



Room by Room

Feng Shui Secrets for a Happy Life

Monica P. Castaneda

Feng Shui is the ancient Chinese Art of Placement and has been in use throughout the Orient for thousands of years. The complex wisdom of the Feng Shui aspects gathered in these pages constitutes the dynamic experience of the author. An investigation of these inspired words is meant to lead you to your own understanding of this complex wisdom. The author makes no claim for absolute effectiveness. The adoption and application of the advice or information offered is solely the readers' responsibility. The author of this book does not dispense medical or psychological advice or prescribe the use of any technique as a form of treatment for medical or mental problems without the advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. The intent of the author is only to offer information of a general nature to help readers in their quest for spiritual wellbeing. If the reader chooses to use any of the information in this book as is the reader's constitutional right, the author assumes no responsibility for the reader's actions.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a core belief, in the philosophy underlying Feng Shui, that your life did not happen by accident.

Your life was designed in Heaven before you were born. It is not random. It was created intentionally, and you came here with specific purposes.

These purposes, or life missions, were not imposed on you, but chosen and agreed to by your spirit. This is why this is called your Contract with Heaven.

Your body and the circumstances of your birth were chosen to help you achieve that which you came to do. These together are known as the Seed.

Another core belief is that your best chance of accomplishing these life missions is to live in a state of happiness and health.

Though your life is not random, randomness and free will do exist. Added to that, the state of humanity as a species and civilization is what it is, so bad things can happen that could derail you from achieving your life missions.

When you experience bad turns, the dynamic Seed that was provided to you at birth adapts and responds to the current circumstances to provide you with everything you need to readjust, so that you may continue the pursuit of your life missions.

The Seed provides you with every opportunity for redemption and healing when things go wrong, or when you make mistakes.

When these opportunities arise, you are free to take them or not, exercising your free will, but people tend to be happier when they align their lives and their personal purposes with the agreements they made in Heaven.

Feng Shui is one tool designed to provide you with your best chance for happiness and success.

Feng Shui helps you live in harmony with nature and universal laws, to make things easier for you.

Feng Shui is a tool you can use to improve your life by improving the spaces where you live.

The rewards are immense.



THE LIVING ROOM

Traditionally, the living room was the area in the home designated for receiving guests.

However, in our modern life, people often choose to entertain guests outside of the home instead of inviting them in. Whereas many older homes had a formal living room, and an informal family room, most newer homes have only one area that has the function of both.

The living and/or family rooms represent our **social standing**, and our **social life**. In Feng Shui, this life area is often associated with rank.

The furniture arrangement of this room (or rooms) mirrors the internal decisions that we have made regarding our role in society. Our living spaces influence our **fame and reputation**.

People were not designed to be loners, but to thrive in the midst of a community. Every person has a role to play in that community. The more connected a person is, the better their chances of doing well in life.

This is true for both extroverts and introverts.

MY GRANDMOTHER'S LIVING ROOM

When the curtains were open, my grandmother's living room was full of light. It had large windows on one side that received the morning sun, which made it a perfect home for her lovely indoor plants. She was able to make plants thrive that usually didn't make it at that altitude, and with the cold nights of Quito (almost 10,000 ft. above sea level).

She visited with them every day, inspected them, trimmed dry leaves, sent them love. She said part of her secret was that she talked to them, and they loved her voice.

My grandmother always had two rows of window treatments: one set of sheer curtains for privacy during the day, and thicker opaque curtains to prevent the escape of heat at night.

She had three types of light in her living room. Canned light in the ceiling, lamps on the end tables, and at least one floor stand-up lamp.

With the combination of two sets of curtains and three different heights of light, she could produce many different effects and moods in her living room, depending on the occasion.

I only remember one set of furniture in her living room during the 50 years I knew her. It was of great quality, comfortable and beautiful.

