

Sacred Space

Turning Your Home into a Sanctuary

Jill Angelo

“This little book can help change the world.”

~Marianne Williamson

Praise for Sacred Space

“This beautiful book by Jill Angelo is a gift and an inspiration. Combining spiritual insight, practical advice, and an unforgettable story of personal awakening, SACRED SPACE is a must-read for anyone who longs to turn their home into a temple, a healing place, a refuge of wellness in a stressful world.”

~ **Mark Matousek**,
author of *When You are Falling*,
Dive and *Ethical Wisdom*

“Jill Angelo draws you into Sacred Space by sharing her story, heart and wisdom. The gift of this book is the rich content of soulful exercises and concepts matched by such a depth of humanity that exudes from sharing her sacred space. Any space is surely to become a sanctuary after this experience.”

~ **Simran Singh**, author of
Conversations With The Universe
& Publisher of 11:11 Magazine

“Every reader of this book will be inspired with Jill’s intuitive sense of “home”. She intimately let’s you get to know her and then leads you on a journey of discovery. Each chapter gives you an understanding of balance, Feng Shui, earth consciousness, and the importance of spirituality within your four walls. This book is well worth the effort for making your home a sacred place to return to. A must read for all who seek the nurturing of space.”

~ **Diana Ostreko**,
owner AmazingSpace Design

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By

Jill Angelo

Sacred Space
Turning Your Home Into A Sanctuary
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For Andrew



Thank you for the push

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Part 1—Your Space

Sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again.

~ Joseph Campbell

Introduction

*And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight in a bud
was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.*

~ Anais Nin

The book you are holding is a testament to the fact that you never know just where your life is going to take you, that heaven's path for you is seldom easy. But if you give yourself enough time and you pay attention to the nudges you get along the way, you can see how it all fits together, how both your good and bad experiences have opened doors for you and how heaven has put people in your path all along the way to help you see and hear what's important in life.

I never dreamed as a college student that I would be where I am now, twenty years later. I was hard at work on a degree in Nuclear Medicine with clinicals in front of me when something in my gut told me that was not a good choice after all. On a whim, I answered a classified ad for a general office job at a fast-growing company in my native Chicago. Within days I had started down this new path, working for a small family-owned business in a niche manufacturing industry. I wore multiple hats as many do in small businesses and I flourished. The more I could take on, the happier I was.

I quickly threw myself into learning all about the business. As I grew with the company and it thrived, I was flying high, pulling in great income and being told that I was the heartbeat of the company. Very heady stuff—a feast for my very left-brained self.

I had also met an IT genius named Richard who played in a rock band on the weekends. I didn't think life could possibly get any better. Our relationship was energetic, passionate and, like most relationships, had its occasional storms. But after five years, we both knew where we wanted our lives to go. Time to buy a house, get married, have kids, add in some more dogs, and live the American dream together.

And we almost did just that.

I remember a house that I passed many times over the years. There was something about it; it had a charm that I adored. So when the *For Sale* sign suddenly showed up in the yard, it took us no time to set up an appointment. A flowing and spacious brick split level on a street lined with old ash trees, it had just the space we needed: 3 roomy bedrooms, a family room, living room, 3 bathrooms and an attic office for Richard to work and produce music in. It needed lots of interior work, but in truth we couldn't wait to get at it.

We made an offer, settled on a price in two hours, secured the financing and in no time the keys were ours. A crew of Richard's friends who worked in the construction business showed up the same day we moved in. While the movers were unpacking the truck, the construction crew was busy taking measurements. The day after we moved in, our family room was reduced to studs, an open ceiling and foundation floor.

I'd always loved interior decorating and design, so I took time off from work to settle on the colors, patterns and textures that would help me transition from my fast-paced job in the manufacturing world at day's end and bring life to this new space we both called home. I selected neutral earthy colors tones and hues, window treatments, linens, dark woods, light fixtures, hardware, appliances and comfy furniture. It would be a comfortable, welcoming space—our forever home—where our children would grow up and our grandchildren would come to visit.

There is a saying that goes like this: if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. Two weeks after we moved in, Richard and I had a romantic evening and he had a surprise in store. Getting married was in our immediate plans but he wanted to make it official and ended the evening by asking me to marry him. It was loving, simple, unrehearsed and even a little awkward. I choked up when he bent down on one knee. I said, "YES!" and fell into his arms. We went to sleep that night with our hearts full of the dreams and hopes for our wonderful future ahead.

