



Monster.com: What is the origin of feng shui?

Seann Xenja: Feng shui is based on the "chi" theory. Chi is the universal energy that underlies all life. It has two complementary forms: yin, the passive, static form, and yang, the active form. The goal of feng shui is to set up your physical environment so that it will attract the positive life energy that chi is. It goes back to the "I Ching," the book of changes, the foundation of all Chinese wisdom. The "I Ching" is a book for understanding the changing energies of life.

Mc: Tell me how you first got involved with feng shui.

SX: I was always interested in the "I Ching" and metaphysics. In 1988, I was working in California as a contractor for businesses and private homes. I read an article in the paper about feng shui and I ordered the books that were mentioned. I was fascinated! Many of the building principles I was already using on the job with my clients were explained by feng shui principles. So I started trying out more of the ones I was learning about.

Mc: How so?

SX: For example, according to feng shui, if you want more opportunity, look at the path to your front door. Make it as wide as the front door. I had a narrow walkway, so I made the pathway wider and the next day I was called to bid for a big job on a hotel in San Francisco. It was my first consultation job. So, I figured there was something there. I started using the principles in my work and my clients liked them. People began asking me for feng shui advice. A salon owner said she couldn't keep her staff, so I worked with her on positioning her stations, on color and on lighting conditions at the entry. Five weeks later she called me in, opened up her cash register and took out a chunk of cash to pay me for my advice. She said "You need to start doing this as your main work." I started getting clients through word of mouth, and I started speaking and going to workshops.

Mc: What kind of training do you have in feng shui?

SX: I studied under Professor Lin Yun, a teacher from China who was at the University of San Francisco. He has written an excellent book with Sarah Rossbach "[Master Lin Yun's Guide to Feng Shui and the Art of Color](#)," (Kodansha). He made feng shui accessible to the West.

Mc: How can people implement a little feng shui into their lives?

SX: You need to look at where the chi is flowing too quickly or where it is stagnant. It's the same thing in an office or at home. For example, if you open the door to someone's home and you can see straight through to the outside, the chi goes through and out. You need to put up a screen or something to manage the chi. When you come into an apartment and you walk right into a wall, this stops the chi. You need to put up a mirror, creating the illusion of more space.

Mc: So is chi what we think of as good or bad "vibes"?

SX: In our culture we tend to think in terms of superstition -- maybe you live across from a bar and you've known someone with a drinking problem, so you get bad vibes. A certain amount of feng shui is designed to protect you from negative influences, but the end result is to give you a balanced environment that is supportive of what you want to do.

Mc: Why has our culture embraced feng shui all of a sudden?

SX: A couple of reasons. There is a general balancing of cultural influences going on in the world right now -- HMOs are bringing in acupuncturists, western technology is going to China. In modern architecture people were taken out of the equation -- it became about builders and designers. Now people are stuck in buildings that are uncomfortable, the windows don't open ... feng shui is the quickest way to balance your environment.

Mc: How can someone balance their environment when their office is a cubicle and their home is a small apartment?

SX: One way is to bring the natural environment in. Some people put small fountains or rock gardens in their offices, and plants help. People who sit with their backs to the door put up a mirror to see behind them. Apple and other companies have realized that, to do creative work, people need private offices. In your home, start with your bedroom, where you most need to be secure. Get your bed in the most favorable position, so that you have a wide view of the room including the door. In your office, position your desk the same way, so you can see the door -- you don't want to be in direct alignment with the door, that's too much chi. If the entryway to your home is narrow you can put up landscapes that give a sense of space, or a mirror.

Mc: It sounds like you can't go wrong with mirrors.

SX: Mirrors are very important, and storage is too. Watch out and be vigilant about what you keep! Manage how many things can appropriately be in the same space. Don't get anything new unless you give away something. You don't see the kind of clutter in other countries that you do in America.

Mc: Why is that?

SX: From a young age we are bombarded with messages -- buy this, get that, you aren't complete unless you have these things. It's about insecurity -- some people aren't comfortable with a simple, uncluttered space. Clutter is stagnant, stored energy, and it

has a psychological effect. You ask yourself over and over "Should I go through that pile?" It creates stress. Another important step to take is to note what your daily activity path is. Is it easy to get from one place to another? Keep your hallways free.

Mc: Where can someone train to work with feng shui?

SX: You need very good training and you must want to help people. If you are in it for the money, you can earn a good living since feng shui is very popular, but it's not just about making money. It's about creating balance and harmony. Find a good teacher, find out where and with whom they studied and for how long. Look for training in an official school of feng shui. Don't just take a weekend workshop. Field experience is crucial, too. Feng shui is an oral tradition; people apprentice with masters. It's only been taught to groups in the last few years.

Mc: So what are your days like right now?

SX: My daily routine consists of making phone calls and going to see clients. I spend two hours with each one. I look for where things are blocked or going too fast. I find out the history of the site, how life is going in it. I look for places that relate to money -- such as the back left portion of the home or office -- and I give people design solutions for those areas. I travel a lot -- feng shui is very popular in South America, I work with people in Colombia and Argentina. They spend a lot of time with family and friends, so their spaces are very important to them.

Mc: It sounds like you love your work.

SX: It's a wonderful job if you like working with people. The results happen very quickly, so it's rewarding. I have had clients who never had a relationship, I worked with them and later they tell me they're married.

Mc: Glad to hear it! Thanks for talking to me.