It consisted of one sofa that seated four people, four arm chairs, one coffee table, two square end tables – one for each side of the sofa – and two round tables that she placed between each pair of armchairs. A beautiful matching rug united the set.

When the bulk of the grandchildren were small, she had custom-fitting covers made for the sofa and arm chairs, with upholstery fabric, so they seemed like they came out of the factory like that.

After most of the grand kids were past the elementary school age, she removed the covers to show the original beauty of her furniture.

Time passed. One day when I went to visit her, she proudly showed me that she had reupholstered her living room furniture with an even more luxurious fabric, with a design in accordance with the current trend.

At first, I thought it was all new furniture. The original fabric had started to look a bit worn on the arms, so she decided to change it before it started looking bad.

She had a collection of fine porcelain, which she placed in select spots of the living room, usually behind glass cabinets, away from the reach of the numerous grandchildren.

The living room in my grandmother's home was reserved for guests and social occasions. When relatives or close friends visited, they were usually

received in her bedroom, because it was cozy, and much warmer.

I have lots of good memories of my grandmother's living room, from when members of the large, extended family visited.

They told stories. They told jokes. They reminisced about past fun times. I remember laughing until my belly hurt.

My grandmother liked to have tea parties for her friends. During these times, the children were not allowed in except to say hello to the guests.

I could hear constant laughter in high-pitched voices as they enjoyed tea or coffee in fine porcelain china and delicious treats my grandmother had ordered – she was no cook.

As evening approached, my great-grandmother Dorinda, an introvert, would get tired of all the noise, and declare in a loud voice that she was going to start preparing dinner, in a non-subtle attempt to let the guests know it was time to go home. This annoyed and embarrassed my grandmother to no end, but there was no convincing my great-grandmother to stop doing it. About the third time she called out, announcing what she was heating up for dinner, guests would politely say their good-byes.

Once or twice a year, my younger aunts and uncles had dance parties. During these parties the furniture

in the living room and dining room was pushed all the way to the walls to make room for the dancing couples. My teen aunt Ximena invited over 50 people to these parties. My grandmother was only too happy to host them. My great-grandmother would go hide in her bedroom and lock the door until the “ordeal” was over.

My aunt Ximena’s boyfriend would be in charge of the music, collecting LPs from all friends a week before the party. They danced to pop music that came from the United States or from Spain, sometimes Mexico. They were too hip to play folk Ecuadorian music – ever. Latin music was not as popular with young people as it is today, so rhythms like the Cumbia, folk music originally from Colombia, were only played late at night, when people were already tipsy.

My brother, our cousins and I would play games and run in between the guests until late at night. It was a lot of fun!

MY PARENTS' LIVING ROOM

My father liked to tell the story, to anyone who would listen, of how my brother and I destroyed a whole household full of ornaments and expensive decorations. He would look around the house and indicate that this was the reason they only decorated with plants and a few paintings.

I have no memories of these occurrences, because they didn't actually happen. Sure, my brother and I broke some things, mostly my brother, but there was never a whole "household full of stuff" to break.

My parents had a big wedding and got many expensive gifts from guests. My mother set up her first house in style, with fine furniture, top-of-the line appliances, expensive porcelain and authentic cut crystal. My father sold it all. Well, most of it.

Around the time I was 1 year old and my brother was 2, he convinced my mother that we should all move to Canada. Since they were going to move to another country, it made no sense to keep all that furniture and these knick-knacks, he told her. My mother, my brother, and I moved to live with my maternal grandmother while he traveled ahead of us, to get a business visa and a home.

He went off to Canada with lots of money, made a large investment with a fraudulent company there,

and lost most of it. The Canadian government did not give him a visa.

When he came back to Ecuador, he moved in with us in our maternal grandmother's home, until he could get "back on his feet." Months and years passed without him making any move to get a place of our own. Then his mother died.

I was 5 years old when we moved into the home that my father received as inheritance. He then told my mother they should get practical, modern, light furniture, not the cumbersome stuff other people got. They bought office furniture.

