express in words (and in writing form, an offer to buy the home) since doors represent the mouth and communication.

What Western design deems “wonderful architectural features” might actually be construed as Sha Chi by other cultures. For instance, most Western buyers love exposed beams in the ceilings. These create a heavy feeling in a room, thus a person sitting under them often feels they are carrying the weight of the world on their shoulder. Beams are part of the structural integrity of a building and when you can see the support of the post (as in post and beam construction) they are not a problem. So the “repair” in staging would be to place a tall plant or lamp under the beam by the wall. Sometimes painting dark beams a lighter color to match a light ceiling helps.



Ceilings that are too tall and out-of-proportion to the room make us feel that we are in a chimney, pulling our energy up and out of us. The first impression is “Wow!” But after living in a space like this, people use these areas less and less. As a stager, if you can create the feeling of “coziness” in these rooms by creating a covered area using fabric or large palm trees that “branch over” a sofa or sitting area, you will be planting an idea for them to do the same.

Some Additional Sha Chi Items and Areas

A 90-degree corner projecting into the room
Long corridors
Sharp corners on furniture
Outside poles or posts attacking house
Any sharp object or angle
Dark rooms
Sloped or strange angles in ceilings
Sharp glass or mirror objects

Possible Solutions

Place a plant in front of it
Alternate small items on each side
Plant in front or on top at the corner
Statue or plant in or outside by wall
Don't use the item, remove it, cover it
Bright lights and light colors
Drape fabric or hang a plant or mobile
Remove if possible

ROOM-BY-ROOM FENG SHUI – FRONT YARD, ENTRANCE, AND ENTRY AREAS

Clear all clutter and broken items

Make sure trashcans are not seen from either the front door or the street

Curved pathways are better than straight, if actually designing the area

Keep the view open - Do not plant a tree in front of the front door

Trim bushes back to allow easy access to the house without “fighting” plants or vines

Paint the front door (Good colors – black, white & red for various reasons)

Oil the hinges

Display house numbers prominently

Sweep inside and out to keep it clean all the time

Have a doormat – literally have it say “Welcome” or “Bless this Home”

Have a balanced feel to the entrance/front door - Place plants/statues by either/or both sides

Plants by the door are nice (silk or living)

Place a rug in the entry with some red in it – Round and ovals are best, other shapes - okay



Tip

Have the entrance be clean, open and inviting. This white door with pots of red and yellow flowers and several unique doormats meets the goal. It has flow and symmetry, plus it softens the hard lines of the concrete steps.

ROOM-BY-ROOM FENG SHUI

– DOORS & WINDOWS

Doors and windows play a major role in Feng Shui. They are the entrance to the home. They allow energy to flow in and out of the building.

Doors represent communication with everyone in our lives – at work, within the family unit, and people we meet each day – especially in the verbal format, but also in the written form as well; And they are the transition marked between our inner and outer worlds – the out-of-doors/interior connection and the outer world of our daily lives and our inner spiritual world.

Windows represent our vision. They allow us to see outside and connect with nature as well as to “peek” inside a structure. Also, they symbolize our intuitive and psychic visions and as well as our vision for the future – our hopes and dreams. So you see how important a role they play in our homes and within our lives.

In staging, what we see, feel and experience pertaining to the doors and windows can subliminally affect the buyers’ impression and, thus, the ultimate decision about the home.

Tip

In staging, sometimes the best thing to do with doors and windows - since we want the energy to flow EASILY through and around the home plus connect it with nature - is to eliminate any window treatments or coverings. Be careful the flow to and from a room is not blocked by furniture. Doors should not squeak or stick, have broken handles, or loose latches. These windows and the sliding door invite the view. We would do things differently if we were called in to “redesign” the home as there is too much energy leaving the room to be restful.



ROOM-BY-ROOM FENG SHUI – LIVING ROOMS/FAMILY ROOMS/GREAT ROOMS

Whether it's the living room, family room, or a great room area, we would like to accomplish several things - some of which may be in conflict with one another, especially when staging versus redesign is concerned. These are: focal point of the room, functionality, and "Armchair Position." Also, we want to easily walk into a room without having to walk around any furniture or object in order to find a place to sit.



Tip

When teaching classes, I always stress how important it is to have the home be functional – first and foremost. After that, in my opinion, we need it to be beautiful. Then we add the Feng Shui. One of the principles of Feng Shui suggests the “armchair position” – placing the person so their back is not to the door or a window, so they are facing toward any entrances to the room. You can see from this example where choices often have to be made. For instance, if the focal point is opposite the door, the sofa or chair may have the back to the door in order to look out the window.



