

Sacred Meditation Sanctuary

A GUIDE TO DESIGNING
ALTARS & ROOMS TO
NURTURE CONNECTION TO
YOUR HIGHER-SELF



ByTovi C. Scruggs-Hussein & Kadija Taylor



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INTRODUCTION

“Our Work is Sacred, and so are We”

Greetings. This e-book serves as a leadership tool for what I call “professional spirituality.” We are in a time of creating a more inclusive humanity, and our leadership, when cultivated, is bringing that vision to life.

I live from a consciousness that asks daily, “What will be of service?” It’s amazing the type of answers I receive. Often, they are quite humbling - not always do-ing, sometimes the answer is about be-ing. And our BE-ing is cultivated - daily as an embodiment. What I know to be true is to cultivate what I call our “BE-ingness” daily means having a meditation practice. The research says this. And my “mesearch”™ says so, too. This e-book is to help take you “from the research to the mesearch.”™

I am both excited and honored that my beautiful and brilliant [SistahBiz](#) Bestie has joined me in co-authoring this second edition. Kadija Taylor, owner and founder of [Home & Sanctuary](#), is a kindred-spirit; our work is aligned in values and purpose, yet in what would feel like two completely different sectors. What we share is anchored in the sacred - and that makes all the difference. Birthing the second edition of this e-book in collaboration feels magical! May you, too, be blessed and inspired by Kadija’s voice and creativity in creating your own sacred meditation sanctuary™.



What has been on my heart in being of service is to share parts of my journey in creating sacred meditation sanctuaries™ and altars in my home and on my desk. I have done this ever since my first “adult apartment” in Oakland, CA back in 1994. That was when I created my very first altar using a small end-table.

INTRODUCTION

To get started on my “altar journey,” I had two wonderful teachers to launch my designs...because there is a bit of rhyme and reason for what is on your altar initially. A key resource at that time was from a “virtual mentor” Iyanla Vanzant from her book, *Tapping the Power Within*. That book is so good, I still have my copy from 1994 on the shelf just above my desk where I write this now. Truly, it was my very first “self-empowerment” book so it has a special place in my heart and on my shelf. From 1994, my altars would evolve as I evolved and my living spaces evolved, sometimes large, sometimes multi-tiered, sometimes in a closet, and sometimes throne-like. Since 2009, I have a perfect 4-foot, white coffee table from Ikea that has shelves in the bottom that holds my daily spiritual tools for my sacred mornings to inspire, transform, and catalyze my day of being and doing in the many crowns that I wear as a wife, daughter, sister, friend, colleague, helper, facilitator, visionary, author, and leader. The table is placed against the eastern wall in the corner of my home-office. I treat the wall like my vision board, so it stays gorgeous, focused, and dynamic - just like my vision for my life! Those who know me, know that I have been an avid meditator, ever since - you guessed it - 1994.

Yes, I've been meditating 30 years - almost daily. My morning meditation space has certainly helped my meditation practice to be consistent and keeps me enthusiastic on an aesthetic level. That's the “goddess” part of me that likes sacred ritual and sacred spaces, so a dedicated space to tap into my sacred energy for myself each day motivates me with a practice that can at times feel, well, boring, on the hard days. Where your altar is should not be highly-trafficked in your home. Also, another solid resource (besides me and Kadija) is *Sacred Space: Clearing and Enhancing the Energy of Your Home* by Denise Linn. I've used this book as a tool since 1995.

My hope is that you, too, will be motivated to create a sacred meditation sanctuary™ for yourself to be still, reflect, recharge, and gain self-transformation for systemic-transformation® for your life and your leadership. It's a key well-being tool, spiritually and professionally. It's a space that can create and generate greater self-awareness, emotional regulation and help reduce stress. The space only needs to be big enough for you to sit peacefully and quietly.

