

10 Tips for Organizing Your Space and Time Using Feng Shui Psychology

1. Accept *what is* without judgment. If you have paper mounds, overflowing closets, are often running behind schedule, or trying to do too much, accept that as your reality. Change cannot happen until we see *what is*, and let go of denial or excuse making about our situation. The mounds won't go away, the closets won't get organized as long as we're not accepting things as they truly are.

2. Make a **Recognition List** of 15 things you do well, e.g., I stay current in my field; I have good relationships with colleagues and clients; I keep my car clean; I have good ideas; I have a great sense of humor. Do this to put your critical brain on a positive track. Organizing engages the critical brain, which helps us decide what to keep and what to let go off, and how to prioritize our time. However, the critical brain can also turn on us, enumerating what we've done poorly, or comparing us to others unfavorably. By getting the critical brain to think about what you do well, organizing will be a pleasurable experience.

3. Enlist a friend or a professional. Having the energy of another enables us to break through blockages and procrastination. Trying to solve the problem with the same mind that created it usually doesn't work. Another person is free of the emotions you may have toward your mounds, schedule, or closets. By working with them you get to 'borrow' their neutrality and move ahead.

4. Baby steps. Map out on paper your **Do-Over Areas** that you'd like to organize or bring in to balance. For example, keep desk clear except for what I'm working on, reduce number of emails I get, have time [__ minutes] for myself each day/week, read 25 pages a week, spend time with a friend once a week, etc. Add as many things as you like. Writing things down carries its own magic.

5. Decide what you'd like to accomplish first, second, third and so on. Write the amount of time you wish to devote to working on each line item. 'Working on' is different than finishing. (If doing these alone, limit things that are stressful to 30-minute blocks. Non-stressful things can take as long as 90 minutes. If you have someone helping you the times can be extended. It may take ten days of 30-minute blocks to clear out old files.) Having an end time for a line item provides satisfaction that comes from completion. This experience positively reinforces us to do this process again and again.

6. Pause. Light a candle, have a warm drink, do something pleasurable. If you've gotten to this point, you've made good progress. Acknowledge your forward momentum.

7. Notice with curiosity. Now that you have an overview of what you'd like to change, it's time to do some foundation work. We want to change the underlying thinking and feelings that threw our space or time out of balance, so we must get to know the root cause. For example, are you overscheduled because you're only as valued for what you achieve? Is the clutter a reflection of being sleep-deprived, people-pleasing, or a fear of missing out on something? Are you forbidden to ask for help or take time for yourself? Look at each area in your space that is out of balance and let yourself know why. The truth will set you free.

8. Body check. How do you feel and behave in your various spaces? In your office, for example: Do you feel stuck or bogged down? Are you jumping from one thing to another without finishing much? Do you lack focus and get lost mentally? Is work claiming too much of your time? Is perfectionism getting in the way of your flow? Your answers point to ratio of each of the five elements in your environment and in your psychology to one another. When one is out of balance, all the others get out of balance in very particular ways.

9. Environment check. The five elements are earth, wood, fire, metal, and water. We see them in our environment through their respective shapes and colors, and experience their affect psychologically and behaviorally*. Use this list to see how much of each element you have in your space. Which element dominates? Which comes in second?

Earth:

Color: tan, brown, peach, beige, terra cotta / Shape: square / Items: ceramics, bricks, low squat furniture, tile / Affects: feeling grounded, stable, worry, boundaries, money, practicality, overwhelm

Wood:

Color: green / Shape: rectangular or vertical lines / Items: plants, flowers, landscape depictions, silk, linen, cotton, things made of wood, columns, books, paper / Affects: mood, beginnings, creativity, growth, action, promotes change

Fire:

Color: Red, reddish purple, magenta / Shape: Triangle / Items: lamps, candles, sunlight, wool, animal prints, fireplace / Affects: passion, inspiration, motivation, joy, anxiety, completion of goals

Metal:

Color: White, ivory, silver, metallic color, pastels / Shape: round or circular / Items: gold, silver, metallic items, metal file cabinets, electrical equipment, computers, arches, domes / Affects: precision, endings, letting go, control, concentration, appreciation of beauty, grief, judgment, rigidity

Water:

Color: Black, dark blue / Shape: Wavy or undulating / Items: glass, mirrors, crystal, aquariums, pools, water cooler / Affects: thought, introspection, communication, dreaminess, ideation, inner strength, fear, compassion

** There are entire books written about this. Feng Shui is part of Chinese Medicine and is quite complex. My list is a thumbnail sketch to be used as a starting point.*

10. Finishing up. Use your **Do-Over List** to see which of the five elements you could use more of or less of in your space. For example, feeling stuck and overwhelmed at work? Start by removing earth elements from your workspace. Then add some metal for focus and wood for action. Not finishing what you start? Reduce the number of wood type things and colors in your workspace. Add some fire elements.

There is much we can do on our own simply by giving energy and attention to a situation; for that is the first step toward positive change. Continuing the process at a reasonable

pace, repeating the steps, and getting help, all contribute to making lasting change and establishing good new habits.