

MAKE YOUR

Home Happy

7 Steps to Make Your Home Look
and Work Better For You

by Jackie Hernandez

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1

Throw Out the Floorpan

2

Use Your Feeling Words

3

What NOT To Do

4

Tell Your Story

5

Take a Stand (For What You Like)

6

Stop Over-Thinking *Everything*

7

Get the Right Things Done

INTRODUCTION

What Makes a Home Happy?

For a long time I thought I would never get my home exactly the way I wanted. I didn't want a home that was just finished, I wanted a home that felt *fantastic*.

A home that supports what we love to do. That nourishes us and our relationships. That tells our story and encourages making new memories.

I am *finally* there in my third home and I learned a lot along the way.

If I could go back and give my younger self, or any new homeowner, 7 nuggets of advice for a happy home, this guide is what I would share with them.

Every room has decorating layers—furniture, textiles, art—but I don't want to talk about any of that. Because what will make it feel like home the fastest can't be bought. It's not about what we have. It's how we use our stuff and what it means to us that creates true happiness and a place to call home. That's what this guide covers.

Instead of focusing on design rules and decorating jargon, let's start with what really matters...*you*.

Deep down inside you have all the tools you need to rock this decorating stuff and make your home happy.

Because...

You are the best person to decorate your home.

It's the truth. No one else knows you—and your needs and wants—like you do.

Only you can...

- Decide how your space should feel.
- Know what makes your space function best for you.
- Make your home happy.

Do you believe you are the best person to decorate your home?

I do.

When you put *you* into the decorating process the output is amazing.

Because there is nothing else like it, like you!

When you focus on you, through the feelings you want and the function you need in your home, the rest of it flows from there. Or as I like to say, decorating gets easier from there.

The tough-part isn't applying a style, mixing colors, or staying on trend. All of that is important, but the tough part is being true to yourself. No one can do that better than you!

The 7 steps and exercises in this guide help you think differently about your home, so you can make it your happy place. That supports what you love to do. That nourishes you and your relationships. That tells your story and encourages making new memories.

It may not ever feel finished, but by golly it will feel ***fantastic***.

STEP 1

Throw Out the Floor Plan

Just because the floor plan says the room by the kitchen is a dining room, doesn't mean you can't make it a den or an office or a playroom or a yoga studio.

How you use your space is one of the most powerful ways to personalize your home. Your home should work for you and support all the things you love in life. Forget what the floor plan says and decide what types of spaces you need to support your lifestyle.

You don't have to do what other people do. You don't have to use your home the same way. So many of my students and clients lament about their formal living rooms and dining rooms going undone, because they don't need the formal spaces. I say, make them work for you! What things do you wish you had more space for? Turn an unused room into a playroom, an office, a music room, a library, or a home gym.

Make it work for you!

