

making your home a haven: part 1



discover your values

Here's a list of five values, and examples of how you can make them tangible in your home.

- **Emotions/Feelings** It's crucial for you to share your feelings. Family and friends are your priority. Your home nurtures those who dwell within and those who visit. Your furnishings promote comfort and are arranged to encourage conversation.
- **Adventure** You love to travel without an itinerary – even if it's just a drive in the country. Honour this value by thoughtfully displaying your photos or treasures from your travels.
- **Beauty** You're drawn to beautiful objects and exclude anything that you don't find beautiful from your home. Even a good-looking can opener has the ability to turn you on!
- **Creativity** You love to write, pursue hobbies and make art and handicrafts. You give yourself space to create and to organize the material you use in your creative play/work.
- **Catalyst** You love to get projects going and to motivate people. You have a command-central desk to organize your family's activities.

NOTE: VISIT STYLEATHOME.COM FOR A LIST OF ADDITIONAL VALUES AND SELF-DISCOVERY EXERCISES THAT WILL HELP YOU CREATE A HOME THAT REFLECTS THE INNER YOU.

At its most basic level, organizing is about creating a home that functions smoothly. But for *STYLE AT HOME* readers, an organized environment isn't the only goal; you want a space that's beautiful and expresses who you are so that you feel at home. How do you create such a haven? For the next two months, *Organizing 101* will organize something rather abstract: your thoughts about home. This month, organizer Estelle Gee of *Orderly Lives* and I will help you discover what best suits you, because if you don't reflect deeply on what you want your home to be, you'll never truly get home. By Kathleen Dore

1 who are you?

If you want your home to reflect and nurture you, you need to know who you are. One way is to identify your values – the natural inclinations of your personality. Think of them as states of being, not activities. For instance, gardening itself isn't a value, but your garden may be where you live your values, like being creative and learning.

try this List five values that best describe you, and think about ways to honour them in your home. Let that knowledge influence all design decisions. To get started, see "Discover Your Values" (left); for a more thorough list, visit styleathome.com, where we've also posted self-discovery exercises.

2 how do you experience the world around you?

We take in information through our five senses (sight, sound, scent, taste and touch), which are developed to differing degrees. For instance, my senses of smell, sight and touch are strong, so in my home I try to stimulate them in positive ways. For example, when shopping for my living room rug, I walked on it in bare feet to make sure the wool was super soft and cushiony. ▷

try this When you admire something – say, a picturesque old barn, a wispy seed head blowing in a breeze, or a vase of roses – instead of just assuming that you're simply responding through the sense of sight, note how it makes you feel. Do you just want to touch it? Does it evoke a scent? If you're looking at food, do you think, I want to eat that, or, what a gorgeous presentation? The point is to become more aware of which senses are most important to you, and then decorate your home so that it's a truly sensual experience.

3 what's all this stuff?

In more than 10 years of helping people get organized, Estelle Gee of Orderly Lives (orderlylives.net) in Toronto has seen her share of clutter. But she's also seen the transformative effect that getting rid of stuff can have. "When you clear the external clutter, you often clear the internal confusion," she says. "I've seen clients embark on more satisfying careers, and one who reclaimed an unused guest room for a meditation space." Here are Estelle's top five tips.

try this ① **Start small.** Small steps done consistently will eventually reap big rewards. ② **Clarify your goals.** Think about your plans for each room in terms of how you need it to function, and then make the space fit those goals. ③ **Stop clutter at the source.** Shop mindfully: Ask yourself, Will this purchase enhance my life and also help me achieve my goals in terms of my space? ④ **Have realistic expectations.** Don't try to recreate the perfection you see in design books if you have three kids under five. Your home should be as organized as you need it to be in order to live without a lot of stress. ⑤ **Control paper.** It's the No. 1 source of clutter and anxiety in terms of organizing the home, so create a system that handles paper daily so that it doesn't overwhelm you and become clutter.

4 what's my personal style?

Should I buy this sofa or that chaise? If you feel confused because you like too many looks or think that you don't know how to pull a cohesive look together, here's a foolproof method for finding your personal style. Take all of those inspiring decor pictures you've been collecting and make a scrapbook. See "Discover Your Style" (right) for tips on how to do this. Beside each picture, write what you love about it. I highly recommend this exercise, whether you're going to decorate on your own or with the help of a designer. ■



discover your style

- **Clip magazine photos of rooms,** furniture and accessories that you find inspiring. It might take a few months worth of magazines to build a collection that captures your sense of style. If you already have a very large collection, edit it down to your favourite shots.
- **Paste all the photos in a scrapbook.** Don't worry if a Parisian apartment is on one page and a pared-back contemporary home is on the next.
- **As you paste each photo,** study it carefully and write a few words on the page about what drew you to it. For example, do you love the mood? A lamp? A colour? Your note can be short: "The room is so peaceful."
- **When finished,** look through the book you've created. You may find that you have page after page of rooms that look similar. If so, you've found your style.
- **If you still feel there's a jumble** of different styles, wait a week and flip through the book again. I bet you'll find one or two clippings that synthesize the different looks you love. Let that room or home inspire your decorating plan.

NEXT MONTH, IN PART 2 OF "MAKING YOUR HOME A HAVEN," WE'LL LOOK AT FENG SHUI. PROponents SAY THAT DESIGNING WITH FENG SHUI PRINCIPLES CAN BRING GREATER HARMONY TO YOUR HOME AND FAMILY; CRITICS SAY IT'S JUST SUPERSTITION. I'LL INTERVIEW TORONTO FENG SHUI PRACTITIONER NICOLA LAWRENCE, AND SHE'LL DO AN ANALYSIS ON MY HOUSE (WHERE YOU'LL DISCOVER THAT THIS EMBARRASSED ORGANIZING COLUMNIST HAS, IT'S TRUE, POCKETS OF CLUTTER – VERY BAD FENG SHUI – LURKING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS).



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