BEST PRACTICES

Setting up your Sacred Meditation Sanctuary

Step 1

Representation of your spiritual foundation (ie: God, images, statues, ancestral ancestors, pieces of nature, etc.) - to represent where you gather your inner-strength

Step 2

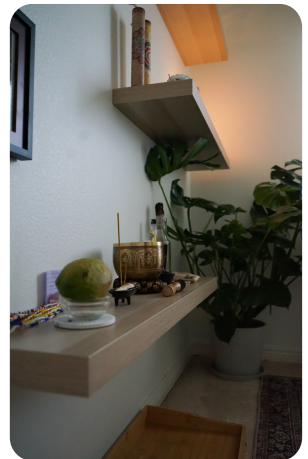
A plant, potted flower, or bouquet of flowers - to represent life-growth and beauty (also “earth” element)

Step 3

Candle - to represent “light and clarity” (also “fire” element)

Step 4

A bowl or cup of water - to represent life-sustenance and flow (also “water” element)



BEST PRACTICES

Setting up your Sacred Meditation Sanctuary



Step 5

For the “air” element, use the space and time for proper breathing, as “air” is all around and present without a direct representation. Also, some people use feathers or burn incense for this “air” representation as well.

Step 6

Symbolism of what is sacred to you, important to you, and what your goals are (in be-ing and in do-ing). This can look like pictures, affirmations, objects, crystals - just about anything that feels right to be on your altar. Other items can be business cards, names of people to pray for, a sacred reading, money/symbols of wealth, cultural symbols of connection, etc. My altar objects have been a myriad over the last 30 years (it took me a year before I felt “free” enough to make my altar completely my own and trust that my own intuition and guidance was all I ever needed for my altar design). Trust yourself, your spirit knows. At the time of this writing, I’ve got my mother’s journals on my altar sitting on a plate that my grandmother (her mother) made for me. I’m creating a deepened ancestral connection as I am feeling called to.



Morning Routine

So many people ask me what my process is like, how I spend my morning in this sacred, fueling, sustaining leadership practice. I have to admit, it takes great discipline. And my “mesearch” has proved what I deeply deeply know to be true: my morning meditation practice has saved my life, gifted me with insights, prospered me with divine right action and right timing, and made me the person and leader I am today. I do my absolute best to never miss a day, not even on vacation or away from home. While the altar hopefully makes it fun and motivating, it’s YOU that does the work and YOU are wherever you go. Thus, you don’t necessarily need a sacred space to do this, you are the sacred space.

On a regular morning, my routine is about 30 minutes. On a rushed morning, my routine is 5 minutes or less. On a leisure morning, sitting in my sacred space without a time constraint is pure joy (and often goes over an hour!).