Tip

For staging, we want the space to look expansive, yet cozy. So we might create several activity areas rather than just one large gathering space. This room has the large sitting area (2 sofas), an area with 3 red chairs at the bar (ocean view), and a game table behind one of the sofas.

ROOM-BY-ROOM FENG SHUI – BEDROOMS/BATHROOMS

As I mentioned previously, the bedroom is one of two main areas associated with our health, and, as such, commands special attention. Except when we're staging to sell the house when other guidelines need to be followed.

For redesign, we'll consider "armchair position" verses a person's best direction and avoid the "coffin position". The "coffin position" is when the line-of-sight from the person's headboard to their feet to the door is in direct alignment and is called this due to the placement of coffins in funeral parlors to allow the "spirit to leave the building to travel homeward"

For staging we usually try to combine the "armchair position" with the "non-coffin position." That means placing the bed away from the door so it is the focal point of the room, WITHOUT it being in direct alignment with the door.

Another issue in bedrooms pertains to mirrors. They are used a lot in Feng Shui (that, too, would be a separate module). I prefer "no" or "few" mirrors in a bedroom when redesigning, as we want to have the bedroom be restful. Mirrors are not restful energy as they are Yang energy. Yet in staging we want to make the room feel larger and more open, so we might use mirrors to accomplish this task.

Tip

Locating the bed on the wall away from the hallway door puts this bed in the "armchair position" and keeps it from being in alignment with the door (which is known as the "coffin position". No mirrors – that we can see – have been placed in this room. Although we might not want to use the color red based on different schools if we were working on a redesign for a client, in staging it's all right.



ROOM-BY-ROOM FENG SHUI – BEDROOMS/BATHROOMS

In my opinion and experience, the kitchen and/or dining areas are one of two locations to place our focus to achieve good health and vitality (the other is our bedroom where we need a good night's sleep). The kitchen's purpose is to nourish and nurture the body. Food is the focus – the storing, cleaning, preparing, cooking, and sometimes eating of it. The Five Elements are present within it; and when not present, creates an imbalance in the home and those who live there. This is the center of the home – the “HEARTH” of the home!

In designing a home, there are many things I'd incorporate based on Feng Shui – a module unto itself. In reality, as a stager, you work with what you have. You make it clean, bright and inviting.

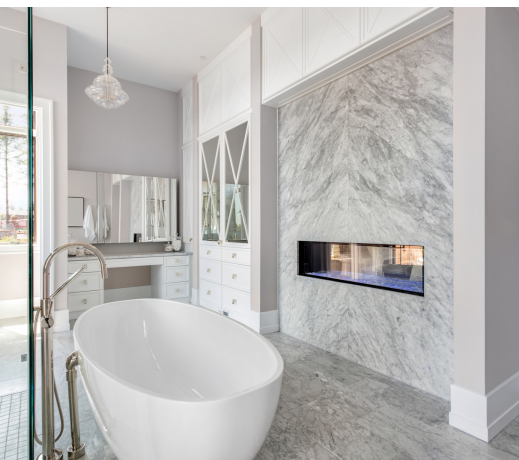
For dining rooms/eating areas, we want the same clean, bright, and inviting feel; yet have a little more flexibility with them.

If it's a formal space, we can dress it up. If there is a particular ethnic group or living style we are trying to convey, we'll change the décor accordingly.

Tip

Since both areas involve health and food, we want to bring in fresh symbols of food – fruits, vegetables, possibly even poultry – as part of the design elements. Place fruits in a bowl on the counter; hang pictures of pears or apples in the kitchen or botanicals in the dining room; display a topiary made with small apples; place a metal pig or ceramic chicken above the cabinets; invigorate a chef's pantry with a lemon branch in water; Maybe paint a vine of grapes or branch of pears (as above) on the wall; and pumpkins, squash, loaves of bread, or a soup tureen, especially during the Fall season, evoke a cozy and subliminal call to HEART of home.





ROOM-BY-ROOM FENG SHUI – BATHROOMS

As with kitchens, there isn't much you can do about the placement of it, and that is one of the most challenging issues with bathrooms. So the best staging technique would be to utilize the colors associated with the area of the Ba-Gua if possible. Henceforth, a bathroom in the wealth area would be more in harmony with the home if you use greens or purples; a partnership bathroom might be salmon; and a helpful people bathroom would be stunning in grey, black or white.

Maintenance is another quality on which we focus. Fix a gurgling toilet or dripping faucet – common sense items like that. Remove any clutter since bathrooms represent cleanliness.

Note: If you can see the toilet upon entering the bathroom, place a screen to hide it from view. In the above bathroom, a separate room was created for it (located behind the mirrored make-up table). Below, the plant and color help balance the water element in the bathroom. Green works well for family and wealth areas.