The living room set looked like something you might find in a young doctor's private practice waiting room. It was dark orange in color, with black designs on it, uncomfortable, with a hard surface instead of cushions at the back. The sofa seated three people. There were two armchairs – just as uncomfortable.

The coffee table was oval, wooden, with a Formica top, kind of cute. Our coffee-table books were two dictionaries, one Spanish and one Spanish-English. They were each at least three inches thick. There was no limit to the amount of time my parents would spend helping us understand the multiple meanings of one word.

When my mom set up her second home, she did so with commercial-grade furniture that had the look of commercial furniture.

I never understood, as a child, what felt wrong with my parents' living room, compared to my grandmother's living room or the living rooms of other friends we visited.

Office waiting rooms are not designed for comfort, cuddling, or to make people want to stay there for a long time. My parents choice of furniture was a statement of how little they wanted visitors to stay.

My father often spoke in derogatory terms about how people arranged their homes, as opposed to his own simplicity. In a living room that looked like a waiting room he felt okay. This was furniture he could live with.

He had spent a large part of his childhood in a boarding school, like many other children in his generation who were born in small towns without proper schools. The difference for him was that no one would come pick him up during holidays.

No one would pick him up during the summer, when all the other kids went back home. He was sent there since the second grade, and never formed any strong emotional bonds with anyone at the school.

He was not a lovable child. He liked to bother people, make them feel uncomfortable. He cussed, made fun of others. There was no one to teach him to behave better. Punishments made him worse.

As an adult, his social skills were poor. He could not have a conversation where he was not the center of

attention, and resented any attempts from others to talk about other things.

When my mom set up her second living room, she opened up a box with the only wedding gifts my father had allowed her to keep. It contained three colored glass ornaments and a set of six colored glass ashtrays. Only one of the six ashtrays survived.

My brother broke the three ornaments and five of the ashtrays. I broke one ashtray.

Every time my brother broke something, he tried to hide it. When my father eventually found out, he threatened to hit us both with his belt if the guilty one did not confess.

I looked expectantly at my brother, who said “It wasn’t me.” My father turned to me and asked if I had done it, and I said “No!”

Then he beat us both. I could not understand how my brother, knowing he was responsible, would not just tell the truth, and spare me a beating, but he would do this time after time.

A few minutes after each beating my brother would go to my parents and ask to be forgiven, while I crouched in a corner, crying at the injustice.

Then they would all sit on the couch that had been designed for three people, cuddling together and declaring me to be resentful and spiteful.

Then the day came when I broke one ashtray. I left it where it was and waited for my parents to come home.

As soon as the door opened, my brother screamed that I had broken an ashtray and pointed toward it. Before I could react my father had taken his belt off in a fit of rage and lifted me from my right arm into the air, then hit me repeatedly on the thighs – I was wearing shorts.

The memories I carry of my parents' living room are filled with smoke from my father's chain smoking, and dense, tiring conversations about philosophy that he imposed on us.

My parents never offered parties and rarely had any guests other than family. When I was a child, sometimes we played table games at night, in the living room.

They organized only one birthday party, when my brother turned eight, but it was all done outdoors, in the front yard and overflowing into the street. That was back when money was pouring in, so they "threw the house out the window" for this party. The entertainment was provided by personalities that appeared on national TV. This impressed the whole neighborhood.

My parents never celebrated any of my birthdays, other than handing me a gift in the morning, in the living room.

In elementary school, when money was abundant, that gift was usually a doll or something else I had asked for. From middle school on, that gift was one piece of clothing, whichever my mother judged was the biggest necessity. It was much appreciated, too, because I only got two pieces of clothing per year, one on my birthday, and one for Christmas.

There were never any candles, any cakes, or happy birthday songs.

Once, my uncle's brand new wife brought me a cake she had baked to celebrate my birthday – that was the only time during my childhood that I got to blow the candles. She was received so coldly by my parents, though, that she never tried again.

