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This is a happy home. We really liked the couple who lived here before us and they left behind a great atmosphere.

Agneta

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# I'VE FOUND HARMONY-SO CAN YOU!

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Can Feng Shui change your life? Author and teacher Agneta Nyholm thinks so. Take a tour of the Swedish home she shares with her family and find out her secrets...



TEXT: DONNA HARDIE PHOTOGRAPHY: MATS ??? STYLING: PERNILLA CHECK



## WELCOME TO MY HOME

'I live here with my husband Mikael and two daughters Annie and Linn. Our house was built in 1928 when the main building material used was wood. As one of the most important things in Feng Shui is the use of natural materials, this makes it the perfect structure for a home! The ancient art of Feng Shui is evident from the moment you walk through the wide doorway – this plays a key role in allowing chi to flow easily. What is chi? It's the universal energy that exists in everything including us. When chi is flowing calmly around us we feel good. When it stagnates or moves too fast we are affected negatively. There are lots of ways you can arrange your home so the flow can move in the best way.'

**STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN**

'Stairs are really important in a house. We changed the staircase so it was curved – this helps the chi to flow more harmoniously through the house. Also, we kept the middle of the treads brown and the edges white. It's good to have a balance of light and dark – while white lets chi flow freely, brown stairs help slow down the chi. Don't forget, it's all about balance! You don't feel good when the chi is too fast or too sluggish either.'



**S**ometimes there are moments in your life that change your world for ever. Mine was listening to an audio tape on the ancient Chinese art of Feng Shui. I'd been working in the field of preventative health and hosting wellbeing workshops called 'Joy of Life' that advised on diet, nutrition, exercise and dealing with stress. But after hearing the advice on the tape, I realised that there was another way to improve how I felt on the inside – by making a few simple changes to my environment. Feng Shui teaches that by arranging our furniture and decor in a way that aligns with nature we draw harmony and good health into our lives.

It's been 10 years since I started, and although I will never be a 100 percent balanced person, I have as much balance and harmony in my relationships than I could ever have wished for and have had a heck of lot of opportunities come my way.

When I first heard that tape I wanted to know more but found there was very little information on the subject in Sweden. So in 1997 I went to the US and studied Feng Shui in San Diego for six months. I was so enthused by this experience that as soon as I got back home I started hosting small workshops on the subject. Then my courses grew so popular and I set up the Nordic School of Feng Shui. Now I find myself hosting workshops all over Sweden, and I've even been asked to write four books.

Do I practice what I preach? I sure do. In the wooden house I share with my husband Mikael, children Annie, 10, and Linn, five, and a flock of chickens, in the Härnösand, northern Sweden, I've put all the Feng Shui principles I've learned into practice. It took me 10 years to find a house that felt good and didn't need too many changes, but it was worth the wait!

I did move a few of the walls around to improve the flow of energy, but I really only had to change a few colours and textures as there were too many earthy tones and elements that felt too heavy. A good Feng Shui home doesn't have to be fancy. It's all about going back to basics and simplicity, keeping only the things that you like and that are useful and balancing the five elements, fire, earth, water, metal and wood.

Yeah, I know that some people are dubious about Feng Shui, but I know that it can bring such great rewards. My brother was very sceptical and he teased me about it. But one day he bought a lottery ticket and put it in the wealth corner and he actually won some money. Now he's organising his office so he's in a better power position and to reduce stress levels.

Have I finished work on my own home? Not quite – I'm now trying out my Feng Shui ideas outside. That's the thing about Feng Shui – it's empowering, you feel energised to do more.'

**HANG IT ALL**

'As you can see, I don't have much storage in my house, just the odd piece like this coat rack in my hallway. You really don't need that much storage if you don't keep unnecessary things around you. I don't believe in hoarding things like clothes and shoes. In fact, if you haven't used something for two years, just get rid of it!'





## WHAT ARE THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FENG SHUI?

Feng shui is related to the notion that living with rather than against nature benefits us and our environment. The 3 most important tools you work with in Feng Shui are the five elements, the yin & yang and the Baguan. The five elements (water, fire, wood, soil and metal), carry energies. Create balance between those elements at home and you achieve balance too. The yin & yang are poles apart which play well together, light/dark, weak/strong, male/female etc. Getting to know their different qualities helps us find harmony. The Baguan is a "map" where different life aspects have a given place. Place it on your home to see how you may influence the parts of your life you want to change. Everything is alive with vital energy called Chi. All the people, places and things that surround you are alive with the associations and memories you have about them. Your possessions are essentially 'talking' to you. Everything is connected Your relationship with the home, garden, neighbours and community are connected by chi. Chi is always changing Movement produces change. As you change, you grow and move through life, so it is important to change your environment to reflect who you are now.

## THE LIFE FORCE OF PLANTS

Cut flowers and house plants, according to Feng Shui, can help keep your house happy and healthy. Hear what Agneta has to say about them...



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I make sure there are cut flowers in my house all year round. That's one reason I love the spring, when I see the first blooms of the year – it's all about new beginnings. House plants are important to me too. I choose them according to the shape of the leaves. I avoid plants with sharp, spiky leaves. Round is best. Whatever you do don't display dead plants. As soon as they die they bring misfortune.”

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## NATURAL ASSETS

"We got the reclaimed timber for the kitchen ceiling and floor from an old house outside the city. We've painted the plain walls yellow – you can just about see the colour on the left of this picture. Why yellow? It's tremendously social. People are happier and like to chat more when they are surrounded by it."

