

# domino

## the *COZY* home!

rich colors & spicy scents  
to warm up any room

decorating secrets  
that save you time

simple recipes for  
3 easy fall parties

KITCHEN & BATH SPECIAL:  
**178** best ideas,  
sources, trends and  
new appliances



decorator  
Barrie Benson

the top 10 renovations  
that add the most  
value to your house

# The Adventuress

Our game-for-anything reporter  
**CYNTHIA KLING**  
 does everything we'd do if only we  
 had more time and more nerve.



## feng shui: the new couple's therapy

"The feng-shui people say that if we make the bed, we'll have a lot more money," I told my husband, Phil. This was a lie. I didn't really know what feng-shui masters did, but I had a vague sense it involved straightening up—and that's why I hired one: It was time for us to deal with our main marital issue. We're slob. Everything from chain saws piled in the mudroom to old shoes and T-shirts baking in the attic. The problem is, you see only the other person's piles, never your own, so we were constantly on each other's back about the same sin. It created stress in our relationship, and I wondered if the mess wasn't symptomatic of something deeper.

Besides, I kept reading about these feng-shui miracles—practitioners had done everything from calming monkeys at the Los Angeles zoo to helping

Donald Trump close real-estate deals. This Chinese art, which is thousands of years old, is all about organizing space to maximize the positive vibes—and remove the negative, niggling, irritating ones. Why not give it a try? I made an appointment with a highly recommended expert.

**the house call** On a Tuesday morning, a woman with red hair and bright-green eyes named Catherine Brophy stands at my door, surveying the entryway. (You get nervous when someone comes over to inspect your house for bad karma.) "Is there something wrong?" I ask.

"Is this your back door?" she says.  
 "Yes."

"Why do you enter the house through the back?" I'd never thought about it before, so I dodge the question: "How do you know feng shui? You're not Asian." She laughs and explains that she's the daughter of a former New York City detective (in fact, her site is [thefengshuidetective.com](http://thefengshuidetective.com)) and has studied with a gifted master for years. Her careful manner and creds mollify me—or more specifically that little gremlin in the back of my head who's been whispering "New Age fraud" ever since I booked the appointment.

Catherine pulls out a compass and starts walking slowly around the house, pausing periodically to ask more questions. "Does this dining room get used?" "Well, I host Christmas every other year," I offer.

"Dead space isn't good." The room,

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### my master, myself

Cutting-edge practitioner Catherine Brophy remaps my life based on ancient tenets of energy flow. The Chinese astrological charts she does for me and my husband offer a spiritual explanation for our clutter conflicts (I'd always thought we were just messy).





**shift energy with color**

A little paint or even just a few accessories can completely change the mood of a space. Red generates energy (for a dynamic front door). Yellow is centering. Black and dark blue, representing water, are soothing. White and gray bring a sense of purity and order. Green encourages refreshing growth.

with its sophisticated red walls, was set up to be filled with friends every Saturday night, drinking and telling hilarious stories, but it never happened and the space seemed to mock me, reminding me of my social awkwardness. (If I had a party, would anybody come? Would there be huge gaping silences? Would the food suck?)

Catherine calls from upstairs, "Do you watch TV in bed?" "Yes." Silence. "Catherine, we've been together 17 years. Give me a break." "Your physical environment is a reflection of what's going on emotionally in your life," she says gravely. I have to think about that.

**the diagnosis** The architects of great cathedrals like Chartres and Notre Dame must have believed that beautiful surroundings could prompt a change in the soul. But did a disorderly or badly done home have the power to screw up your life? I realize that the apartment of my most discombobulated friend is still full of boxes—after 18 years. Another woman, in a rocky marriage, has the chilliest bedroom I've ever seen. There seems to be something going on there, I have to agree.

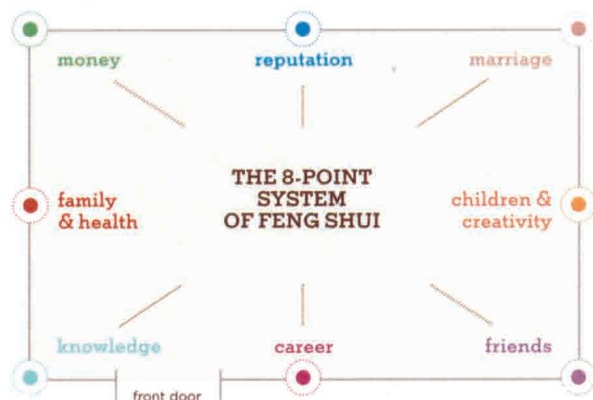
As Catherine wanders back downstairs, I know that she's about to discover the one spot I'm truly embarrassed about—our all-purpose

dumping ground. "Oh my god," she says on the mudroom's threshold. "This is your marriage area." What does that mean?

