

The recession is treating Priya Sher well. The feng-shui expert, who counts Mayfair property owners, art galleries, restaurants and investment banks among her clients, is booked up six weeks ahead. "I've been very busy recently helping people who've lost their jobs or who want to reactivate their careers," she says, from her Regents Park practice. "I've also had quite a few people contacting me because they need to sell their house. Maybe it's been stuck on the market for quite a while and they wonder why it's not selling – I can help them work out what's going wrong."

An ancient Chinese method of aesthetics, feng shui is concerned with harnessing the energy – or Qi – in a home, optimising its flow around the property and ensuring the five elements (water, fire, earth, metal and wood) are equally balanced. Each part of a property represents a particular family member or area of life, so the theory is that if energy in that space isn't balanced, it will have a negative effect on the person or subject concerned.

"I recently did a consultation where the client had been in the property for two years and the husband had got quite sick," says Priya. "When I went to do the consultation I could tell what the problem was – the north west part of the house, which represents the father and the male leader, was where the toilet was situated, so energy was draining away there."

Placing plants, which represent the wood element, in the bathroom helped slow the draining of energy in the room, as did keeping the toilet lid down, apparently. Similarly, the southeast area of a house represents finance and money and the north career, so if these parts of the house contain a bathroom or rubbish bins then energy could be draining away.

# Mystic makeover

"Often in the UK our houses aren't rectangle or square but L-shaped, so the southeast or north area might be 'missing'," says Priya, whose consultations start with an examination of a property's floor plan. "If that's the case, I'd need to find ways to activate that part. For activating money, I'd put a water feature in the southeast section of the house, since flowing water represents money coming in, or a mirror, which doubles positive energy. If I need to strengthen an area, I place a Buddha or dragon there."

The front of a house is particularly important for those concerned about their good fortune. The front garden represents your future, so must be kept well looked after and tidy, while the front door is considered very significant in feng shui. "If you place two plants outside, on either side of the door, that will attract good energy to come in," says Priya. "Make sure it opens smoothly and that the hallway is clear of shoes or other clutter, so energy can enter and circulate."

Priya herself was born in India and became a convert to feng shui after her sister fell ill with chronic fatigue syndrome. The family was advised that the problems had been caused by the bad energy in the house and, once they moved, they found her illness disappeared. A management consultant for KPMG, Priya was so inspired that she left her job to study feng shui under Master Chan Kun Wah, and has now been an adviser for 11 years.

A consultation with Priya costs from £400 and begins with her first standing outside the property with a compass to see which direction



**FENG SHUI CONSULTATIONS ARE BEING COMMISSIONED FOR EVERYTHING FROM LUXURY HOUSES TO INVESTMENT BANKS. LOCAL EXPERT PRIYA SHER EXPLAINS HOW TO HARNESS POSITIVE ENERGY IN YOUR HOME**

negative energy might be coming from – for example, from nearby power stations, cemeteries or main roads. She then spends between two and six hours inside the house, assessing where energy is lacking in each room, and afterwards gives a full report detailing how to balance the property using different furniture, artwork, mirrors and colour schemes.

"One place I visited, for example, a member of the family was having problems with anger," she says. "I found that the room representing that person had an excess of fire energy in it – they had painted it red and the furniture was red. I told them to repaint it and think about buying a sofa in brown or cream, which represents earth, to balance the fire energy."

Feng shui doesn't promise to solve all our problems, but according to the Chinese the environment we live and work in accounts for 33 per cent of our luck, the other two thirds being our heaven luck (astrology and birth) and human luck (self-motivation and the people we mix with). "At least if we can get the feng shui right," believes Priya, "we're some of the way there."

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