Morning Routine

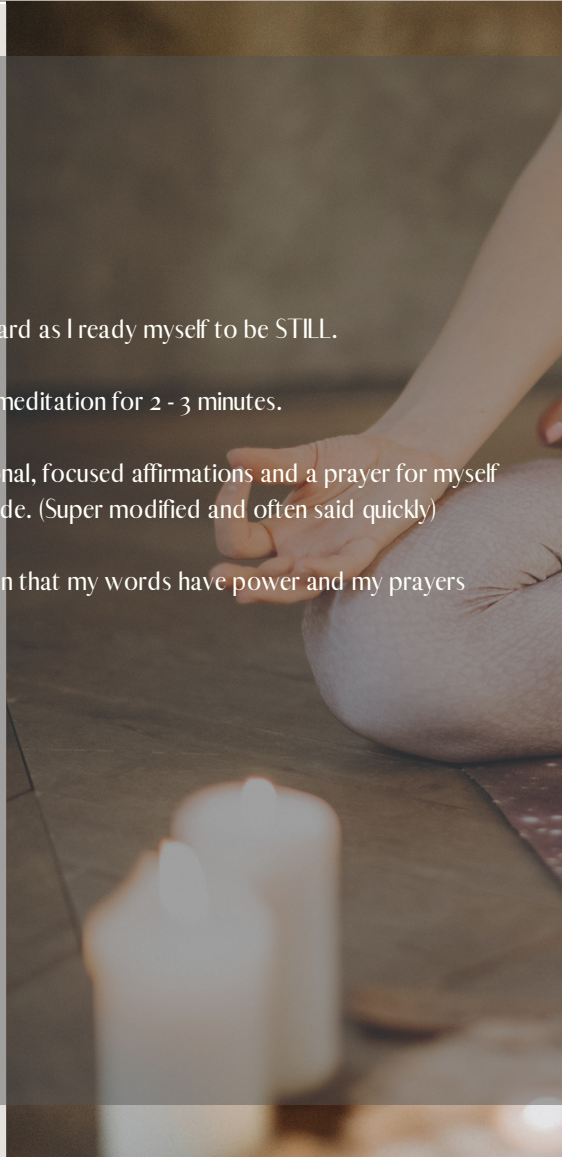
REGULAR VERSION

- 
1. Wake up, drink huge glass of water.
 2. Settle-in at my altar (for me, that's sitting on a floor pillow) - getting my comfortable position and seating just right.
 3. Turn over my 30-minute hour-glass.
 4. Light my candle. Using that flame, I light my stick of incense (from my collection, choosing what suits my vibe).
 5. Gaze and appreciate my altar space and vision board as I ready myself to be STILL.
 6. "Brain dump" to-do items that are creeping in my mind since I woke up at Step #1. (I keep a pen and pad of paper at my altar mainly for this reason. I don't like the pressure I place on myself to try to remember when I want spaciousness and freedom of my mind during this magical, intentional time. It's my way of having self-compassion in this practice).
 7. Intentional deep-breathing and "sit" in meditation, as I ready myself to be STILL...for real this time :) (Sometimes if I am struggling with focus, I might play an inspirational song to get me more grounded and centered.)
 8. Stillness and breathing for as long as I can/choose.
 9. Closing by speaking out loud my personal, focused affirmations and a prayer for myself and for others, then expression of gratitude. (Sometimes: listen to a motivating song.)
 10. Blow out the candle with great intention that my words have power and my prayers have been heard.

Morning Routine

MODIFIED 5 MINUTE VERSION

1. Wake up, drink huge glass of water
2. Settle-in at my altar.
3. Light my candle.
4. Quickly look at images of my vision board as I ready myself to be STILL.
5. Intentional deep-breathing and “sit” in meditation for 2 - 3 minutes.
6. Closing by speaking out loud my personal, focused affirmations and a prayer for myself and for others, then expression of gratitude. (Super modified and often said quickly)
7. Blow out the candle with great intention that my words have power and my prayers have been heard.



Altar Examples

I wanted to be certain to celebrate real leaders, real people, creating sacred meditation sanctuaries for themselves and their leadership. They understand self-transformation for systemic-transformation® - and live it everyday, one sacred sit at a time, once mindful breath at a time.

The leaders highlighted are just a few of my dearest friends, aligned colleagues, and dedicated ej2 clients. Their vulnerability and courage makes this e-book more possible and useful as a tool. These are REAL spaces done by busy, brilliant, practical, and successful leaders just like you. They know the power of what fuels them, their days, and their leadership. I love that they took time to support this e-book in inspiring and motivating others. Moreso, I love that their spaces speak to a key point: your space is for YOU. So, however you want it to be is what matters and what is “right.”



Tovi's Altar, circa 2019

Altar Examples



"My sacred space allows my nervous system to settle. It gives me the spaciousness to turn toward myself with full presence and care."

-Grace Helms-Kotre, ei2 Faculty & RHA Leader



"This space is where I completely exhale. It provides psychic nourishment and like other healthy practices, I actually feel a hunger for my time here. Every time I light candles and drop in, it's as though an amazing feast of knowing is being served."

-Sally Albright Green, ei2 Faculty & RHA Leader



"My sacred meditation space is my sanctuary...a personal haven where the busyness of the external world slows down, my thoughts find stillness, my soul discovers its own melody, paving a way to inner wisdom and peace."

