



Meditation

Design

The benefits of a meditation practice are seemingly endless — from lowering blood pressure and decreasing the heart rate to easing anxiety and managing pain. But with the constant flow of distractions flowing through our daily lives, when we do settle down and take the time to get quiet, it's important for our surroundings to support the practice, and contribute to calming and centering the mind and body.

Setting the tone for a meditation space — be it an entire room or a cozy corner — begins with the right design

By Tammy Mastroberte

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“Magical Housekeeping,”
by feng shui consultant
Tess Whitehurst

Whether dedicating an entire room to meditation or carving out a corner in a studio apartment, using the right colors, bringing in objects of meaning, and incorporating feng shui principles can make all the difference — but the first step is selecting the right space.

“There is usually one spot where a person will feel the most powerful,” Tess Whitehurst, a Los Angeles-based feng shui consultant and author of the book “Magical Housekeeping,” tells *Elevated Existence*. She recommends her clients try out one or two spots to see where they feel “the most nourished and grounded.”

For clients who are looking to dedicate an entire room to meditation, a traditional Chinese feng shui compass reading can be applied to determine the northeast section of the home, which is the place of spiritual or higher learning, says Tamara Romeo, a feng shui designer and owner of South Coast Feng Shui in San Diego. Feng shui uses the power of the earth to determine the way life force energy flows, which is done by using a compass, she notes.

“First you determine the facing of your home, which is whatever part faces the street, and then walk to the center of the house with a compass to determine the northeast corner,” she says. “I have a two-story house, so my northeast corner is the garage, which is obviously not the best space. But just upstairs from my garage is one of our guest bedrooms, and that is the room I was always drawn to instinctually.”

She recommends clients find a space closest to the northeast as possible, but if this doesn’t work, the next best thing is to follow their intuition to a serene space that makes them feel supported.

“The feng shui way is to find a space closest to the northeast, but it could be the tiny, 2-foot-by-2-foot space between the sofa and the wall. It’s about what makes you feel comfortable and supported. There is no rule-breaking,” Romeo explains.

When dealing with limited space, Whitehurst recommends choosing a space in the living room rather than the bedroom, which is more about

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intimacy or sensuality. However, if that is the only space available, she says the far right corner when standing at the door of the room is known as the relationship corner, and it could be set up with a “romantic theme, bringing in rose quartz or pictures of Krishna and Radha,” who are Hindu deities representing divine love, she notes.

Once the area for meditation is determined, setting an intention in the space is another practice Romeo recommends to her clients. “They should come up with an affirmation or sentence to put the intention into the space,” she says. “For example, ‘This is a peaceful and serene space that supports my spiritual journey,’ and then meditate in the space to place the intention.”

COLORS, CANDLES AND MORE

After the room or area is chosen, the next step to designing a meditation space is to choose colors, fabrics and objects to support the practice of meditation. While these details vary depending on the likes and dislikes of the individual, there are some universal principles that can be applied.

“Whether you have a meditation room, or are using a space in your living room, you want to make sure you are sitting in a place where your back is not to the door,” Whitehurst explains. “You want a peripheral view of the main door to the room because humans feel unsafe when they don’t feel in control of their surroundings, and it’s more grounding.”

She compares it to the president of the United States and the desk placement in the Oval Office. “His desk is facing the opening of the door with space in front of him,” she says, explaining if this isn’t possible, putting a mirror on the altar will help a person feel more connected and more likely to meditate.

It’s also important to have open space above and on the sides of where a person is sitting. “You don’t want any shelves over you or anything hanging over you — it’s a subconscious thing,” Romeo says. “You want an open space above you and on the sides of you. Also, if you have a wall behind you, it will make you feel more supportive than sitting in a totally open space.”

Salt lamps bring the elements of both earth and fire to the space.



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The lighting in the room is also an aspect to consider, and overhead lighting should be avoided, says Whitehurst. Instead, she recommends ambient or low lighting such as a salt lamp, candle or even twinkle lights on a tree.

