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Body, Mind & Spirit

Harmonious Environment: Beautify, Detoxify & Energize Your Life, Your Home & Your Planet

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Lingham Press
978-0-9779633-0-0
(December 31, 2006)

"Have you ever entered an indoor or outdoor space (like a beautiful park) and suddenly felt peace and joy? You were entering a space filled with positive life-force energy," the author writes.

According to Hartie, that's the ultimate goal for readers of her debut work. It's a handbook for those wanting to achieve a healthier, happier lifestyle in harmony and balance with nature.

She's the creator of the practice known as Harmonious Adjustments, which combines the following: principles of Feng Shui (interpreting a particular space), a central belief in various life energies (yin and yang), the four elements (earth, fire, water, air) based on birth dates, color schemes, and good design. Hartie, a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College and the Parsons School of Design, has also been a chef and floral designer, and cites her twenty-plus years of research and life experiences.

Using first-person narrative, she takes the reader through the book's four parts, the first enticingly entitled, "Banish the Ugly from Your Life." Hartie goes beyond the normal cleaning and organizing tips found in other how-to books: she delves into the history of unsafe products. For example, eight European countries banned lead in interior paint in 1909; it took nearly sixty years before the United States followed suit.

The author takes numerous products (from air fresheners to toilet bowl cleaners) to task for their smorgasbord of unpronounceable toxic ingredients, offering instead a list of eco-friendly alternatives. In the chapter "Eating for a Harmonious Body," she shares fifteen pages of favorite recipes.

The book's second section highlights earth-based spirituality ("about following your own intuition") and the Medicine Wheel, used by Native Americans to deepen the

understanding of self. The four temperaments types are explained here: for example, earth people (the color green) are patient.

Hartie describes how it's helpful to use the Bagua Map (the sacred octagon used in Feng Shui, which contains nine Guas representing such life areas as career, love, and health) to enhance the different rooms of a person's home. These are perhaps the most fun and easily read chapters.

She talks about chi, the life force energy or breath of life within everything, and how it needs to flow through one's home unencumbered. According to her philosophy, adding elements of air (wind chimes), water (birdbath), fire (outdoor lighting), and earth (plants) enhance the life force.

Part three describes putting these pieces together; part four is a forty-five-page list of resources, including websites. Seven pages are reserved for note taking.

"Harmonious Adjustments" provide principles to help individuals get started on their creative journeys. As Hartie notes, the practice "is based on the belief that if it feels and looks good, it is good."