My brother was allowed to have one dance party for his 18th birthday. During the party, my father took me aside and told me that he was grateful and relieved to see that I could dance. He had been agonizing at the thought of being embarrassed by my awkwardness.

The party was a “success.” Lots of people, lots of dancing, lots of drinking. Everyone had fun. The legal age for drinking alcohol was 18, but most people had started drinking since they were around 14 years old, at Quinceañera parties, the classic coming-of-age parties for girls in Latin America when a girl turned 15.

Back when I was about to turn 15, my father had asked me if I wanted to have a Quinceañera party.

I was surprised – and afraid of what he might be up to. I said “no.”

He insisted until I agreed to have a party. Then he offered me a car *instead*. That had been his plan all along. In fact, he had already chosen the car he wanted to buy, and needed an excuse to spend the money. It was a beautiful sports Mustang, white and red, with white leather seats.

There was great pressure to accept this car, so I finally agreed. In Ecuador, at the time, it was illegal to drive until you were 18, so my father drove the Ford Mustang around town to pick up younger women for the next three years.

When I turned 18, it was clear he considered this his car, so I was content to drive the beat-up yellow truck, the one that he'd been driving to chase after me when I was riding my bike in that country road, the day I almost flew into the abyss.

One evening, my father convinced my brother that it would be a grand idea to play a trick on my mother and me. While we were out, they knocked a lamp and a couple of pieces of furniture in the living room, turned the sofa and seats at weird angles and lay down on the floor, pretending that the home had been burglarized and they had been knocked down.

My mom and I had gone to the supermarket. When we came home, all the lights were out, and the front door was ajar. To my father and brother's

dismay, it didn't occur to us to turn on the lights at the entrance, but rather we decided to take our shopping bags upstairs, thinking that they must be in my parents' bedroom, watching TV. The master bedroom was located towards the back of the home, and you couldn't see its lights from the street.

I turned the staircase light on and we started going up. In the landing, we found the family photo that hung on the wall had been thrown off to the floor and ripped to pieces.

We continued upstairs and checked the bedrooms, to find no one. Then we went back downstairs. That's when my brother couldn't hold it any longer and started giggling. We heard my father's voice complaining that he had ruined *everything*. He turned on the light. They both roared with laughter. He had us sit down and asked my mother and me what we thought when we came home. Were we scared?

He was very disappointed to learn that we didn't notice the disarray in the living room. He wanted to know, when we came down the stairs, if we thought they were dead or just unconscious. Upon confirming that we didn't even notice them until we heard the giggles, he was floored.

He pressed on, if we *had* seen them, the way they were sprawled on the floor, would we have thought that they were dead or unconscious? What would we have *felt* if we thought they were dead?

I asked my father how the torn photograph in the landing fit into their scheme. I didn't understand. Was his plan to have us think that this was some kind of personal vendetta against the family?

My father said he didn't know what I was talking about. Did he not know that the family photo in the landing had been torn to pieces and was lying on the floor?

It seemed a light turned on in his head, and he nodded, then said, "Oh, that had nothing to do with this. I did that hours earlier and had forgotten about it. You see, I was going down the stairs and looked at the photo, and decided that I didn't like the way I looked, so I started by tearing out my face from the photo, and then saw there was no point in keeping any of it."

Neither my mother nor my brother said anything about the photo, not then or later. I wondered, if this had happened hours before they planned their living room scare, how could my brother have missed the torn photo in the landing? Why didn't he say anything? Why didn't he pick it up?

This was one more example of how people seemed to be blind to or easily dismiss the strange things my father did.

To me, that day was the first time I had an inkling that there was something seriously wrong going on in my father's mind. Something that went beyond

quirkiness or idiosyncrasies, and even beyond the emotional disturbances that came from a hard childhood. I saw that there was something broken there, some inability to even be in the world if he was not creating chaos and suffering for the people around him. He only seemed to be at ease in the eye of the hurricanes he created around himself.