“I don’t use a lot of ceiling lighting,” agrees Bethany St. Clair, an interior arranging consultant and space planner based in Oakland, Calif. “I like to bring the light down low to soften the room using a simple candle or low, background lighting.”

Romeo also recommends a salt lamp because it brings the elements of both earth and fire to the space. “Earth is where you feel grounded and attached to Mother Earth, and the energy that builds earth is fire,” she says, explaining salt lamps are made of earth, and the element of fire is introduced when they are plugged in.

Furthermore, when it comes to colors, most people prefer earth or skin tones from the lightest beige to a chocolate brown, Romeo says. If a client doesn’t like earth tones, serene spa-like colors such as celadon green or light blue often work well. “I would stay away from anything citrus or glaring, as well as anything gray black or muddy like army green. Those colors don’t feel as good to most people,” she explains. And while she wouldn’t paint the walls red when the goal is to create a relaxing room, she does recommend bringing the color in with a red candle, a scarf or a pillow.

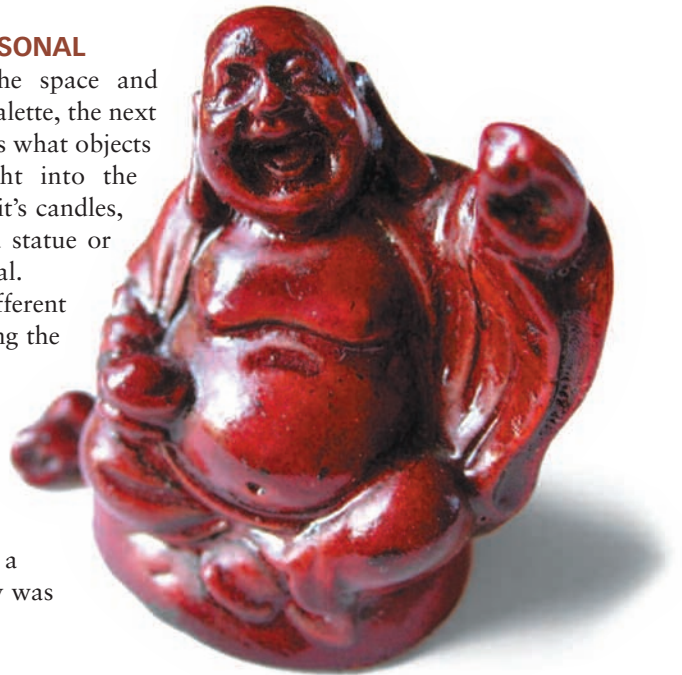
However, no matter what, each person must connect with the design and feel comfortable in the space. For example, St. Clair worked with a medical doctor at Stanford who felt very connected to Hawaii and preferred shades of green, while another client liked deep purple.

“I also had a couple who had been to Indonesia and liked everything light, so we used a lot of rattan and natural fabrics,” she says. “It’s about the space itself and making sure one is comfortable.”