The next morning, Richard awoke agitated and moody. He felt out of sorts to me. "It feels like the other shoe is going to drop today," he said, "like something is going to go seriously wrong and I'm scared."

This was completely unlike him and his words chilled me to my core, but I did my best to reassure him, hugged him extra tight and off we went to work. At the office, I jumped into my usual routine and before I knew it, it was lunchtime.

Richard called to tell me he was on his way home to work with the construction crew in our family room. His voice was light and

happy, and this morning's dark foreboding seemed far away. We both said, "I love you" and hung up.

Moments later my world was shattered. Richard was dead, killed in a five-car automobile accident.

I was reeling with shock and grief. I asked the question we all ask when a tragedy strikes. Why did this happen to me?

My family had never been very religious. My brother and I were raised Catholic and attended Catholic school, but outside of the occasional wedding or funeral, we did not attend church, so there was no religious doctrine to console me.

I remembered the times Richard and I would talk about life's challenges and I would so often ask that same unanswerable question: *why did this happen to me?* And he would say, "Have you no faith Jillbe? God is always here."

But I couldn't find God anywhere in this and my shattered heart wanted an explanation. I sought out a priest in my new community. If I could just find God, maybe I could understand what happened. But his answer left me feeling hollow. There are, he said calmly, mysteries in life we will never understand.

I located my favorite religion teacher from high school and told her what happened. And in a very calm voice she said, "Do you remember what I taught you Jill? God is everywhere. Begin there."

Richard's words echoed again in my head.

Slowly the comforting words I had learned as a child began to

sink back into my head and heart. God was everywhere, I didn't feel as alone or abandoned as I had. Family and friends were a wonderful support in my physical world. But it was the spiritual realm I wanted to know more about.

A friend put me in touch with an incredible psychiatrist who specialized in grief. He gave me the very safest place to fall, one where I could explore to the deepest depths the paralyzing fear for my future. In those early days, I would have slept on his floors if he had let me. I wanted to work my way out of this pain and into this new realm that was before me as quickly as possible. I was intrigued; this unbearable pain was opening new avenues and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't rush the process. "Surrender" became a new word in my vocabulary.

And as the saying goes, when the student is ready, the teacher appears.

I continued to work at my job by day and seek peace for my spirit at night. I had nearly taken up residency in the Alternative Medicine, Self Help and Psychology sections of local bookstores where I often took time to sit down and journal what was happening to me. One day, walking to my favorite bench in the bookstore, a copy of a book entitled *Anatomy of the Spirit* by Caroline Myss fell off the shelf and onto the floor in front of me. I didn't know her work but I picked it up and began to read. The book presents Myss's model of the body's seven centers of spiritual and physical power, in which she synthesizes the ancient wisdom of three spiritual traditions, the Hindu Chakras, the Christian sacraments and the Kabbalah's Tree of Life to demonstrate the seven stages through which everyone must pass in the search for higher consciousness and spiritual awakening.

Almost overnight, the way I perceived my life changed. I enrolled in classes she taught at her CMED institute and began to study archetypes from both a psychological and spiritual perspective. I learned about mysticism and the wisdom of saints, how to learn to listen deeply, what a soul's calling is, the difference between fate and destiny and how to discover the incredible treasures of wisdom that lie in the jewel box of my soul. Above all, I learned to trust in something that I couldn't see, yet could energetically sense and feel around me.

These studies directed me to modalities to ease pain and aid in healing. I found CAM (Complementary and Alternative Medicine) and through CAM, was introduced to Reiki, a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that promotes healing and is based on the idea that an unseen "life force energy" flows through us and is what causes us to be alive. Reiki and acupuncture became weekly appointments; they soothed my pain and gave me so much energetic strength, I eventually became a Reiki Master (teacher). Another jewel appeared in my life via email more than a dozen years ago, when I met one of my dearest friends who to this day remains my life coach, helping me stay centered, focused, and accountable, always striving to become my best self. (I refer to my first session with Glenda as Clarity 101.)

After twenty years at my high stress role in management, I could feel that my compass was recalibrating, moving me out of that life into a vocation, a life calling. I left my job and happily filled my days studying everything I loved: taking classes in design, reading endless books and mail order catalogs, spending days at flea markets, antique malls and garage sales, learning the difference between Wabi Sabi, Vatsu and Feng Shui. Much to my surprise, I already had a combination of all of them under my own roof. My

life got even busier as I began working with leading authors on spirituality for whom I had the deepest respect. I began traveling the world and delighted in adding other styles and tastes to my design palette: the simplicity and bright colors of India, the stark beauty of our own Southwest, the magical call of nature in South Africa, along with the unique charm found in the communities surrounding my native Chicago.