The photo that he ripped off the wall that day had been the only family photo to ever hang, or be displayed anywhere, in my parents' home.

OUR LIVING ROOM

Our living room is designed for comfort and enjoyment.

The living room set is made up of a red sofa and love seat, two sofa tables, one storage ottoman that doubles as a coffee table, an entertainment center made of cabinetry, and three unique pieces of furniture with lots of small drawers in different colors of wood.

In this room we read books, take naps, play games, watch movies, and receive visitors.

Our TV is small on purpose, because we do not want watching TV to be the main function of this room.

Across from the sofa, which fits four people, we have a large wall where we can project movies on special occasions. The projection is over 8 feet in the diagonal, much larger than most large screen TVs.

We connect my tablet to a sound bar and bass speaker to get the cinematic sound quality.

I make us organic popcorn with coconut oil, and instead of butter we use a blend of herbs and brewers yeast.

Sometimes we have friends over for dinner and a movie. On these occasions we bring extra chairs from the dining area.

Breakable things are placed way out of the reach of children who are playing games or rushing somewhere. Our cotton curtains run on metal grommets so that they are super easy to open and close. Lately, there is a cat scratching post to one side of the living room, to keep the kittens away from the ottoman. We also had to move all the plants from the sun room to the living room, where the kittens spend the night, so they would not kill them. (They tried real hard!)

This abundance of plants reminds me of my maternal grandmother. I used to take care of all the plants, but my twelve-year-old has decided that all plants in the home, inside and out, are his, and he is the caretaker. Our living room is filled with beautiful memories of conversations and games, movies watched, home schooling lessons completed, interesting books, and cuddling. For my sake, the boys keep the sofa and love seat clear of toys, so that I can relax in the living room any time I feel like it.

There was a time when our living room looked like a mine field of toys. Back then, the boys and I made a deal that they would always leave a path to walk through it. You have to be able to walk through your home.

At times, it seemed I would never have a living room I could enjoy, but kids grow up, and if you teach them how to clean up and organize, they learn to enjoy a home where cozy sofas and love seats are available for a nap, or a good read, instead of

doubling as storage devices and having mountains of their own stuff on them.

Once in a while things still get messy, and that is OK. I have taught them processes and systems by which, if we work all together, we can get the house tidy in less than twenty minutes.

Sometimes I long for dance parties. In Spanish, a social reunion is only called a party if there is going to be dancing, otherwise it is just a social gathering. I dance at the gym, teaching Zumba classes, several times per week. Once or twice a week, the boys go with me. They have a lot of rhythm. Once in a while, my husband comes, too.

We sometimes have their birthday parties at home, and sometimes at places with lots of fun things to do for kids their age.

I wish I could have dance parties for them as they enter their teenage years, but I don't know that their friends would get into it.

Much of our home schooling happens in our living room. We use a variety of methods to teach the children, and, whenever possible, we try to make learning fun for them. If something can be learned better by watching a movie or a documentary, rather than from reading a book, we watch that movie or documentary.

When the boys had trouble remembering the location of countries around the world, or states in the United States, we put together puzzles of maps.

At one end of the living room, we have placed a few items for the kittens – a scratching post, a scratching mat, and a small wooden step stool they like to hide under.

For a long time, the floor of our living room was covered in wall-to-wall carpet. I was grateful for the boys to have a soft surface to fall on when they used the living room as a jungle gym. Yes, we allowed that.

As time passed, the light-gray carpet became dark gray, no matter how much time I spent trying to get the stains out. I felt embarrassed and self-conscious when inviting people over, because the carpet looked dirty even if I had just vacuumed.

We replaced the carpet with bamboo flooring when the boys became less prone to end up on the floor. For a while, we loved the clean, sleek look of our living room that the bamboo boards produced. A couple of years after this change, though, we started missing sitting on the floor, lying down on the floor or reading on the floor, so we added an area rug.

