

Letter from the Editor

In February, we celebrate the most important holiday of the year: Chinese New Year. The lunar cycle comes full circle and we take joy in renewal, rebirth and give gratitude for all the abundance and love that surrounds us. It is a time for big meals, cleaning and looking back to honor those who have passed on their wisdom to us. Fireworks abound, resounding with reminders to be thankful and occasionally filling the sky with colored starlight that turns our glances Heavenward, where they belong. We get the far away look and think of our place in it all, remembering our mortality and therefore the preciousness of this fleeting life...

In Chinese medicine, almost all illness is thought to be a form of stagnation. Our bodies and spirits are moving, changing energies. The Sage's oft-quoted wisdom that dead things are rigid while living things remain flexible comes readily to mind in discussions of illness from a traditional perspective. In order to stay healthy, our system must move and change. When energy gets stuck, we fall ill. In a way, this is a fundamental truth that even Western modalities acknowledge: that if our digestive system stops absorbing energy and removing waste, we'll be unhealthy. Obviously, the circulatory system must circulate! While this may seem clear on the physical level, it is also important to remember that these principles apply just as poignantly to heart and soul; we must move and grow, lest we find ourselves stagnating spiritually. Actually, the idea that the mental/emotional, physical and spiritual should be compartmentalized is perhaps itself not the healthiest outlook, and definitely is antithetical to the wisdom of the old Chinese sages.

Chinese New Year is therefore always a time for renewal and change. Spring couplets are put on the door to welcome the new growing season—new life and inspiration to cover old trails and reveal new paths that lead to never-before-seen horizons... Taiwanese people buy new clothes and do a thorough cleaning of their homes to move energy around. Here at the center, we believe in the connection between outer and inner work. "After the ecstasy, the laundry", as the Zen saying goes. We must be healthy physically and spiritually to be *healthy*, in other words!

The space in which we live is a manifestation of our mind, and it encourages that kind of mind. A clean space comes out of a pure mind and succors further purification, while a cluttered mind creates a messy living space, which then incites more clutter, etc. Here at the center we take the invitation for change seriously, and use the New Year to clean more deeply—moving furniture and sweeping in those spots you rarely can



reach, dusting our shelves (which means taking down lots of tea jars and cleaning them one by one), and making significant changes to inspire transformation in the coming year. In that spirit, we asked a great friend and master woodworker to make a new central altar to hold a very special, antique Kuanyin we found in Japan. Our Ming Dynasty porcelain Kuanyin is difficult to move, but we feel that having her in a different spot for just one year will bring a lot of shifting, moving energy to this place. And the new one is just as special!

We'd like to pass on the invitation to clean your space more thoroughly and move your furniture around. Remember: it was all your old habits and last-year minds that organized your space, and did so in a way that furthers that kind of mind and life. If you are to make way for a year of new growth and experience, you'll also need new organization, both internally and in your physical life. What a great opportunity to see what your room looks like with things all re-organized. Why not? You can always move them back if you don't like the new configuration, and you'll then have had the chance to clean underneath, getting rid of all the stagnant energies in your place!

And as you may have noticed, we're doing that with Global Tea Hut as well: moving and changing, letting go of clutter and refining this magazine to be the best Tea magazine ever! This is our year, of abundance and restructuring both! We hope to spend this year building the right structures needed to hold larger amounts of energy!