



A space to call your own

Liska Turner in the office/
meditation room she has
created — just for herself.

An office in a cupboard. A putting green in the garden. A room for yourself.
There's no place like home once you've created your own special space.

By JANE SOUTHWARD & SARAH MARINOS

With two young children and a business to run, Liska Turner knew she was neglecting herself. The solution? Create a haven for herself in a spare bedroom.

The room is painted in calming cream, highlighted in shades of bright green and red and filled with the things that make Turner happy: a luxurious armchair for meditating in, shelves set with framed cards and photos, pretty trinkets, vases with fragrant flowers, decorative candles and a large sign that spells the letters LOVE.

The room also has a desk and laptop set aside just for Turner. It's where she meditates, reads and plans what matters in her life, including a burgeoning business helping other people decorate their own sacred spaces.

"This isn't about a room looking good for other people," Turner says. "This is about creating something that connects with you.

"Adults have forgotten how easy it is to stay busy. Busyness offers variety and it also offers distraction. Creating a sacred space at home is about developing a place just for you — no matter what it is."

For Turner's husband, David, that means a mini putting green with four holes set in artificial turf in what used to be the family's garden. That it means no need to mow or water is simply a bonus and their children Tom, 5, and Lily, 3, happily use the space to ride their bikes when their accountant father is at work.

"Meditation isn't his thing," Turner explains, "but putting a golf ball is his way of relaxing. He uses the space three or four times a week and says it is the perfect antidote to a busy life." ❖



During a trip to the American desert to learn more about meditation a few years ago, author Maggie Hamilton realised the importance of finding a special place she could retreat to for some quiet, reflective time.

When she returned to her home in Sydney, Hamilton was determined to find places around the city where her mind could be free from the clutter of daily life. She has two sacred spaces in the city where she retreats to for time to reflect on her day-to-day life, to escape the rush and to plan where her life is going next.



Accountant David Turner relaxing on his putting green. For \$5000 he created a place at home where he can escape. Below: Suzie Turner at her office in a cupboard.



Unlike other advocates of sacred spaces, Hamilton's special places are not in her home but in Waverley Cemetery at Bronte and in Neilsen Park on Sydney Harbour.

"Waverley is a beautiful old cemetery on the cliffs, filled with gravestones and stone angels," Hamilton says. "There's a wide expanse of sea and sky and the stone angels almost look as if they are about to take flight."

"I love cemeteries because I love people's stories. I often trek between the graves, read

Maggie Hamilton at Sydney's Neilson Park, a place she finds sacred for its healing powers.



the stones and ponder on what that person's life might have been like, and I enjoy the wide-open feeling of the sea and sky.

"Neilson Park is a small cove filled with the creamy magnolias I always identify with the deep south of America. It also has huge fig trees with twisted trunks that look like those you find in fairytales — you can almost see faces in them.

'There has to be a balance between the "fast pace" and "fast focus" lifestyle and the need to be intimate with ourselves. If we don't like our own company we never learn to know what feeds us — and then we live in a constant state of dissatisfaction.' — Maggie Hamilton

"I often go there on a Saturday morning and find it an incredibly healing place. Neilson Park is womb-like. It's tiny and the trees reach over you, almost like they are protecting you. Sometimes I buy a coffee and sit under the trees or I paddle in the water."

Sacred spaces don't need to be expensive or dramatic. In fact, they can be just part of a room, as Suzie Turner has found. Turner loves

to write, but a hectic life running around after her two daughters, Annabel, 6, and Luisa, 3, leaves her little time to focus.

That all changed when Liska Turner helped the book editor create an office in a cupboard the size of a small en suite. The room had been set aside for a small bathroom but had not been renovated.

The pair chose cranberry and white as the

colour scheme, covered a wall and door in bright fabric, squeezed a simple desk against the wall, painted an old filing cabinet and covered an office chair. Next, they decluttered the desk, leaving only a few favourite trinkets and pictures, so there was room for work.

"It's a small room and I balance my feet on a box while I am writing," Turner says. "There's just something about the space. I close the door and it really helps me to

focus. I feel more creative there and having my own space is something I have long dreamed about.

"As a parent you are always doing things for other people, so even though it's simple and small, it seems luxurious having a space of my own."

Just what you do in your sacred space is up to you, but Maggie Hamilton recommends you use the space for yourself. "I think being alone there is the secret of going to a sacred place," she says.

"It's time to let the week drop away. Sometimes, I take a book but often I reflect on anything and nothing. Your home can be a sacred place, too, but often you don't have it to yourself."

Hamilton says in a fast-paced life, a sacred space is important for all of us. "We interact with more people in a day than previous generations did in a week. There has to be a balance between the "fast pace" and "fast focus" lifestyle and the need to be intimate with ourselves," says Maggie.

"If we don't like our own company we never learn to know what feeds us — and then we live in a constant state of dissatisfaction."