When we started looking for a **rug**, I had just replaced my old car with a new-to-me used car, and I had paid cash for it. I didn't want to get a brand new car, because I didn't want to be the person to deal with the fast depreciation of that first year. I wanted a car that was two years old.

When I realized I would have to replace my previous car, which had served me wonderfully for

several years, I put in motion Feng Shui processes and tools to manifest my **next best car**.

Once I chose the vehicle I wanted, and applied my Feng Shui cures, life led me to a car that, although of another brand, was as good as the one I had wanted to get, and much more affordable. Through a series of serendipitous events, I found the car I wanted at a great discount, and in fantastic shape! To top things off, the car was painted in the color I use for backgrounds on my website, which is also a color I love to wear. Talk about a message from Heaven!

The deal on this car was so good that I was able to pay cash for it and avoid a car loan, but to do this I wiped my personal savings account.

Finances were tight there for a couple of months, but we really wanted to get a rug for our living room, so we used a Feng Shui tool called a **wealth poster**.

On a wealth poster, you paste images of all the material things you would like to get for the household. We had not used one in a while, since we had not felt the need. It was time to use this tool again.

A wealth poster is different from a vision board in that you don't make a collage of **everything** you want in your life. You only place images of **material things** you would like to **acquire**.

We created a wealth poster where we placed images of things each family member wanted, including the rug. We chose the rug online and pasted a photo of it on our wealth poster. The rug we had chosen was, sadly, made of synthetic material, but it was the only one all four of us liked.

The next day, we met some friends at a Mexican restaurant which was close to several home improvement stores.

After lunch, we decided to visit one of those stores. As we walked into the area-rugs-and-carpets section of the store, we saw, hanging from the ceiling, a rug that looked so much like the one we had chosen online that my younger son thought we had already bought it, and they were holding it for us to pick up. When I looked at the price, I saw it was on sale for less than one-third of the cost of the rug we had seen online. I turned the rug around to look at the tag at the back, and discovered that it was made of 100% wool!

The rug complements the happy colors of our living room perfectly and is enjoyed by all. We love the feeling of the soft wool under our bare feet.

On this rug, some Sundays, my sons and I do Pilates. The boys put on a good face to not reveal when they are struggling with the moves, and only fess up to it after the session is over.

We keep many books in our living room, but no books that create clutter. If we have finished reading

The Living Room

a book that we don't plan on reading again, we donate or sell it, unless it is a book that we might need as a reference, or one that we might loan to friends.

Our coffee table is also a storage ottoman. I love that it is soft and has round corners, so no one could get hurt if they hit it when distracted.

The ottoman holds comfy blankets we use on chilly days and cotton towels that we take out to the back yard when we want to sun bathe.

Our living room used to have direct contact with the back yard. The back patio held, at some point, wading pools, sand boxes and slides. I used to cover the living room floor with old sheets from the back door to the bathroom, in case the boys came back covered in mud from head to toe, which they did often.

When the kids got interested in music, we added a room at the back, connected to the living room. This room is now their den, where they play music, do school work, and play with their friends.

My children have many happy memories of our living room, a place for enjoyment and learning.

FENG SHUI SECRETS FOR A HAPPY LIVING ROOM

The living and family room represent how you relate to society at large.

In Feng Shui, these rooms are connected to a life area we call **Fame, Reputation and Social Life**.

A well set-up living or family room is crucial for anyone who works in a business that depends on referrals.

People are social beings. In order to be healthy, happy and successful, you need to be able to relate to others in social situations, creating connections that will eventually lead to relationships, be they of friendship, love or business.

Your aspirations for a social life, your reputation and your social reach are expressed in your living or family room.

In homes that have a family room in addition to the living room, the living room is usually more formal, and used less. Often, it is reserved for guests, but in the United States the custom of receiving guests is disappearing. Most people meet acquaintances at restaurants or coffee shops.

