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Banishing Stagnant Energy From Your Home
Lynette Evans

"The more enlightened our houses are, the more their walls ooze ghosts." - *Italo Calvino*

Got rooms your dog refuses to enter, birds bashing themselves at your windows, guests who begin to cry when they enter the dining room? Italian critic Italo Calvino was lecturing on "Cybernetics and Ghosts" in 1969 when he spoke the words above, but San Francisco psychic Sheldon Norberg and his clients are convinced that many of our houses are haunted, if not by ghosts exactly, then by the negative energy of previous tenants. "Every house maintains the energy pattern of whoever has lived there," says Norberg. "If you don't take certain steps to move their energy, you won't ever feel at home." And that's where Norberg comes in. A graduate of San Francisco State University in psycho-spiritual healing and the Academy of Intuition Medicine in Mill Valley, he specializes in removing the dead, or negative, energy from buildings. He does not refer to himself as a "ghostbuster."

"I'm not trying to bust anybody," he says. "A lot of my job is not about ghosts; it's about stagnant energy." He calls what he does "energetic house clearing." "Working with energy is one of the things I happen to be better at than most," Norberg explains. "To clear the energy out of a house takes some grounding in channeling energy; using energy to change things. What I do is a meditative process." Although he sometimes uses chimes or gongs people have in their homes, he maintains that his methods are "not very ritualistic. I create an order of steps and there are always a couple of things I do first to ground the structure and put up protection. Sometimes I wait before I go into a room where someone has died.

"I always know I need to look at who's lived there recently, who built the house, what the house has been used for historically, if people have died there, what their death was like, what kind of family situations, where that energy sits in the house." Things don't have to go "bump in the night" for a house to be haunted, for want of a better term. "I do a lot of work with people who have had deaths in their houses - cancer, AIDS - people who have had divorces and whose spouses are everywhere in their house," he says, noting that some people have lived in a home for several years "and haven't unpacked. They don't feel there's room for them to move into their own space, to own it."

Although in American culture, people may "deny there is anything affecting them, that there is anything metaphysical, external, that's making them uncomfortable," Norberg says even people who don't know he's worked on a house feel a difference, as do animals. "I know it sounds airy fairy," says Debbie Jacobs, a senior buyer for United Airlines who met Norberg at the academy in Mill Valley, but "after my mother passed away, (her house) felt full of tension and spirits. I felt that I was never alone."

Jacobs' dog evidently felt the same. "I have a yellow lab, and she was totally freaked in the house," says Jacobs. "Before Sheldon arrived, the dog was so upset I had to put her in the car." After Norberg had been in the house awhile, meditating, Jacobs said her dog fell asleep in the living room. "There was no crying, no franticness; that was amazing." "If you don't believe me, believe my dog," she says.

Norberg says houses where people have died can retain a lot of their energy. "The spirit is looking to finish its business or holding onto its unfinished business," he says. Computer company owner Dia North felt that tension in her husband's childhood home after her mother-in-law was murdered by a carjacker. "There were cold spots in the house," she says. "People would come in and start crying. Odd things were going on."

North found it impossible to clean the upstairs room that had been her mother-in-law's. "When people leave their bodies suddenly, in violent acts, they're not ready to go," says North, who called in Norberg. "She had lived in the house for 50 years," she says of her mother-in-law. "She was murdered. Sheldon helped her go over to the other side." When North's husband came home that evening, she recalls he said, "The house feels really calm. You've done something, haven't you?" Guests, too, feel the difference, and she has not only been able to tidy the upstairs room but has made it into her office.

For Diana Willard of El Cerrito, the problem was a bird that kept flying at her windows. She had tried putting up scarecrows and pictures of hawks, but the bird "would sit on a branch and start shivering all over, looking at the window and then suddenly make a dive for it." Norberg meditated inside the house, she says, then sat in the back garden and concentrated on the window. "The bird came back and started shivering all over," says Willard; "then about the time she would have lunged at the window, she flew off." End of problem, and as an added bonus, Willard found that a middle bedroom the family had called the "black hole of Calcutta" because it was dark and depressing, seemed suddenly lighter, brighter and bigger.

How would Norberg prove to a skeptic that he's really clearing negative energy out of a house and not simply sitting there for a few hours, then taking the homeowner's money? "I'm kind of result-oriented," he says, comparing his field to that of some well-known, but equally mystifying Eastern medical practices. "Acupuncture deals with energy in the body. Energy runs in certain channels, and when that energy is blocked, the organ begins to break down." The same thing happens in houses, he says. "A lot of what I work with feels magnetic, feels electric. When I go into a room where someone has died, it feels dead, feels stagnant, feels brown; rooms that feel physically unpleasant, feel like there's pressure on the top of your head, like the ceiling is four feet lower, they just aren't normal. Lots of people have strangely cold rooms."

Fellow psychic Marilyn Pope, has had Norberg work on two of her homes. "There are several levels of energy going on around us all the time, and the unwanted energy is what he moves out. He's really powerful."

Maybe so, but being of the same mind as that other Examiner writer, Ambrose Bierce, who wrote in "The Devil's Dictionary" that ghosts are "the outward and visible sign of an inward fear, " I'm not advocating psychic housecleaning. Still, it is known that amulets work: If a person wears a snake charm, believing the charm will prevent snakebites can alleviate the fear that would have attracted the snake. Perhaps when people feel more at home in their houses after Norberg has done his thing, it's because of their belief that the negative energy has been removed. Perhaps the energy really has been removed.

Hey, whatever works.