I finally stopped asking why this had happened to me. There are questions we don't get to have answered in life and that slowly became a mystery I am at peace with. Why? Because I also see now how the universe supported me through the experience of my loved one's death. As I continually said yes to what I needed for healing and change, another gentle process was at work and that was the return of my faith -- and through this process, I came into gifts I may have never seen otherwise.

Everything I had learned from my experience with Richard's death morphed into something else—a brand new life—and my home had become a reflection of it. As I grieved his loss, I had found solace in making my own home into a sanctuary. Without knowing it, for more than a dozen years, I had been training myself for what was next when I thought I was simply coping with my grief. Instead of turning to despair and bitterness, I was guided to a grace-filled direction I fell in love with. My home became the center of my greatest peace and healing. My need to create a sacred, peaceful environment was my healing path, and I wasn't the only one who liked being there.

People who visit me inevitably mention how peaceful and calm my home is, sinking into the furniture, exhaling and relaxing, breathing in the aroma and scents, feeling the stress melt out of them.

JILL ANGELO

“How did you do this?” is the question I most often hear. But my favorite is always, “Can you help me make my home feel like this?”

And the answer to that is a joyful, yes I can. That’s what this book is about: how you can create your own sacred space.

Let’s begin!

1.

Let's Get Started

Sacred space is where you discover all that is holy in you, around you, and above you. It's where you go to dwell with God.

~ Caroline Myss

Welcome!

The goal of this book is to guide you through a process that will help you transform your current living environment into a sacred space—an organized, calm and relaxing reflection of your own individual style that helps create wellness by replenishing your energy and providing inner peace.

You do not have to be wealthy or have a large house to create a space that constantly reminds you of your own deepest values and hopes and inspires you to realize them. For example, the house I live in now has been furnished on a shoestring. My night stands come from a hospital in Wyoming and were given to me by a great friend who delivered babies there. The coffee table in my living room is an old wooden, hand-whittled chicken coop that is 75 years old. The most expensive feature in my whole home is an Indian poster I received as a gift. Everything else I own was either picked up while traveling, discovered in thrift stores or garage sales—even back alleys on garbage collection days—and from wonderful reasonably priced stores like Pier One. I mention this to make it clear that

what you need to create a sacred space is NOT money, but what each of us already has: creativity, intuitive guidance, imagination and inspiration.

Each chapter will provide you with questions and suggestions that are designed to help you reflect on both your inner and outer worlds. I recommend you keep a journal, so you can capture your answers and reflections as you move through the chapters.

The importance of home

No matter what place you call home, the very word strikes a chord deep inside each of us. Home means sanctuary, the place we can rest, relax, enjoy time with friends, learn, grow ... and just be. Our homes say a lot about who we are and what we think is important in life.

Home is where the heart is but it goes deeper than that. Our connections to home are basic threads in our lives that pop up automatically in casual conversation. We use the word *home* to identify where we're from (hometown), cheer on players who represent us in sports (home teams), describe a level of comfort (at home), relate to our national identity (homeland), and at the end of a vacation, name it as our favorite next destination ("There's no place like home.").

When we purchase a home, we look for it to provide comfort, to be a place where we can feel safe and invest our hopes, dreams and wishes as a foundation for our future. Most of us have pretty similar goals and intentions in life, no matter what size, shape, color or type of home we choose in a given geographic location. We all want to start a life with a significant other, perhaps have a family, grow through life's stages and eventually retire. That's

the American dream. As our lives progress, the daily demands of family, friends, school, careers and all the unforeseen events we deal with over time all contribute to the stress in the overall atmosphere in the places we call home.

Think for a moment of your home. If you were to describe it in a word or two, what would it be? Peaceful and calm? Orderly? Disorganized and chaotic? Messy? Open and welcoming? How would you compare the way you describe your home to the life you lead? Our environments are often the exterior reflections of our interior worlds.

Trusting our senses: our guides to what we can't see

Think back to the last time you went apartment or house hunting. (Note how we refer to it as a “house” at first. We don't transition to calling it “home” until we begin to think of it as ours.) How did you know whether you liked a space when you first walked through the door? Did you smile? Sigh? Check to see where the closest exit is? What was your first tipoff that the space was a hit or a miss?