In these homes, the formal living room has a feeling of abandonment.

You may counteract this feeling by adding beauty and value to your living room.

In Feng Shui, there is a connection between altars, the sacred, and the living room. This is perhaps because in many families children were not allowed in this room. The living room often held the most expensive ornaments and pieces of artwork.

This *sacredness* of the living room is a good thing in homes that also have a family room.

Some of my clients have shared with me that while their children were small, the living room was the only space in the home where they felt things were *not* out of control.

In homes that do not have a separate family room, the living room has to do the functions of both the formal living room and the family room, and hence, there cannot be this feeling of sacredness or separateness in the room.

A formal living room benefits from subdued, elegant colors. A classical set of furniture is much better for a living room than a more modern setup.

A setup with a sofa and two or three chairs looks and feels better in a living room than a sectional or odd mismatched pieces of furniture put together.

In the family room, it is alright to have sectionals or different pieces of furniture. There may be a comfortable sofa, one or two recliners, a rocking

chair, a bean bag chair, and other creative forms of sitting.

In a formal living room, though, it is better to have a matching set, and to avoid quirky pieces of furniture. The exception would be for antique pieces of furniture, or the products of unique craftsmanship. Any piece of furniture that could be considered a work of art is a welcome addition to a formal living room.

Wooden or tile floors are great for living rooms, as long as you have a beautiful area rug in between the furniture.

Many coffee tables double as “weapons of calf or shin destruction.” Some have protruding legs with sharp angles or curling metal bases, that are tripping hazards. Other coffee tables have pointy glass or metal corners, and families admit that at some point or another, every family member, and some guests, have gotten cuts or bruises from walking into them.

Oval and oblong coffee tables are ideal for living rooms. Rectangular tables are also adequate if the corners are rounded. Square and round coffee tables create an awkward flow between themselves and the furniture.

Round and square tables are great as end tables.

The best shape for sofa tables is the half moon or *demilune*.

Fine woods are the best materials for tables in the living room, although metal and marble or granite combinations can work well too, as long as there are no sharp corners or protruding pieces.

Fireplaces that are used need to be kept clean, with metal covers in front of the opening. A gaping opening creates a feeling of a void.

Fireplaces that are not used need to hold symbols of fire. Decorative candles can be a good solution to bring in fire to a fireplace that is never used as such.

Ornaments in shapes of pyramids and stars are also helpful.

The traditional seascape over the mantle is good Feng Shui for a fireplace that is used often, but an image of a flower arrangement (still life) or a framed mirror with no bevels are better choices for a fireplace that is seldom used.

Formal living rooms are great places for photos and heirlooms of ancestors. They are also good spots for souvenirs from trips and symbols of places the family would like to visit.

Flexibility and versatility in lighting bring new dimensions to a living or family room. Play with window treatments, and try different types and heights of artificial lighting.

When you have a separate living room and family room, it is best not to even have a TV or a gaming

system in the living room, and only have them in the family room.

If you have one room that shares the function of living and family room, then see if you can hide the TV, devices and gaming systems in a cabinet when not in use, or cover the TV screen with a beautiful piece of fabric if it is not on.

Let go of electronic devices that have become obsolete, and of media that can't be played because you no longer own the devices to play them. Let go of movies, music and video games you no longer like, or that do not represent your convictions about the world.

If you keep books in your living or family room, keep only books that reflect your world view and your beliefs. Let go of books that you know that you are never going to read again, unless they are reference books, or books you keep as loaners.

Work on your living or family room with the **intent** to create a **happy, vibrant, social life**.

The living and/or family room relate to the life area that in Feng Shui is called **Fame, Reputation and Social Life**.

Take a test to see how you are doing in Fame, Reputation and Social Life. Go to this web address to get a free **Life Areas Test**:

<http://www.ninestepstofengshui.com/9247/>