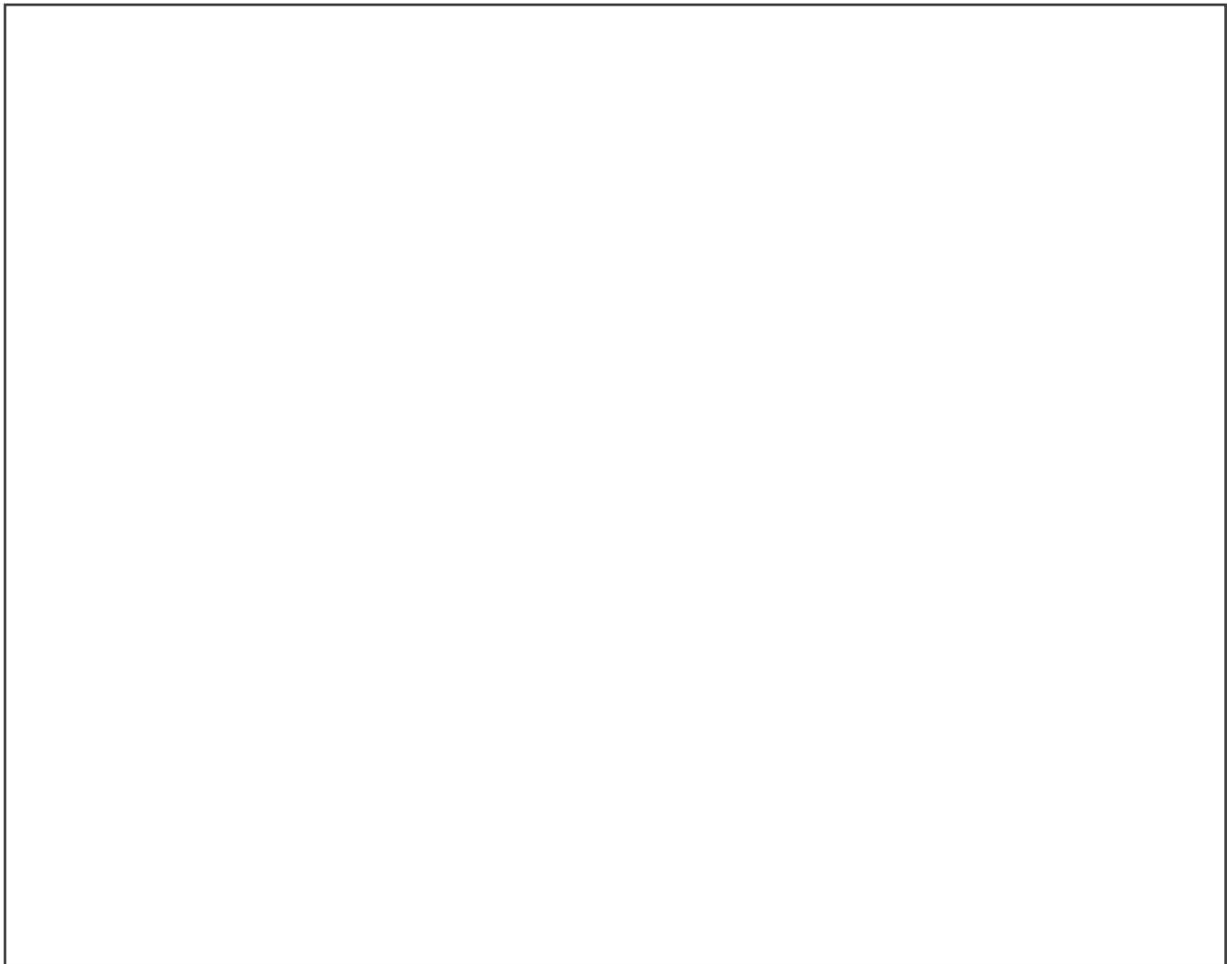
A fashion stylist I follow, Hilary Rushford, says, "Our wardrobes tend to be made up of outfits for Saturday nights, when we really need clothes for Tuesday afternoons."

I think we make the same mistake in our homes. Dining rooms that only get used once or twice per year, while a weekly hobby gets crammed in a closet.

To make your home work for you, you have to get real about how you actually want and need to use your home...*most of the time*, not just sometimes.

Exercise 1

In the space below, sketch a new floor plan—an **activity floor plan**. Instead of naming each room, list 1-3 activities you need or want to do in the space. For example, in the kitchen you might write: Cook, Eat, and Do Homework. The activities you list, not the name of the room, should guide how you design your space.



You don't have to do what other people do. You don't have to use your home the same way. Make your home work for you.



STEP 2

Use Your Feeling Words

The most frequently asked question I hear about decorating is, “where do I start?”

You want to know if you should choose furniture first, or a wall color first, or a decorating style first.

But none of those are first.

The purpose, or function, of your room is important. Your decorating style is important. The colors you like are important. But before any of that, comes the most important thing in decorating...the feeling.

To get the room, and your home, right you must decide first on a guiding feeling.

How do you want to feel in your space?

Seems like an innocent enough question. But it goes deeper than the feeling words, or adjectives, you attach to the room.

For your home as a whole, and for each individual room within it, you should choose 1-3 guiding feelings consistent with what you want to do in the space (look back to your activity floor plan). The feelings you choose should be consistent with one another too, like “relaxed and calm”, not “quiet and fun”.

The feeling you want for your room is the most important decorating decision you can make. If you know what feeling you are after and what evokes that feeling for you, then all the other decisions become instantly easier.

Exercise 2

Write down three words to describe how you want to feel in your home overall. Now, have each person living in your home write down three feeling words, answering the question “How do you want to feel at home?”

Collect all the responses and list them together.

Discuss the words as a family and agree upon your top three.

These are the three words that will guide every decorating decision you make in your home. Don't do anything in your home that doesn't contribute to one of these three feelings.

Extra Credit: Repeat this exercise for each individual room in your home.

<h3>Our Home Should Feel...</h3>
1.
2.
3.



We shape our dwellings,
and afterwards our dwellings
shape us.

-Sir Winston Churchill



STEP 3

What NOT To Do

Sometimes what you don't do, is just as important as what you do.

You want a happy home. But, what does that mean? Does it mean finishing everything on your never-ending to-do list?

In my pursuit to define what a happy home meant to me, I found it easier to *describe what it doesn't mean*. The list started reminding me of what Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, calls a stop doing list. It is a tough-love approach to focusing on what is really important.

