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Recreating a home after a marriage breakup

The new “you” starts at home

BY ADENE LUCAS

STARTING OVER IN LIFE AFTER A MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN CAN BE A REAL challenge. A home, the place you relax in, reconnect in, and feel safe in, should be a priority. How do you begin, in some cases with nothing?

A recent client is in the process of rebuilding due to a marital breakup. His house is beautiful but it is far from being a home. He started by purchasing odds and ends from Costco including a big television set, speakers and audio equipment. Not surprisingly the space feels cold, uninviting and very transitional. Not exactly a refuge from the world at the end of the day. Nor will your children feel comfortable there if the space is not set up for them. Buying items for a home without any direction or vision for the final look will not only waste money but frustrate you in the process as you will be no closer to creating a home. A house becomes a home when it feels like you, when it represents who you are and where you want to be.

LET’S GET STARTED

During this emotional time, focus on the positive which is, you have a blank slate! You can start fresh with what you truly love. You don’t have to run it by someone for their approval; you don’t have to compromise or match up anything with an old family heirloom that you never cared for. It is a great time to really make a statement. Ask yourself, who you are and what do YOU like? If that seems too daunting, think of three adjectives that best describe the look of the home you want. It could be warm, casual, functional or just the opposite,

polished, professional, minimal. Once you define how you want the space to feel, think about how you want to use the space. Will the room be used for entertaining, watching television or relaxing with your family? Of course one room can provide all these requirements but its good idea to think of the function of a space before buying anything long term.

PRIORITIZE

As anyone in the process of starting over knows, finances are split but expenses stay the same, if not increase, so the budget may be tight. You may need to pick one room at a time to focus your energy and limited finances on. If kids are involved make sure their rooms are set up and welcoming. A fun paint color and bedding they help select can go a long way in making their room

personal and inviting which leads to more time spent in the new home. Frame their own artwork or have a collage of family pictures on the wall. The room does not have to be done over night and kids will keep adding and fine tuning as they grow. If possible, it is always nice to have something from the family home in the new home so kids have a sense of familiarity and history, a pillow, an old stuffed animal or trophy. It could be anything that brings the two homes together so the kids feel less like guests and more accepting of the current situation.

If finances are not an issue, forge ahead and get the house done room by room, starting with the room you spend the most time in. Some people want a great bedroom where they can disappear, and collect their thoughts. Others want to entertain and need a living space done so they can resume that part of their life. It depends again on how you use your house but the goal is to create a home where you and your family and friends want to spend time. Nothing is more depressing than coming to home to a half empty house, with art propped along the walls and boxes piled everywhere. It feels temporary and even your closest friends will want to meet you elsewhere!!

LIVING ROOM

The living room is the most obvious space to start as it will be in use daily. If you entertain guests you need to have it set up and other than the kitchen, it is an anchor point in any home. Decide on how much seating you need and what will fit the space. If you need seating





for eight, two sofas along with two occasional chairs will work. If you want to maximize seating, consider a sectional. When selecting furniture individual pieces are so much easier to work with than one large limiting piece but it depends on the footprint of the room.

The furniture must be functional. A room that looks great but is not functional is a total waste of time and resources. My client let me know his kids like to sit on the arms of a sofa. That tells me right away that there is a casual, approachable feel to the space and I need to find that in the furniture. Consider conversation areas before purchasing furniture. Do the pieces fit together in scale and will they be close enough to have a conversation? It is a good idea to get a list of the specific dimensions of the furniture from the retailer then tape the layout on your floor before committing to an order. That way you can see for yourself if the space feels crowded or too empty.

FINISHING TOUCHES

This is the fun part, the piece of the process where your personality can shine through and really create a warm and inviting space. The home should reflect what is important to you and what you value. That can be done with art work, personal photography, accessories or even a bold area rug. Try using a funky lamp off in the corner, or a piece of sculpture that speaks to you. There are no “rules” this is your space, enjoy it. Once you have accepted that this is your home, not something temporary the process of can be very rewarding.

FAMILY HOME

If you were lucky enough to stay in the family home and now need to personalize a few areas or add to what is left, the situation is much easier. It may be enough to change the furniture arrangement or reposition the art to compensate for a few bare spaces. Perhaps add new accent cushions to brighten the space or buy a new area rug that is more your personality.

Going thru a marriage breakup is an emotional process regardless of the circumstances and your home should reflect where you are now in your life, not where you were.

In the end a home is so much more than stuff. You can create new memories in a home that reflects your current style as long as you start with a plan and stay away from random shopping at Costco!



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