



In stressful times

— like during a recession — a lifestyle analysis is often undergone, with the hopes that once some changes have been made, one will be able to reduce the rising anxiety level:

“I will start eating healthier, drinking more water and exercising more!”

“I vow to spend more time with my friends and family!”

“I will not overdraft my checking account anymore!”

While all of these are surefire stress-reducers, they are not the only ways to erase your angst. Often times, we overlook the most obvious source of stress in our lives, simply because we don’t want to deal with it. But, if you are one of those people that still feel stressed after an hour of yoga, it’s time to take the plunge and go straight to the main stressor: your home.

Maybe your kitchen is in total disarray. Perhaps, the color of your walls is reminiscent of your rebellious “Goth” days as a teen. Most likely, your furniture has been chewed to bits by your lovable pooch.

Whatever the symptom, each of our houses have been diagnosed with some kind of hiccup, ultimately causing unnecessary stress in our lives. (Enter your desired excuse here: Remodeling is expensive. Reorganizing my closet is time consuming. Repainting the walls is a huge pain. Hiring an interior decorator is costly.) Whatever your defense, it’s time to retire those useless excuses and start creating a space that releases your stress the moment you walk in the door. Don’t worry. There are tons of easy, inexpensive ways to transform your living space into a place you can be proud to call home.

According to Lanie Lessard, owner of Lessard Design Associates, the first step is to de-clutter. “A cluttered space causes a cluttered mind,” Lessard says. “If you spend a lot of time in a home or office that is filled with stuff, is dirty, has uncomfortable seating and bad lighting, you’re going to be unhappy, frustrated and unproductive. Once [your] surroundings are cleaned up, furnished with comfortable and well-placed items and have brighter or natural light, [you’re] going to be much happier and more productive.”

Athens Home Organizer, Julia Marlowe, can attest to this, as well. Marlowe says that, “Having an organized home generally provides a serene environment in which to live, which is calming and helps reduce stress.” Marlowe encourages all homeowners to make sure that, “You are in control of your home, not your things.”

Not only can being organized help you to feel less stressed, but it can also save you money. When you are organized, you can find what you need. You also know exactly what you already have, so you don’t wind up buying excess at the store. You also don’t lose valuable checks, coupons, tax documents, etc. By being organized, you will enjoy your home more, and you aren’t as apt to feel that you need more space.

If the daunting task of re-organizing your living space seems overwhelming, Marlowe suggests starting with something small, like a linen closet. “The success there will motivate you to organize something else,” she says.

Once the space is opened up, you can begin to think about decorating. Lessard encourages people to “use colors in the individual rooms that make you smile, relax and that blend pleasantly with each adjoining space.” Repainting can even be a fun activity for you and your roommates or family to do together.

“A well designed home reflects a true sense of place and belonging,” says Abbi Williams, owner of Red Door Design Studio. “At the end of the day, all aspects of the built environment need to evoke an emotional response that [you] can identify with.”

Williams suggests creating a folder of the things you are drawn or attracted to, the only requirement being that the items in the folder are meaningful. “Be honest about the things you find important and meaningful in your life, and be sure they are represented in your everyday environment,” she emphasizes.

By identifying what you like, you are more able to make your home original and display your personality. “You want your design to reinforce your sense of belonging and reverence to others, as well,” says Williams. “Creating the emotions of being welcomed and wanted is priceless.”

In just a few easy steps, you can create a warm environment that produces efficient, happy residents. But, don’t be afraid to ask for help. A little bit of money invested up front in expert consultation can save you lots of frustration and money in the end. Next year’s resolution: Spend more time relaxing in my fabulous home!

Kate Parham is a writer for Athena Magazine and a junior at UGA.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

www.Athenshomeorganizer.com

www.reddoorstudio.com/

www.lessardesign.com/index.html