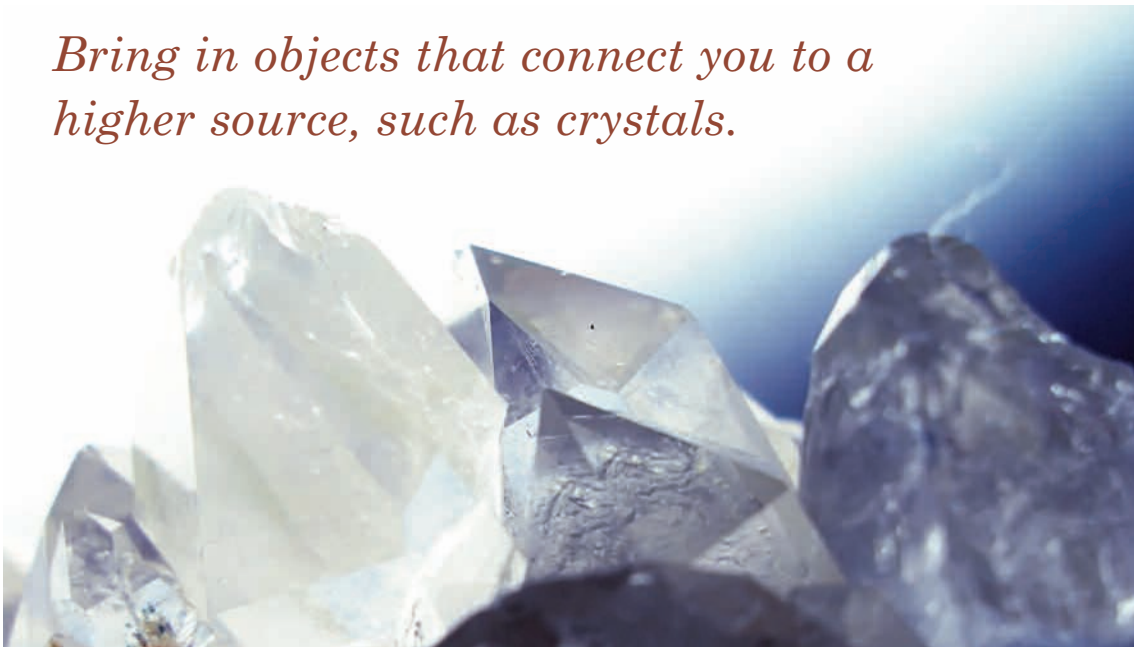
MAKING IT PERSONAL

After choosing the space and selecting a color palette, the next thing to consider is what objects should be brought into the room — whether it’s candles, incense, a Buddha statue or an Amethyst crystal.

“We all have different ways of interpreting the divine and our spirituality,” says Whitehurst. “I had a client who was a scientist and very spiritual. For him, a picture of a galaxy was what worked.”



Bring in objects that connect you to a higher source, such as crystals.



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Tips for Designing a Meditation Space

DO apply feng shui principles like using a compass to find the northeast corner, which represents spiritual or higher learning, and keep a peripheral view of the door.

DO set an intention for the space and meditate to place the intention there.

DO use earth tones or serene spa colors like light blue or green for walls.

DO bring in objects that connect you to a higher source, such as a Buddha statue, plaques with affirmations or crystals.

DO use a candle to bring in the element of fire.



DO NOT use overhead or ceiling lighting.

DO NOT bring a lot of clutter or distractions into the space.

DO NOT meditate with your back to the door.

DO NOT paint the walls a bright citrus or red color.

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First, a person should select objects that make him or her feel spiritual — a Buddha or statue of Jesus, images of nature, or whatever makes them feel connected to Earth or a higher power, says Romeo. It's also about engaging all five senses, so she recommends bringing incense or essential oils such as vanilla or lavender into the space.

Also, while keeping the space as quiet as possible, some people like to bring in instrumental background music or singing bowls — and for those who live in a busy city like New York, adding in a white noise machine might be a good choice, Romeo explains.

“I like to use things with affirmations in a meditation space, such as a stone engraved with the word ‘gratitude,’ or a stone plaque with a quote from Buddha like ‘What you think, you become,’” she says. “It’s also a fantastic place for crystals. The earth element is anything stone, so ceramic, pottery and crystals are great.”

But no matter what objects, colors or scents fill the space, one universal practice is eliminating clutter from the area, including any altars being used. “Sometimes altars can feel a bit cluttered, so it’s better to have one focal point and a few items that are inspiring,” says Whitehurst.

Keeping the area clean, free of dust and filled with minimal clutter is essential, agrees St. Clair. “I always recommend having as little clutter as possible in a meditation space because every item in there brings in energy,” she notes. “Making sure everything is dust free, clear and clean brings peace to the body and relaxes it a bit more.”

Ultimately, whether designing a big space or a small nook, it’s about creating an environment that enhances and assists with the practice of meditation. “Even if you are in a studio apartment you can find a space — get a cushion or use a section of the sofa,” Whitehurst advises. “You can get your iPod, light a candle and put a crystal out on the coffee table. You can take it all out and put it back so it’s a ritual that gets you ready for your meditation.”

After all, when it comes to meditation, it’s not all about the place you choose to sit, “it’s about the space you hold within yourself,” says St. Clair.

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