-Doran E. Navarro, PT Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Global Lead, Genentech

Altar Examples



“This sacred space feels....sacred. It is not big. It is not in its own room. It is close to where I rest and includes sacred items that matter to me. In this sacred space, I am learning, I am growing, I am quieting, and I am healing. Before this space became “sacred,” it was the gap in between my bed and bookshelf. Now, this re-purposed space is where I ground my heart, mind, body and spirit for the day. I am deeply grateful for what is sacred.”
- Dr. Tiffany Brown, Asst. Supt., Long Beach USD



“I trust that the center will hold, honoring the space between no longer and not yet, knowing that being perfect is not more important than the quest to be whole.”
-Dr. Sarah Glenn-Smith, CEO, The Learning Center for the Deaf



“It's very simple, and it's mine!”
-Deanna Rolffs, Founder & Principal Consultant, L3 Catalyst Group

Altar Examples

CATHERINE BRONNERT DESCHEPPER &
FAMILY ALTARS



This picture is of my altar on my desk by my computer. I have one here because I often meditate during my work with clients or between coaching sessions, and having an altar nearby helps me center, ground and integrate. While it is a visual altar, it is also a tactile one as I often hold the heart rock, carved wood or tiny ceramic bowl in my hands while coaching or meditating. I can easily pack this into a pouch (other than the heart rock) to take with me when traveling.”

-Catherine Bronnert DeSchepper, Lead Coach ei2



The altar below is in my closet on my half of a dresser I share with my partner. When my children were younger I often meditated in our closet since it was a quiet, separate, sacred space for me alone.



This is my partner’s computer screen at his desk. and the other is in our living room.

Altar Examples

CATHERINE BRONNERT DESCHEPPER
FAMILY ALTARS



This is my partner's altar in our living room.



Altars created by my kids at different points in their teenage years.



Altar Examples



This is a shared altar with my wife and it changes from time to time - monthly, seasonally, when one of us needs something on it, etc... it is in our living room, the center of our shared space.

Occasionally, it is completely empty, as sometimes space is what is needed. It has been a centerpiece of our practice for the last 15+ years and feels like "home".

-Melissa Ambrose, Wellness Coordinator, Jefferson UHSD



bringing sanctuary home

If you downloaded this guide you have answered the “call” to go deeper into self by going deeper into the environment you create for yourself to express on a soul, spiritual level. As someone who grew up in a religious home, one of the most impactful lessons I have taken with me into my adult life is the importance of creating space to allow God/Universe to communicate with you.

My mother created her own space through what we called a “prayer closet.” She would choose a small closet in our home and nestle inside to spend time with God almost everyday. She would wake up early, before my sister and I would wake for school, to read her bible and pray.

As a child I thought the concept was really odd. Why would anyone want to go into a dark closet to pray? Now as a grown woman, with a few years under my belt, I can see clearly why her prayer closet was needed, why she looked forward to stealing those few early morning moments away for herself. It was her time to commune with her higher power, a time of reset and refuge from the crazy and unkind world she was trying to navigate while raising two little girls on her own.

I have expanded my spiritual teachings and practices extensively over the past twenty years yet this concept of a prayer closet has never left my side. As a holistic interior designer, I deeply resonate with the importance of carving out a small area of your home dedicated to your spiritual practice.

To reiterate on some of our teachings, this guide is designed to help you bring sacred space into your home. Please don't over complicate how this should be done. Most importantly let your intuition lead. It will guide you to add and/or remove what your meditation and prayer room should be.

Let me also mention that you don't actually need a room. A quiet corner, a closet, even a blank wall will work. The most important thing to remember is this guide was written as a roadmap to help you navigate the process and providing you with encouragement to bring sanctuary right to your home.

Happy Designing!

Step 1

SELECT A SUITABLE SPACE

Choosing a quiet and peaceful area in your home for the meditation/prayer room is the first step to creating your meditation/prayer room. It could be a spare bedroom, a corner of a quiet living room, or even a walk-in closet. Any place where you can spend ten to thirty minutes without being interrupted is key.