Here's what I put on my stop doing list for a happier home:

1. Stop seeking approval, it's my home.
2. Stop wasting time and money on fluff projects, instead work on life-improving projects.
3. Stop blaming the house for my behavior. The house isn't messy I am!
4. Stop collecting inspiration, start doing.
5. Stop over-thinking everything.
6. Stop apologizing for what is undone.
7. Stop complaining about problems, find solutions.
8. Stop dwelling on a failure, move on to Plan B.
9. Stop comparing my home to pictures on Pinterest. A moment captured in a photo is not real life.

Exercise 3

What do you need to stop doing for a happier home? In the space below write down 5-10 things that you are going to stop doing in your home.

My Stop Doing List



To define what a happy home meant to me, I found it easier to *describe what it doesn't mean.*



STEP 4

Tell Your Story Without Saying a Word

It takes so much more than family photos to personalize a home.

In our home, we didn't just hang our latest portrait and some store-bought art. We mixed in meaningful mementos from our past.

When you tour our home, you can learn more about us, the people who live here. You'll learn about our time in the military, our current professions, our families, places we've traveled, our hobbies and interests, and our values. All without saying a word.

The things we surround ourselves with serve as memories to us and tell our story to our guests. Our home and the things we display in it are the only conversation starters we ever need.

Help your home tell your story.

You should actively look for ways to share your story. Start with considering what is most important to you. Even if you think it has nothing to do with decorating, because you never know. The details of your story personalize your space and make it uniquely you.

For everything you love, there is a way to showcase it tastefully in your home. You just need to use an artifact that represents that thing. For example, if you were a geologist, you might display a mineral collection. If you love skiing, you might hang a pair of vintage skis as art. If you love to travel, you might display a map with markers of all the places you've been.

Put some thought into what represents that thing and would also make interesting decor. Sometimes the more obscure artifacts start the best conversations.

Exercise 4

In the space below, write a list on the left of your interests—hobbies, symbols, professions, values, places, letters and numbers that are important to you or your family. Now in the right hand column, brainstorm one artifact you could use to display each interest in your home.

<i>Interests</i>	<i>Artifacts</i>



The things we surround ourselves with serve as memories to us and tell our story to our guests.



STEP 5

Take A Stand For What You Like (and Evict What You Don't)

Phrases like, “It might work”, “I sorta like it”, and “Maybe if it was...” are hereby banned from your vocabulary.

You need to get clear on what you like and what you don't.

There is no room for wishy-washy in your home.

You're in control. Act like it.

On the next page I am going to ask you to list out your decorating loves and hates. If you are a decorating decision-phobe, start with what you hate. It is often easier to point out what you don't like than what you do.

Now, it's time to write the love list. The gotta have it, can't live without it, need it in my life list. It's okay if it's short, it should be. Just like picking a husband, you must be choosy. Speaking of choosy...

You gotta love it, not just appreciate it.

I believe things you like and catch your eye, fall into one of two categories; love or appreciation. Knowing how to spot the difference is the key to making sure you are creating a home filled with things you truly love, not things you merely appreciate.

To create a home that makes you happy, you need to **differentiate** between what is right for your home and what is nice, but would be better for someone else's home. Big difference.

Exercise 5

In the hate column, get clear on your decorating aversions. List out every color, fabric, style, metal finish, etc. that has ever done you wrong and you never want to see again.

Now in the love column, jot down your decorating obsessions. What colors do you love? What style do you gravitate toward? Whose your favorite designer? What puts a twinkle in your eye every time you see it on Pinterest? What do you want your home to have more of? To feel more like?

Extra Credit: Evict one thing you hate or merely appreciate from your home NOW. Donate it, trash it, or give it to someone who would love it more than you.

Love	Hate

STEP 6

Stop Over-Thinking *Everything*

We spend a ridiculous amount of time thinking about the small decisions. In the grand scheme of life, what color you paint your walls is a very small decision. But many of us probably spend more time thinking about wall colors than we did about choosing which college to go to. (Slight exaggeration, I hope.)

We toil over the small decisions, because they don't *need* to be made. We can sit on them forever. Think about them endlessly. I used to think it was a form of procrastination.

When I can't make a decision I feel stuck. I feel useless. I feel unsure. Even if it's a stupid little decision.

I finally realized indecision was a symptom of self-doubt. How many second-opinions I asked for was equal to how much I doubted myself.

With thousands of small decisions to make in your home—everything from what color to paint the walls to which way the bed should face—you need confidence.

In a frustrating catch-22, the only way to get it?

Make *more* decisions.

With each decision, you must:

- Follow your instincts or trust your intuition.
- Stay focused on the outcome you want.
- If you are unsure, let it rest for a moment and come back to it.
- Confidently choose and move on. Other decisions await you.

Exercise 6

One of the best ways to make better decisions? Recall what worked well or didn't work well about the last *similar* decision you made.

In the space below, write down three successful decisions you made recently and how you decided. Also write down three decisions that didn't turn out well and how you made them.