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In our living room I keep the passage way clear and the furniture against the wall to allow the chi to flow through easily. We always keep the doors into the dining room open.

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#### PICTURE PERFECT

‘In Feng Shui it’s important to honour your family and your ancestors, as they make up the chain of humanity. By displaying family photographs in the living room I can appreciate them constantly. Which promotes harmony. It also promotes harmony if you have at least one straight line when you organise your pictures. Laying them out on the floor first helped me work out how I would achieve this – before ruining the wall with nail marks!’

#### ROOM BY ROOM

Try these fun Feng Shui ‘cures’ to increase the flow of energy in your home.

##### LIVING ROOM

- Enhance your feeling of security in a relationship by placing your sofa in a position of power with the back against a solid wall.
- Hang crystals in windows of sunny rooms, giving your home some colour therapy by bouncing a prism of light.

##### KITCHEN

- Place things in pairs in the heart of your home. Try matching salt and pepper shakers or two red plants.
- The burners on your cooker must work smoothly and be kept clean. The Chinese believe the cooker has a direct link to wealth.

##### BEDROOM

- If you don’t sleep well, remove or cover large mirrors in the bedroom.
- It’s better for your relationship if your bed doesn’t face the door. Place it where it has the best view of the whole room when you’re in bed.
- Clear out the clutter from under the bed – it could lead to disagreements with your partner.

##### BATHROOM

- Before you flush the toilet put the lid down and keep it down when it’s not in use. This ensures good health and also keeps your wealth from flushing away.





## FENG SHUI IN EVERYDAY LIFE

### LIVE WITH WHAT YOU LOVE

Imagine living exclusively with things that you absolutely love. Sort your belongings by asking "Do I love this?" If not, let it go. As you do this fresh energy flows into your life.

### PUT SAFETY AND COMFORT FIRST

Choose things that first pass safety and comfort test, and let beauty follow. For instance choose tables with rounded corners and chairs that are genuinely comfortable. Be sure you locate your self in the "powerplace" – facing the door – as often as possible.

### EXPRESS AND ORGANISE YOURSELF

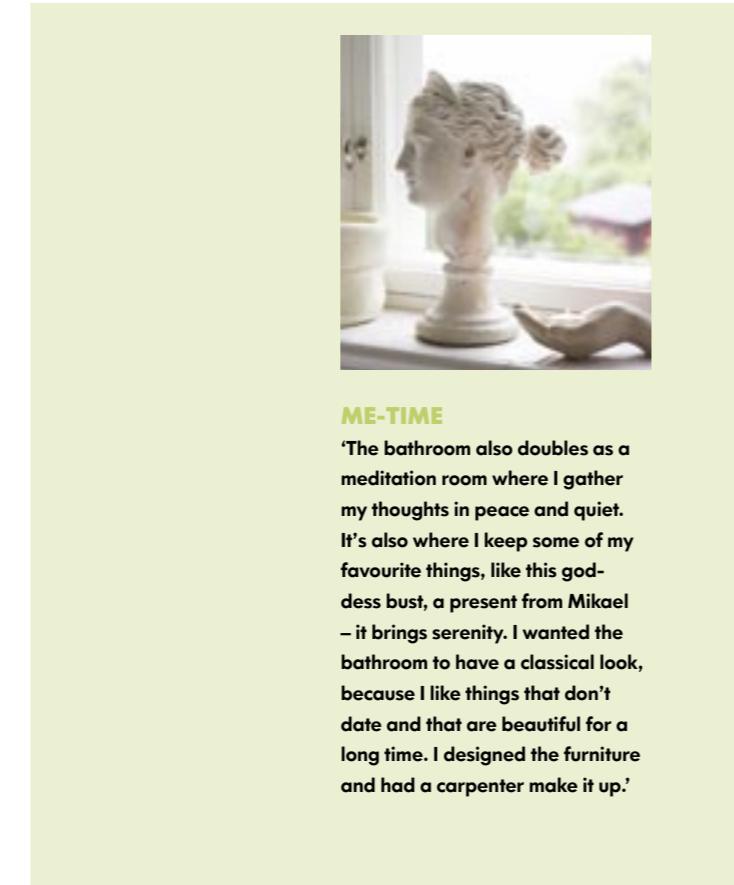
Your vital chi will expand and strengthen as you

creatively express yourself. Make sure you have a place within your home where you can truly express yourself. Expression is like exhalation and organization is like inhalation. One cannot truly exist without the other.

(Taken from Terah Kathryn Collins book 'The Western Guide to Feng Shui' Hay House. [www.wsfs.com](http://www.wsfs.com))

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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[www.wofs.com](http://www.wofs.com)  
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[www.fengshuitimes.com](http://www.fengshuitimes.com)  
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### ME-TIME

'The bathroom also doubles as a meditation room where I gather my thoughts in peace and quiet. It's also where I keep some of my favourite things, like this goddess bust, a present from Mikael – it brings serenity. I wanted the bathroom to have a classical look, because I like things that don't date and that are beautiful for a long time. I designed the furniture and had a carpenter make it up.'



### ROOM TO GROW

'Trees are good symbols in Feng Shui because they signify growth and stability. This is why Annie has wallpaper in her room with a woodland design. She also has lots of pictures of animals everywhere. When she grows up she'd love to work in dog kennels.'