Chances are your body told you pretty fast what your reaction was. We all have a set of intuitive monitors that help us know quickly whether we want to stay in a place or not. They're called our senses. They are an inborn part of our wiring and with just a little imagination, we can call them forth and use them in some pretty creative ways.

These monitors are guiding us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We take them for granted so much, we cannot grasp how much we depend on them until we lose them either partially or completely. When a specific sense is limited or removed, we draw upon our memories of what it once provided.

You can test this yourself. Sit at a table and put on a blindfold. Have a friend hand you some items and ask you to identify them by touch alone. Do the same thing with different kinds of food. With the blindfold on, identify some by touch alone, others just by smell, still others by taste. Note how the taste of something is more acute when you cannot see it but have to rely on another sense to identify it.

Each particular missing sense heightens the ones that remain. This is a good exercise for learning to trust our innate ability to navigate our lives by being in touch with the signs our body gives us.

The chapters that follow are designed to provide you with what you will need both inwardly and outwardly to turn your house (apartment, condo or loft) into a home of Sacred Style. You will be challenged to use your senses differently and stretch your own ability to “listen” to what they have to tell you. Each chapter carefully balances the need for awakening both your own inner connection with the divine and your sacred imagination.

At the end of each chapter you will find a series of contemplative questions that will help you honestly and richly explore the vision I am inviting you into. These questions will help you become brutally candid with yourself and develop the kind of discipline and courage that you will need to not only turn your home into the most creative and invigorating version of yourself, but also provide you with wonder-filled inspiration for your future. I continually follow the same steps I mention here in my own home (and include recent photos as examples).

Here's what you will need in your toolkit:

- An open mind
- A willing heart
- A journal to keep track of your impressions

About Journaling

You cannot really create the sacred space you need and deserve if you are not paying attention to the shifting circumstances, moods and inspirations of your life. This is why journaling is so important. It not only helps you take note of what you are learning; it also helps you envision a home that truly responds to your deepest inner needs. It is a key component in creating your own sacred space.

Journaling is the art of telling your own story. Its root word *jour* is French for *day*. So it's a reflection of your day, rather than a story of your life. It's about what you are doing and noticing from day to day—what impressions stick with you. People write journals for many different reasons: to track the ups and downs of new motherhood, to capture the essence of a vacation, to record the impressions of a historical event over time, even to keep track of memorable dreams.

Journaling doesn't require that you be a good writer. (And no one else ever needs to read your journal; it's for your eyes only.) It just requires a little willing discipline—but it's work that pays off. As you write down your responses to the exercises and suggestions in each chapter, you'll discover things you didn't know about yourself. These jewels will help you not only understand the way you see the space you live in but will also help you build—step by step and piece by piece—your own sacred space.

As you journal each day on the questions in each chapter, be honest with your inner self, because that honesty will help you locate your deepest wisdom.

End each entry in your journal with gratitude for what your experiences were on that particular day. Good or bad. Our souls grow from those experiences and so does the sacred environment we are creating.

Writing by hand with paper and pen creates a unique alchemy with your intuitive side, nicely bringing both parts of your brain to bear, but you can also use your computer or Ipad (or similar device). The important thing is to devote regular time to your journaling. If you can journal for an hour, great. If fifteen minutes is all you can handle, fine. What counts most is doing it regularly. You pick the schedule, then stick to it.

I invite you to begin this journey now. Learn how to reinvent sacred style in the space of grace that is your home—and the foundation of everything you are and want to be.

Let's get started.



Beginning a journaling practice

- Remember: any way you want to journal is fine. Pick the one that works for you. Use pen or pencil. Add markers or colored pencils. Add drawings, clip art, even small elements from nature to give your journal dimension and grounding. Journaling is a personal experience, so get creative and enjoy it.
- Spend time each day writing and releasing, even if it is only

a few lines. Soon you will be pleasantly surprised at what is beginning to take shape.

- Document your dreams; they are messages of guidance from above.
- After a few weeks, go back and revisit what you have written. What patterns do you see? Do you write more or less depending upon your mood? Have you noticed any topics that make you feel anxious?
- As you begin to journal, be sure you provide yourself with a comfortable space in your home, or find a quiet spot outside. Be on the lookout for good candidate places for yourself.

Sidebar:

If your writing stalls, is it because you don't have a beautiful journal and favorite pen to compose with? If so, what's stopping you from getting them? Indulge yourself! This is your story.