Step 2

DECLUTTER AND CLEAN

Clear the chosen space of clutter and unnecessary items. A clean and clutter-free environment supports a focused and tranquil atmosphere. Decluttered spaces act as a moth flame for clarity and positive energy. You are more inclined to spend time in spaces that clean and easy to navigate.

Step 3

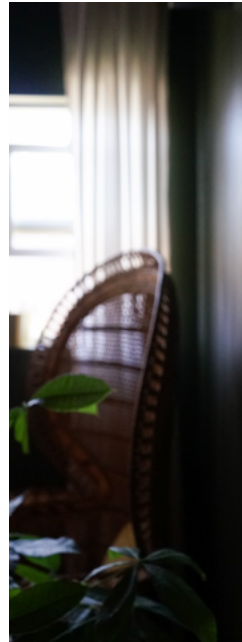
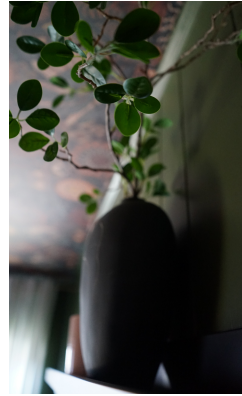
SET AN INTENTION

Like most everything in life determining the purpose and intention of the room/space is key. Clarifying your intention will guide the design decisions.

Step 4

CHOOSE A CALMING COLOR PALETTE

Select soothing colors for the walls and decor. Soft neutrals, calming blues, gentle greens, and muted earth tones are ideal choices that promote relaxation. Something you can do to help you decide on a color is visit a paint store. Pick up free swatches of the top three colors you feel most drawn too. If don't mind spending a few dollars purchase samples. Take these samples home and paint the walls. This way you can see the color in the space before committing to it. It's amazing what one accent wall can do.



Step 5

COMFORTABLE SEATING

Choose comfortable seating options. This could be a cushion, meditation pillow on the floor, a comfortable chair, or even a small bench. The goal is to make sure you feel restful and supported.

Step 6

NATURAL LIGHT

If possible, choose a space with access to natural light. Natural light fosters a positive atmosphere and is extremely conducive to meditation and reflection. If you don't have natural, don't worry. Add ambient lighting, also known as general lighting. A light fixture with dimmable capabilities is ideal.

Step 7

PRIVACY AND TRANQUILITY

Ensure the space offers privacy and is free from distractions. If you are using an actual room you can use curtains or room dividers to create a private and serene environment.

Step 8

FLOORING AND TEXTURES

Use soft and comfortable flooring. If you have hard wood, tile, laminate, or vinyl flooring you may want to consider using an area rug. If your space is carpeted, it may already be comfortable. However, feel free to layer it with a beautiful area rug to add additional texture and color to the space. Also incorporate tactile textures like soft fabrics, cushions, and throws to create a cozy atmosphere.

Step 9

MINDFUL DECOR

Decorate the room with items that have personal meaning and resonate with your spiritual or meditation practice. Consider incorporating meaningful artwork, sculptures, or symbols.



Step 10

AROMATHERAPY AND SCENTS

Introduce calming scents through essential oil diffusers, incense, or scented candles. Aromatherapy can enhance the sense of relaxation and mindfulness.

Step 11

MINIMALISM AND SIMPLICITY

Embrace a minimalist design approach. Keep decor simple and uncluttered to avoid distractions. Keep in mind the intention of the space when selecting furnishings and decor. Anything that doesn't promote having a clear mind should be avoided.

Step 12

SOUND AND MUSIC

If desired, integrate soothing sounds or gentle music that align with your meditation or prayer practice. Consider using a small speaker or headphones for a private experience.

Step 13

INCORPORATE A FOCAL POINT

Create a focal point for your meditation/prayer room. This could be a small altar, a candle, a statue, or an inspirational quote, or wall art that holds personal significance.



Step 14

PLANTS AND NATURE

The benefit of bringing nature indoors is endless. Having plants and flowers indoors help to absorb toxins in the air and produce clean oxygen. The perks don't stop there because they also boost moods, productivity, concentration, and creativity. A small fountain in the space can be soothing as well.

