



How to Make “Home” Your Comfort Zone in Tough Times

4 Wallet-Friendly Steps for Creating “Home, Sweet Home”

By Christine Eisner

The recession has directly hit more 50% of the nation's working adults, pushing them into unemployment, pay cuts, reduced hours at work or part-time jobs, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey. With no recovery in sight, they face a bleak economic reality. Even for those who are lucky enough to have jobs, workers at all income levels are working more hours for less money – and there is always the fear that they might be suddenly be joining the ranks of the unemployed.

In these times of uncertainty, having a positive attitude is more important than ever. Whether you are punching a clock or pounding the pavement, it is increasingly important to create a home environment and daily routines that can inspire a positive attitude in tough times.

Over 10% of people unemployed have been out of work for an average of 6 months, and a 24% of 18 to 29 year olds have moved back home to reduce their living expenses, according to the May, 2010 Pew Study.

The key is to create living spaces and daily routines that make you feel grounded, connected and comfortable in your home. That's what Comfort Living is about - creating a lifestyle that emphasizes inner priorities is as comfortable and personal as your favorite pair of jeans.

Here are a few ideas for making your home your best friend in these trying times. Keep in mind that what's most important is that you feel comfortable, connected and “at home”. Experiences are what count, not appearances.

1. A Relaxation Place:

Remember the forts you built as a kid? They weren't elaborate but they sure felt good to be in! I call these “campfires.” Just like the logs and sticks kind, Comfort Living campfires are intentional combinations of objects and routines that make you feel grounded. So what will your campfire include and where will it be? -- an armchair in your den, a hammock in your back yard or a rocking chair on your front porch?

2. A Productive & Inspiring Workplace:

Campfires can also draw you in for productive and inspiring work sessions. Whether your focus is on a job search, earning extra money or taking care of the bills, a home office and a daily routine of taking care of business makes you feel in control of your life. One of those routines is staying organized. Whether you suffer from papers gone awry or an overflowing e-mail inbox, obstacles like these get in the way moving forward. But staying tidy is only half of the picture. “Neat-as-a-pin” surroundings aren't going to make you feel truly at home. So make a point of personalizing your spaces. In my book, *Comfort Living: A Back-to-Basics Guide to a More Balanced Lifestyle*, I call this “streamlining,” when you turn UP the volume on the positives and turn it DOWN on the negatives.

3. Little Things:

In your relaxation and work spaces, look to add elements that make the places that make you want to linger. Some ideas include “soft stuff” like pillows and lap blankets, photos of friends and family, music, good task lighting as well as the kind of lighting that casts a warm glow when it’s time to downshift from the work day. And don’t forget convenient storage, a nearby pen and paper for jotting down thoughts, a conveniently-located wastebasket and comfortable seating.

4...Nature:

This is one of the most overlooked tools for living well – and it have to cost a penny! With technology encroaching on virtually every aspect of daily living, nature is one of the easiest ways to slow things down and re-balance. Try pulling back the curtains, opening the windows, taking a walk or enjoying that cup of coffee on your balcony -- and when you come back inside, bring in a flower or two for your desktop or your den. You’ll be surprised at the difference it makes.

The cover of my book has a birdhouse on it. That’s because, the way I see it, living well doesn’t have to be complicated, overwhelming or expensive. All you need is a roof over your head, a place for your treasures, a view to the outside and a place for special people to make themselves at home when they stop by. Start from what’s most important to you and how you want to feel in your day-to-day life, and then go from there to create “campfires” that draw you and others in for positive experiences.

Christine Eisner is a designer, author and consultant. She was the Public Relations Director for Polo/Ralph Lauren and has worked in the lifestyle and design world in New York, London and Atlanta for the past 30 years. As the author of the critically-acclaimed **Comfort Living: A Back-to-Basics Guide to a More Balanced Lifestyle**, she shares how people can create living spaces that enrich the moments that make up life.

Comfort Living is available through Barnes & Nobel, Borders, Books a Million and other retailers as well as on amazon.com and comfortlivingbychristine.com

5-star ratings from 9 Amazon “Top Reviewers” A Foreword Reviews “2009 Book of the Year” Finalist!

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