

Reclaim your space after divorce

So your ex has moved out – now what?
Our guide to moving your home from "we" to "me"

By: Deborah Moskovitch



It was a dream-like experience. Upon returning from a weekend away with our children, the bedroom closets were empty—my husband, now my ex, had moved out. He took the fabulous living room furniture that we had purchased not that long ago. My world was changing.

The reality was, I wanted to stop thinking about who I had become upon divorce—a single woman—and focus on my surroundings. I wanted my home to change from our home to my home.

I wanted to shape my space to reflect my personality. I wanted to transform it into a space where I would be happy. Slowly, this philosophy would influence the décor throughout my home.

Of course, like most of the things I was dealing with, this was uncharted territory—especially learning to deal with my new budget. The first project I wanted to tackle was my new bedroom. The room which we shared, which was ours, was now mine. As I gloriously celebrated more closet space, I needed to create a room which would provide new memories of the next chapter of my life. I fantasized about my new seductive boudoir, strewn with rose pedals and candlelight everywhere.

But the truth was, that wasn't me. Reality set in and I did what I could—cost effectively, changing only my sheets, drapery and mattress. It was a fresh start.

Comfort for the kids as well

I also needed to keep in mind that my children needed continuity. Even if I could afford it (which I couldn't), I wasn't going to change everything. After all, what message would that be sending to my children—erasing all memories of their life before the divorce? Letting my personality shine through as best I could, spending as little I could, I would decorate for myself, not anyone else. I bought some new artwork, throw pillows for my family room sofa and a few knick-knacks here and there.

Kimberly Seldon, an internationally recognized designer, suggests: "When you experience a crisis it's essential to take time to heal before embarking on new projects. I've met new clients who immediately want to redesign the whole house. It may feel good to "erase" any trace of him, but you want to make sure you are in a sane and peaceful frame of mind before you start renovating or decorating."

"You don't want to make every decision with him in mind. For example, he hated leather so you will "show him" and put leather everywhere. That may not be what you really want. Once you are emotionally ready to heal and move on, then decorating can be an empowering process; reclaiming your own space and your own look."

Seldon offers the following helpful tips to lessen the decorator letdown, and create a space that will become your retreat and your oasis; and a sanctuary away from the hectic life you lead. After all, life post-divorce sometimes seems like huge a balancing act, teetering on the brink between stress and sanity.

Identify priorities. Tackle one small, important space at a time. For instance, if you are going to spend 50% of your time in the kitchen then put your focus (time and money) there. Don't bother with the living room initially if you don't think you'll use it much.

Be yourself. Make sure you are choosing what is authentic for you – not just what he would have hated. You are going to be moving into new territory; a whole new life. You'll want the new space to reflect the beginning of a new life, not the end of an old one.

Put the war to rest, and be realistic. Put together a floor plan before you hire the movers. It's too easy during a divorce to fight over pieces of furniture that are really obsolete once you move. Make sure you want or need the items in question before you pay the movers to take them to the new home. If the old pieces of furniture don't fit, or aren't right, that will just be one more thing you hate about the divorce.

Be authentic. Seldon comments: "I have a dear friend in LA whose home is very formal, but she's very casual person. There's a disconnect when you see her in the space." Embrace the best parts of yourself and create an environment that celebrates the real you

Let the real you shine through. Seldon learns the most about new friends and clients from the artwork and books they collect. These are the true mirror to the soul. You may not want to invest in a lot of kitsch for your new house, but a funky coffee table book about the subject sends a message about your irreverent side.

Ah, my space, and loving it. Relaxing in the surroundings I call home. I'm doing it in style, my way – and it's certainly far from perfect. But, that isn't to say I can't change my space from "me" to "we" again, but for now, this is what makes me happy.

Divorcing? Learn how to navigate the post-divorce social scene, deal with the loss of mutual friends and family, and get out into the post-divorce dating world.

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