Step 15

TECH-FREE ZONE

Technology is a big part of our lives. Many of us make a living from our desktop. I understand the need to have access to your phones, computers, ipads, etc. Nevertheless, it's important to designate tech-free zones in your home. Your meditation and prayer room should be a tech-free zone. This space was created to disconnect from the noise of the outside world and tap into our most authentic self.



This is the beginning of something good

You have finally reached the exciting part! We've gotten you ready to start creating your space! Remember this process is all about YOU. The best part about DIY is you can go at your own pace. For some of you, this means creating a shopping list and purchasing everything in one day. For others, it may mean completing the space over several days, weeks, or months.

Regardless of your approach, remember to have fun. When the process begins to feel daunting, remember why you started. You are deserving of a space that grounds you and helps you reset.

There may be a few of you, who, after reading our guide realize that you would rather make the investment in having our team design your meditation and prayer room. [Here](#) is the link to complete our contact form and schedule your 15 minute chat.

Home and Sanctuary® is available for your interior design needs. We can't wait to see you again soon! Until then we are sending you lots of *love and light.*





*"Our Work is Sacred,
and so are We"*

- Tovi
#Goddess-at-Work

We'd love to be able to share pictures of your altar spaces and morning routines in our upcoming newsletters (anonymously is fine).

Please let us know what you create! Let us know how your morning routine is going.

Please send your notes, pictures, musings to tovi@ticiess.com.

We can't wait to see all your professional spirituality and sacred meditation sanctuaries!

MEET

Tovi C. Scruggs-Hussein

Tovi Scruggs-Hussein is a leader of leaders and award-winning urban educator with almost 30 years of leadership and transformation experience. She is internationally recognized for her signature approach of moving from Leadership Do-ing to Leadership BE-ing and Emotionally Intelligent Equity & Inclusion. Tovi has been recognized by Mindful Magazine as one of the Powerful Women Leaders of 2021 who are igniting the world with courage and wisdom. She walks her talk of courageous leadership being cultivated by meditation, resilience, and self-mastery, having had a daily meditation practice for almost 30 years, and also sitting four week-long silent retreats.

Tovi is on a mission to heal our leaders and organizations through SELF-Transformation for Systemic Transformation. She is the co-founder of ACSA's Equity Leaders Academy, co-founding adjunct professor of Trauma-Responsive Leadership with an Equity Lens, and served as the national president for Coalition of Schools Educating Mindfully.

Tovi is a certified Integral Coach and has been personally trained by Dr. Brene Brown as a Certified Dare to Lead Facilitator to train others in courageous leadership with a lens of inclusion and belonging. Yet, the very best leadership training she ever received was the 17 years she spent as a high school principal.


From keynotes to workshops to meditation retreats to in-depth coaching and training, Tovi cultivates conscious, connected, and courageous leaders world-wide.
www.ticiess.com



TOVI C. SCRUGGS-HUSSEIN

LEADER, HEALER, &
TRANSFORMATION CATALYST

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MEET

Kadija Taylor

Hi, my name is Kadija Taylor. I am the founder and principal designer of Home and Sanctuary.® After spending over a decade in affordable housing, serving on various project committees for rehabs, renovations, and new builds, I fell completely in love with design. I knew it was time to make a change and in 2016 I decided to spread my wings and venture into the world of real estate and home design, which ultimately led to opening Home and Sanctuary.®

My time in affordable housing taught me how deeply our spaces directly influence our everyday lives. Our company believes that space is sacred, land is spiritual, and home is your sanctuary. We value the importance that land and space play in the overall wellness of a person, and we make it our business to help you discover how thoughtful design can be a practice of self-care and self-love.

Join our tribe of beautiful people taking a holistic approach to living well by designing spaces that speak to our souls and help us become the best version of ourselves.



KADIJA TAYLOR

OWNER/PRINCIPAL DESIGNER,

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