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Sound Therapy
Final Essay

We have become obsessed with spaces. Whether it's purging with Marie Kondo, watching reality shows of remodel and design, or following #hygge on Instagram, we as a collective are becoming aware that the environment we put ourselves in affects mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing. Although the obsession with beautiful design influences my Netflix and scrolling habits, there's something that is missing in most of the shows and influencers that are creating beautiful spaces - and that is the energetic piece.

In a cute little french bistro, my cousin, a premium real estate broker, and I were discussing a conundrum she was having. She listed a \$1.2 million dollar home in the greater Seattle area. The house down the street sold with the same style and same views. But her listing - staged beautifully and listed at the right price, was not selling. She said potential buyers would walk in, comment how beautiful and great the house was, but would say, "There's something about it. It's not right." In further discussion, I found out that the owners were selling because they were going through a painful divorce. The house was a place of fighting and tension for the past couple years for the couple and two kids. No one cleared the house before listing. When we discussed this, my cousins' eyes widened, and said, "That's exactly it." We were able to pinpoint that the house didn't feel right because of the residual energy left from the family. Who

should of or could of cleared the house, though? The family before they moved out? The stager? Should she have hired a shaman, feng shui or reiki practitioner? Or could she have done it herself?

We now live in a time where sage, incense and essential oils can be found in most grocery stores. It has become the norm to smudge, maybe being introduced to it by a spiritual teacher or at a yoga studio. Although it's easy to find these materials now a days, there isn't much communication about how to use them or where they came from. I will be diving into the ancient rituals and religious practices sage and incense come from, as those are the most common materials being burned in homes today.

The burning of sage comes from a Native American ritual called the "Sacred Smoke Bowl Blessing". The purpose of this ritual is to release negative energies up to the Great Spirit. Although white sage is the most common these days, Indigious people also used other plants like sweet grass, tobacco, and cedar as well. Modern studies claim that burning sage may clear up to 94% of air borne bacteria for up to 24 hours. It's said to release negative ions, lowering anxiety and putting people in better moods, and has historically been used for digestive troubles and depression. A practicing Shamanic healer recommends making sure the area is well ventilated so negative energies have an easy way out. One can also use a feather to fan smoke away from a person or an object. One way my cousin could have used sage to clear the house is by acknowledging the pain and suffering that had occured in the home, as well as the joyous and good times as well. After opening windows and allowing air flow, she could

allow the negative (and positive) energy of each room to be swept up by the air flow and out the window.

Another item to burn; incense! The use of incense date back to 3300 BC in India and other parts of south Asia, spreading to China around 2000 BC. The Hindu people most commonly use incense called “argabatti”, in almost all pujas, prayers, and other forms of worship. As one of their daily rituals, they turn the incense clockwise three times to offer to God in his deity forms, such as Krishna and Rama. It was described to me that incense are used to set mood and ambiance for prayer, and is used in personal homes on a regular basis.

Pivoting to the Jewish Rabbinic tradition, the incense were first used in the temple, and only those from Aaron’s lineage were allowed to make those certain incense. The combination of ingredients were a carefully guarded secret, as they didn’t want it to be duplicated for other gods. The incense were used to purify and perfume the air after burning sacrificed animals. It is also believed that the incense were used to created a “smoke screen” to shield the priests from the presence of God. In the New Testament, “the smoke of the incense arising and filling the tabernacles signified offered prayer.”

In these three different religions and traditions we visited, the burning of items has one thing in common. It was used as an offering to God. Part of a ritual to set sacred space - Holy ground, the connecting to God, Creator, Krishna and Rama. If burning represents sacred space, an offering, a communion with Spirit - do we have any business using sage and incense in our daily lives? I believe we do.

I took a survey of seven friends. They were a random group with a mixture of backgrounds, beliefs and experiences, but there were a couple of very common themes. They burn sage, incense, or candles primarily because it resets their environment and supports them in their version of prayer and meditation. Burning these things allows them to experience calmness, coziness, gratitude, stillness - an emotional reset and "fresh start".

The lesson I've been learning over and over - it is all sacred. It is all holy. The intentional moment of even lighting a sage bundle for 30 seconds, is 30 seconds of stillness and beauty. Just being, is a spiritual practice and connection with One. God is in the mundane. As we have learned in class this semester, intention is everything. Even if my cousin lit sage from the wrong end of the bundle, and was skipping around the house with rap music playing, I believe that if the intention is there to clear and bring the house to peace, it would work.