

FIND YOURSELF AT HOME



A CONSCIOUS APPROACH TO
SHAPING YOUR SPACE AND YOUR LIFE

EMILY GROSVENOR

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PHILOSOPHY

**CONNECT WITH
THE MYSTERY AND
POWER OF YOUR
HOME**

THE INFINITE POSSIBILITIES OF HOME

Your home is the center of your world. It is a place of specific, wise energy that welcomes you after the long journey of your day into a lush setting of ritual and messaging, deep reflection and dreaming, gathering and exchange, letting go and trusting something outside of yourself. Home is a place of great power and purpose—as sacred a location as any major historic setting or pilgrimage site. When you shape it consciously, it shapes you back.

When you see your home like this—not just as a shelter or a safe space but as an essential collaborator in your life—everything changes. Mundane tasks become magical. Any adjustments you make to your rooms, big and small, carry an air of personal transformation. To paint the walls becomes a radical, spiritual act. Switching up decorative objects creates nothing less than inner transformation. Even walking through the front door feels like arriving at a destination of profound significance. The more you interact with your space with curiosity,

reverence, and a spirit of collaboration, the more you will feel “at home”—both enjoying and in love with your own life.

The Empowering, Transformational Home

Most people consider home to be a place of comfort and safety. This has never been more true than during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during the period when schools and companies shifted almost entirely to remote learning and work. Suddenly, without warning or preparation, our homes became shelters that had to support all our needs. This shift forced us to reconsider what our homes mean to us—and how they might need to continue changing to support us in the face of future challenges, including climate change. All in all, these events have reminded us of the power of places. We can no longer treat our homes as pretty boxes to disappear into. To live our best lives, we must reenvision our homes as empowering environments that embody who we are and aspire to be and that support every aspect of our lives.

When home is a place of empowerment, it becomes a playground to explore our ideas of self, a message board that cues us to aspirational goals, and a story where we choose which parts of our past to let go of and which to carry forward. In addition to meeting our basic needs for shelter, our homes can also fulfill our needs for serenity, creativity, meaning, and purpose. Our homes hold infinite possibilities. They aren't just places to keep our stuff. They can be living, evolving embodiments of the story we choose to live.

This book details the methods I use in my own home and with clients to create transformational environments that shape



identity, behavior, and purpose. I developed these ideas and approaches during my years working as a design journalist and as a private consultant and from a lifetime of “reading the room,” which began during those house tours of my youth. Throughout, I include my own stories about the incredible impact of collaborative spaces as well as the stories of the people I’ve worked with. I feel immensely lucky to be able to share these tales, and I’ve sought to present people who represent a wide range of backgrounds and beliefs (while changing names and identifying details to preserve privacy). My hope is that, with this advice and these examples, you can discover how to create your own collaborative home space for yourself.

Becoming Conscious of Space

In order to transform your home into a great collaborator in your life, you must first become conscious of how your space affects you and approach any changes with deep awareness. This means moving beyond questions of function and aesthetics to assessing your space at the level of energy and overall feel and by learning some of the tenets of environmental psychology and feng shui. Becoming conscious about your home means developing a lifestyle that supports the person you want to be and making design decisions aligned with your big-picture vision of life.

Becoming conscious means noticing what is and is not working and then sitting thoughtfully with possible design solutions that could change the atmosphere. This has nothing to do with buying luxurious, expensive furnishings or trying to emulate a space that belongs to someone else. It doesn’t necessarily require massive, full-on makeovers or rebuilding portions of your home. It’s not about following of-the-

moment trends or styles to impress the masses on Instagram. It also doesn't mean scrolling online shops until your eyes go blurry.

Instead, it means giving yourself the luxury of self-reflection and the time to feel the effects of the changes you are making. Often, it means working first with what you have, such as by rearranging spaces to increase energy, ease, and happiness. It means evaluating changes for how well they enrich human environments, not necessarily whether the décor fulfills a certain style. Becoming conscious of how spaces affect you is a slow dance over time: As you consciously transform your home, your rooms will hum with their own essence and vibrancy.

Some people are already energetically open. They have a natural ability to feel and shape a space. They can tell immediately and intuitively whether walking into a room feels welcoming and harmonious or off-putting and disjointed. But anyone can learn how to notice, direct, and shape the energies within a room. And anyone can find it hard to evaluate their own home, or they can get bogged down and overwhelmed by the unending options available in the market. Whatever is true for you, and whenever you hit a stumbling block in this process, be gentle with yourself. By consciously developing a

will steadily improve.

Change Your Environment, Change Yourself

We are creatures existing in place, characters informed by our settings, so it follows that changing our environment will impact who we are. You may have already experienced the life-changing moment when shifting something within your home shifts something

within you. A big or small alteration, especially anything that brings more beauty, function, and flow to a space, inspires a sense of ease and delight. The spirit exalts, the heart rejoices. The nerves settle, the soul sinks in.

The more we align our home with the person we want to be, the more our home becomes our essential collaborator: A place of mysterious power and messaging that can send us back into the world with strength and purpose.

Through the way we design our home, we can gain a sense of power and confidence that nudges us toward our goals and inspires the activities, feelings, and social interactions we desire. The more we experiment with placement, color, materiality, and other design tools, the more we find ourselves “at home”—that elusive feeling of serenity and arrival.