Catherine pulls out a small piece of paper with a simple diagram on it. According to feng shui, there are eight major areas in everyone's home—money, reputation, marriage, children and creativity, friends, career, knowledge, family and health (see box). Each location mirrors what's going on in that aspect of your life. Sure enough, the marriage area on the chart falls right on the junkiest place in my house. "Clean it up, and we'll clean up our marital problems?" I ask. She smiles. I look at her map and point to the money zone. "What about here?" "Put objects of value and worth there to attract more money to your life," she says. (The gremlin howls at this bit of tomfoolery.)

**this is your life on feng shui**

Homes are divided into eight segments, representing the key sectors of our lives. To see where these fall in your place, match up the front door on the map with your own front door.



**the prescription** Two weeks later, Catherine has done our Chinese astrology charts and comes back with a decorating plan to support who we really are and who we want to be (a few simple things like richer, happier, kinder, wiser, more successful...). She's also ID'd our animal natures. My husband is a snake: very sensual but ordered. I, on the other hand, am a dog: happy, social, but vulnerable and easily wounded, she explains. There are two big problems with our house: 1) We live





### chi makeover

My eat-in kitchen was a feng-shui nightmare, with energy-blocking clutter, a hierarchical rectangular table and an uncovered window.



**CURTAINS** keep vitality from flying out of the house.

**LOCK ON WINDOW**  
All exits should fasten well; otherwise, you create a feeling of insecurity. We fixed mine.

**OPEN SPACE**  
Replacing junk with a window seat in calming blue gives chi (and people) a comfortable perch.

**OVAL TABLE** allows chi to flow better than a stiff, four-sided option and has no "head," so everyone is equal.

only in certain sections of it, so other parts are atrophying. And 2) the ones we do live in are decorated in my dog aesthetic (aka gently chewed antique), not my husband's pared-down snake taste. I'd never even considered the concept of equal decorating space, let alone what my husband's style was. This was much scarier than just hiring some decorator to create her idea of the glossy life for us. A false front is something that you don't have to live up to—you aren't measuring your sex life or happiness against it. Where would we be if this didn't work? On the other hand, according to the chart, Phil could get viperous without help.

Over the next few weeks, we take the plunge—red for success at the front

## FAST FENG-SHUI CLUTTER CURES

**CLEAN OUT JUNK UNDER THE BED,** in the basement and in closets. Accumulated stuff weighs you down, and those hidden piles block energy flow through the home.

**THROW OUT CRACKED OR CHIPPED VASES** and old flowers. Fresh blooms, beautifully arranged, attract wealth. Dead plants or broken containers do the opposite.

**MEND OR TOSS BROKEN CLOCKS.** Any symbol of dead time impedes progress.

**MOVE OUT ANY ITEMS OR FURNITURE FROM BEHIND DOORS.**

Also, fix squeaky hinges (a hit of WD40 should do it). The feeling of every room is conditioned, in part, by how you enter it.

**KEEP KITCHEN COUNTERS CLEAR,** and wash dishes. Periodically clean out the refrigerator as well. This area is considered the heart of the home, and messes will affect your health and finances.

TO CONTACT CATHERINE BROPHY, GO TO [THEFENGSHUIDETECTIVE.COM](http://THEFENGSHUIDETECTIVE.COM).

door; a rounded kitchen table to replace the sharp-edged, rectangular one; and an overhaul of our money zone (the back porch and the kitchen), including power-cleaning and new paint for the furniture. When we finish, the house feels different—lighter, gentler—and the rooms seemed to support our best interest. Even more exciting, I come downstairs and my husband has actually cleaned up the kitchen. After more than a decade and a half of marriage, this is huge.

Was it feng shui at work—or simply the power of considering what you need and implementing some fresh ideas in a home that had gotten stale? I thought the latter, but then got an e-mail from the bookkeeper at an old job—I was owed a check and should send an invoice. (That's like the IRS calling and suggesting you apply for a refund). A statement came in the mail about a 401(k) I'd set up years ago but forgotten; then a phone call: I was in the will of a wealthy uncle. (Reader, I promise this is true.)

Just coincidence, whispered the gremlin, though his voice was fading fast. ::

## THE feng shui DETECTIVE

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TIMES TO CRACK EVEN THE MOST CHALLENGING CASES

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