

# INNER BALANCE

The new book that delves deeper than décor to show how our homes are the key to living well



There's nothing like two months of self-isolation to highlight the parts of our homes that aren't bringing us joy. From uncomfortable sofas to messy spaces, if there was ever a time to address our problem areas, it's now. Happily, a new book by former ELLE Decoration Editor-in-Chief and interiors expert Michelle Ogundehin (left) is on hand to help. *Happy Inside: How to Harness the Power of Home for Health and Happiness*

encourages us to think of the home as 'a holistic organic entity' and offers practical guidance on making the most of what we have in order to find inner calm and outer contentment. One chapter, entitled 'Energy', explores how to boost the flow and mood of your space. In this extract, we've pulled out some tips included in the book's four-step 'Clear, Cleanse, Combat and Continue' approach.

## CLEAR: WHAT TO GET RID OF

**Toxic cleaning products and bleach** Ditch noxious chemicals and anything that warrants a toxic warning flag for natural alternatives. Baking soda and vinegar are fantastic for cleaning oven trays.

**High-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint** Paint 'off-gasses' (gives off low levels of chemicals) over time, not just during application or while drying. Thankfully, effective, long-lasting yet healthy VOC-free paints are now widely available. (Read our guide on page 78.)

**Mould** If you have mould anywhere in your home, you must get rid of it and tackle the cause as a matter of urgency – it gives off airborne spores that you definitely do not want to be inhaling.

**Plastic** Choose natural materials over man-made wherever possible, especially with respect to the storage of food, as some of the chemicals used to create plastic are known to leach directly into food or water.

## CLEANSE: WHAT TO CLEAN UP

**Clean cooking** The more you can steam your food (from veg to fish), the better in terms of locking in nutrients.

**Clean water** Sadly, a lot of the water supplied to our homes is not as clean as we'd like it to be. I use a ZeroWater jug at home, which has a filtering system that guarantees to remove 99 per cent of all total dissolved solids (TSDs).

**Clean products** Check the labels of any lotions and potions that you use, from make-up to handwash, and avoid nasties such as parabens and sodium lauryl sulfate.

**Clean materials** Be mindful of the content of varnishes, sealants or upholstery that may have been used on furniture, especially vintage pieces.

## COMBAT: WHAT TO INTRODUCE

**House plants** Research by NASA has revealed that they can remove up to 87 per cent of air toxins within 24 hours, as well as turning carbon dioxide into oxygen.

**Natural beeswax candles** Burning these candles is reputed to release negatively charged ions into the air, which may keep common allergens such as dust and dander at bay.



**Himalayan salt lamps** There is little scientific evidence to support the claims that salt lamps purge the air of toxins by attracting impurities and neutralising them, but they are beautiful to look at as they emit a wonderfully soothing pale pink light.

**Essential oils** Used for millennia to purify and heal, some oils are also believed to neutralise airborne bacteria. Using an essential-oil burner in your home is the best way to experience the positive effects – and stick to organic oil brands.

## CONTINUE: HOW TO KEEP THINGS MOVING

**Clear rubbish** or clutter from around your front door. Try to keep the direct line from the street to your front door completely clear, so that you can walk in or out without having to navigate a mountain of obstacles, garbage or unnecessary clutter.

**Small square tables are banned.** They are a nightmare for your shins and small children, and their very angularity cuts off space rather than encouraging flow.

**Clean your windows!** It's easy to overlook this simple way of admitting more daylight, and thus living energy, into our homes.

**Keep pet beds and bowls as clean as your own.** Use a different scrubbing brush, though, and invest in decent grooming tools, and a lint brush so you and your home are not perpetually covered in shedded fur.

*Happy Inside: How to Harness the Power of Home for Health and Happiness* (Ebury Press, £18.99) is out now