This sense of harmony is the premise of feng shui and dovetails nicely with the field of environmental psychology, both of which I’ve studied with great interest. I will never tire of trying to understand the mechanisms behind how space affects us. Each year, research by environmental psychologists unearths new insights—whether the effect of clutter on our mental states (it’s bad, no surprise there), how an office setup affects what people accomplish in the workplace, or more evidence of the never-ending benefits of our connection to the natural world.

That said, intuition is our most powerful compass and friend. We don’t need to read a bunch of empirical studies to discover for ourselves how our own settings influence us. Nor, as one of my feng shui mentors once told me, do we have to know or care how energy work actually functions in order for it to work. Some people want to run for the hills

when they hear talk about “energy” and “vibrations,” but they can still follow their own inner voice, aesthetic sense, and sense of self to improve their home. My approach is to blend the emerging science of environmental psychology with the ancient practices of feng shui to make home-shaping a pursuit anyone can feel comfortable practicing and have success with.

Be Prepared for Change

By shifting the energy of our home, we are inviting change, but that can still be difficult. Further, we can’t control the results (wouldn’t that be nice!). Energy work for the home can be unpredictable—that’s part of its charm—and so we have to respond to what life throws at us with ingenuity and adaptability. For instance, we might create a family altar hoping to repair a relationship with an aunt, but we find our interactions with our brother start to flourish instead. We might ask for more respect in our current job and end up getting another offer entirely out of thin air. Shifting energy always seems to work out in our favor, or achieve something positive, but outcomes aren’t always what we imagined. There is rarely a straight line from before to after.

Though the outcomes of energy work cannot be predicted, our intentions when shifting energy matter. When I go into a client’s home, I take a good look at what’s going on in the environment (what I call “reading the room”), and then I make suggestions for changes based on what I know about the client’s story and their current struggles. My own sense of style and the specifics of what *I* would do are unimportant. I’m just an idea person helping someone meet and overcome their problems by suggesting possible design solutions that might shift things in the person’s favor.

I've seen amazing results with home energy work. I've had clients get new jobs out of the blue and start partnerships after a long, romantic dry spell. I've also seen difficult, decades-long relationships end after spatial changes were made. I've helped small-business owners attract new customers by reworking the entrance to their offices, and I've helped a homeless shelter shape the behavior of young people coming in off the streets. Once, after an older woman finally redid the bedroom in a home she had lived in for forty years, she abruptly moved eight states away in order to start over. Did the new bed, carpet, and paint cause it to happen? Of course not. Did the changes spark a necessary identity shift that allowed her to take one of the biggest leaps in her life? Perhaps.



THE FIVE STEPS OF FINDING YOURSELF AT HOME

My goal is to provide you with the tools to make any place you live, any space, feel like “home.” This is a feeling you can cultivate whenever you want or need to. By applying the tenets of environmental psychology and by noticing and respecting your intuition for what feels authentic and resonant, you can use décor and spatial design to cultivate a more meaningful life. In that sense, I hope you approach reading this book as a way to give yourself permission to prioritize the big picture of your life.

I have divided the process into five steps (which align with the book’s five parts), but these are not meant as a list of prescribed tasks you must accomplish. There is no single “right way” to turn your home into an essential collaborator in your life. Everyone’s situation is different, and whatever the current state of your house, it is already collaborating with you.

Through these five steps, I will show you how to use the tenets of

to foster an empowering conversation with your living space. Not every suggestion may work in your space or for who you are and what you want. While some suggestions can involve spending money, nothing *requires* you to spend money; this process can be successful with any budget. You get to decide what ideas to pursue and how to pursue them.

Here are the five steps:

Step 1. Connect with the mystery and power of your home

Train yourself to see your home as a place entwined with your own energy and story. Reimagine your home as a partner in all you do.

Step 2. Prepare your environment for your story

Set the stage for shaping your story at home. Clear your environment of past energies and set your intentions for your space based on the person you'd like to become.

Step 3. Discover design tools to cue your behavior

Take simple actions to send yourself desired messages in your space. Create a color story, use visual cues, and incorporate primal urges like scent and animal symbology, and adjust the space where you do your most important work.

Step 4. Bring your aspirations into your space

Using a feng shui-based home energy map, connect your home's layout to your personal aspirations. Using this, you can make intentional changes in different areas of the home to produce shifts in confidence, type of energy, and openness to change.

Step 5. Take your purpose into the world

Discover ways to ask for what you want and put your mission out in the world.

How to Deepen Your Practice

Finally, at the end of each chapter, I've included reflective questions to help you deepen your understanding and awareness of both your space and yourself. Consider these “Find Yourself” sections as conversation starters between you and your space. Each chapter's questions and exercises can help you re-envision your home and foster your collaborative relationship with it.

Throughout this book, proceed gently and give yourself time as you align your home to suit your purpose and your path. Remember, making your space into your home is an ongoing process. Your relationship with your home is one great, long, continuous conversation.



FIND YOURSELF



When was the last time you felt at home?

What do you see your home as: home base? A playground?

A jewel box? Choose a metaphor that captures the role you want your desired home space to occupy, and write it down somewhere you can see it every day.