EXERCISE FOR CREATING EXTERNAL SACRED SPACE IN YOUR HOME

Many cultures have small altars in their homes or gardens as sacred places. As a child, I remember the old corner bookshelf in the upstairs hallway. In the spring we would create a shrine for The Blessed Mother on the top shelf and keep tiny glass vases filled with lily of the valley, violets and lilacs petals in front of my sister’s blue and gold plastic Virgin Mary statue. At Christmas, we’d put one of our several family crèches there. I loved kneeling on my pillow on the hard wood floors with my sister and brother and saying our night-time prayers front of our little altar.

Objective: Having a specific space in your home which represents your commitment to your personal growth work supports your work.

Materials you will need: An attractive colored cloth or scarf, or a tray of a size suitable for holding items which represent your circle of self-work. Objects, pictures, candles, small bowl or decorative box, or any items that represent or help you focus your work and strengthen your commitment.

Directions:
Choosing a space: Take some time and walk through the rooms of your home, with the intention of choosing a room that has a space for you to set up a small area where you can keep, a journal, pictures, objects which represent the Circle of Self Aspect you are working with, etc. This not need be a big space. Members in the past have used a shelf on a bookshelf, the top of their dresser, a small end table in their study. One member, feeling she did not have any place in her shared apartment, created her space in a dresser drawer in her bedroom, and would open the drawer and use it also as her meditation space. Another member set up the window ledge over her kitchen sink. In her life, an area of family conflict had been that no one ever washed up the dishes except her. She relayed that even though it wasn’t a totally private space, having it on the window sill above the sink, really shifted her negative feelings about ‘kitchen work’ to more positive and grateful feelings. She also said that as she kept a symbol for her symbolic wisdom counsel in her window ledge altar, she would have a mental council with them while doing the dishes!

Cleansing your chosen space: Once you have chosen your space, clean the area. Cleaning has two forms. The first is to literally make sure this area is clean of dirt, dust and clutter. This need not apply to the entire room, just to the area you will declare as your sacred space. The second kind of cleaning is a cleaning of the energy/feeling of the space. You are literally going to ‘clear the air’ of the space. There are several ways to do this kind of clearing suggested below, though these are certainly not the only methods of air clearing. You might also use aromatherapy oils, candles, water or crystals, but these are the two methods am most familiar with. If you have a method you like, use it, and please share it with the Circle of Self® community.
SMUDGING is the method for clearing a space which I use most frequently. I use either mountain or white sage, and at times will use cedar or sweet grass. This is a practice taught to me by a Native American Teacher and I pass on the instructions as they were taught to me. You can learn more about this cleansing practice by checking out either of these links: http://www.snowwowl.com/nainfosmudging.htm or http://www.asunam.com/smudge_ceremony.html

1. Generally a clay bowl, shell or natural burn-proof object, shaped in such a way that it can hold small pieces of sage or herbs, is used as a receptacle. This object should be used only for smudging. This object should be able to handle a small amount of heat.
2. Bring your attention to the intention for cleansing your sacred space. Give gratitude for the gifts the herbs and the ceremony. Take a small amount of herb (a couple of 1 inch pieces of white sage are ample for smudging a small room) If you have purchased a sage wand, I do not recommend lighting the wand, but rather taking small pieces of the sage from the wand, as it can be difficult to extinguish the wand once lit. Put the pieces in your bowl.
3. As you light the sage, state your request for the cleaning of the space. The sage should burn briefly and then the flame should go out and the sage will smoke slightly. Move the bowl in the four directions, the divine above and the earth below. If the sage is still smoking, set it in the center of your sacred space until it extinguishes on its’ own. If the sage smoke becomes to strong for you, you can extinguish the smoke by moving the pieces of sage apart, or by gently breaking off the smoking part of the leaf.
4. Express your gratitude for the herb for its’ gift of cleansing.

SALT CLEARING is a method for cleansing that is very useful when you do not want to have any smoke or smell in the room.

1. Tools needed: A box of Sea Salt or Epsom Salt, 90 proof or higher rubbing alcohol, an aluminum pie pan, pot holder, matches.
2. Assemble your items in the room where you will be doing the cleansing. Put a scant ½ cup of salt in the center of the pan. Take 1 cap-full of rubbing alcohol and pour in the middle of the salt.
3. Carefully light the salt/alcohol mixture. It should flame with a blue flame. If it does not light, it is probable the alcohol does not have a high enough proof. Do not pour on additional alcohol. Make sure you have lit the salt in the same spot where you poured the alcohol.
4. Using the pot holder, move the pan around the area surrounding your sacred space. When the flame goes out—which can vary from a few seconds to several minutes, the cleansing is finished. Dump the salt mixture in a toilet.
After you have cleared your intended sacred space, take some time to arrange the items in the space. You might think of this as a personal altar. Every object placed on this ‘altar’ will have a specific meaning for you. In my sacred space I have representations of my Symbolic Wisdom Council, persons I am praying for, symbols of the work that I am currently focusing on, a candle which I light when I am in prayer, a picture that represents my inner safe place, and a bowl in which I put small pieces of paper upon which I have written an issue that I am asking for clarity or resolution or inspiration. I also have in my sacred space personal items I use for my own spiritual practice. You might wish to take a picture of your sacred space that you can carry with you when you are away from home so you can connect with this space at any time.