

re: Melanie Stokes, feng shui organizer

A year before relocating with her husband to Louisville, Navy veteran **Melanie Stokes**, 54, started an organizing and feng shui business. In its seven years here, it has caught on as Intuitive Living, 4403 Saratoga Woods Drive, www.intuitiveliving.net, (502) 417-7123.

Wandering workplace: "People say, 'Oh, you work in your home,' and I say, 'No, I work in your home.' ... Everybody's different — no one approaches organization or feng shui the same."

Organizing basics: "I try to give my clients the best bang for their buck. If we're sorting papers, I'll give them a pile, stacked neatly, all facing the same direction and just say, 'Divide it into keep or toss.' Then when we go back through 'keep' and they end up tossing more."

Same for clothes: "If I'm in someone's closet and we're going through clothing, I don't let them touch it. ... It just breaks up the process." Instead, she pulls clothes out as clients classify: keepers, maybe, toss/donate.

Get moving: "I really try to get the process going quickly, being very mindful of people being on different speeds. ... I try to be very mindful of their speed and how quickly they can make those decisions."

Some times: "I do have a free 30-minute phone consultation" to talk about specific needs. "Some people say they can do it — physically, do it themselves — they just need direction and help getting started."

Feel no shame: "One of the big obstacles is that people are ashamed to have somebody come in and see their disorganization. Don't be ashamed! The idea is to make it better for you."

Educational: "It's kind of educating — having people look at their stuff and understand why they do have it, why they are holding on to it. ... (People want to) reduce stress, and you can control that by getting yourself organized."

Feng shui: Clients asking for feng shui only usually have specific issues with things like career, love or health. "I'll go through their space and assess — whether it's home or office — us-



By Chris Hall, The Courier-Journal

Melanie Stokes of Intuitive Living said people are sometimes ashamed of their disorganization. ... It literally means 'eight diagrams.' It's like a tic-tac-toe diagram that stretches" over every room and surface."

Believers: "Most customers have done some reading (on feng shui) and realize that it's intense. ... They get a little interested in it and realize, see, the potential," but want professional help.

Cynics: "I do have very dear friends who always try to challenge it. They'll say, 'Why is so-and-so so successful and they don't even know feng shui?' I'll tell them, 'You don't have to know it to have it working for you. ... You don't have to believe in it to have it work.'"

Hand in hand: "The reason that I think the feng shui and the organizing go hand in hand is that you first have to clear your clutter before you can figure out how to make your energy flow. ... The clutter sucks the vital energy out of you."

In the Navy: "I went in the Navy young; I was 19. ... I made advancement very quickly and (in eight years) my last duty station was at the Pentagon."

Military brat: "I was kind of raised in that light — of organizing, being organized. ... I'm one of eight children and we had rotating chores. ... My chore that I had all the time was the dining room and the living room, and one of the things that my parents allowed me to do was move the furniture around."

— Paula Burba

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