

creating a sacred space

Are you often so focused on the needs of other people that you ignore your own needs? Do you *want* to nurture yourself by quieting down and/or practicing mind-body activities but never seem to have the time or location to do so? By allocating an area in your home or yard as a sacred space, you can give yourself a place for quiet reflection.

Try these tips for creating a space that works for you from April Durrett, IDEA contributing editor and award-winning health, fitness and lifestyle writer who is based out of San Diego.

[1] Benefits of Having a Sacred Space

All people have a sacred space within themselves, according to Michele Hébert, co-owner of Harmony Ranch in Glen Ellen, California, and master teacher of yoga and meditation. “We can easily get lost from this inner space because of the chaos of the outer world,” she says. “An *external* sacred space helps you find the sacred space *within* you to recharge and get grounded.”

Leslie Levine, a life coach in Northbrook, Illinois, and author of *Wish It, Dream It, Do It: Turn the Life You’re Living Into the Life You Want*, says that devoting an area to your inner self will help you slow down, which can benefit your body and your immune system. “In addition, people are always looking for permission to take care of themselves,” she says. “A sacred space helps you do that. It’s an excuse to take time for you, and it’s a place where you can go to shift your mindset.”

[2] Designating a Space

Where can you put your quiet space? Wherever you want. You *don’t* need to set aside a whole room. The space can be anywhere inside—for example, in an alcove, on or near a bookshelf, in an attic or basement.

“It can be a corner of a room or just a small space with a meditation mat,” says Ellen Speert, MEd, registered art therapist and director of the California Center for Creative Renewal in Encinitas, California. “Look for a quiet place with little through traffic. You can also make a wonderful space outside. You could put a fountain on a patio, place a plant on a balcony or outline a designated space with a circle of stones.”

[3] Elements to Include

Put items into your space that are personally relevant and sacred to you, says Speert. Use these ideas as food for thought:

- altars
- photograph(s) of special people, special places, someone you love (alive or dead) or a spiritual teacher
- candles or incense
- special cloth
- pillows
- a fountain
- religious symbols or worry beads
- statue of Buddha or Quan Yin (the female Buddha)
- a book of quotations or a written prayer
- shells, flowers, rocks or plants

“Going out into nature for many people is a sacred experience,” Speert says. “That’s why bringing photographs or images of places like lakes, mountains and beaches into sacred spaces is popular.”

using your quiet space

What can you do in your sacred space? You can just sit and reflect. “Sitting with your legs crossed, back straight, palms facing up, perhaps on a pillow for support, is a great reflecting position,” says life coach Leslie Levine.

Other possible activities include

- meditation or relaxation;
- yoga, tai chi or qigong;
- singing or listening to music;
- reading inspirational writings.

Skeptical about the benefits of spending quiet time? “Give it a month and see what happens,” suggests Levine. “You don’t need to spend hours in there. Perhaps set a goal of a few minutes and increase that time in the future.”

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