Refer to this list the next time you need to make a decision and remind yourself of what works and what doesn't.

	<h2>Recent Good Decisions:</h2>
1.	
2.	
3.	
	<h2>Recent Bad Decisions:</h2>
1.	
2.	
3.	



In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.

-Theodore Roosevelt



STEP 7

Get the Right Things Done

I know, if you are anything like me, the list of things you want to do in your home is a mile long. But going from home to *happy place*, means knowing when to rip up the list and just live.

Think about your list for a moment. Does everything on it really matter? Do you have more nice-to-dos than must-dos?

Let's figure out what are your must-dos—those projects and changes that are life-improving—and throw away the rest.

Because darling, you don't have time for it all.

On the next page follow the exercise to break up your to-do list into four categories:

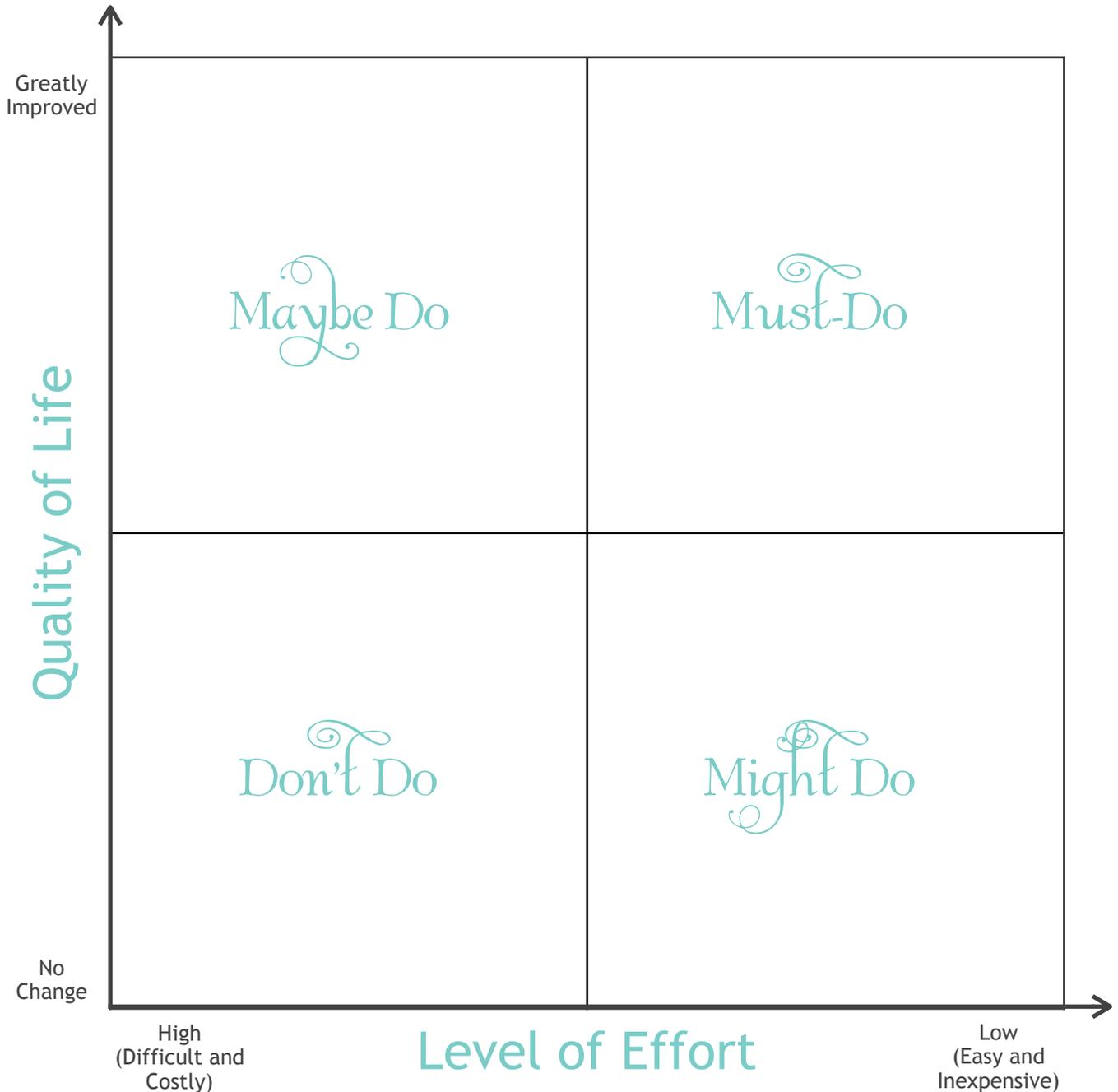
1. **Must-Do** - Changes that greatly improve your quality of life for little effort.
2. **Maybe Do** - Changes that greatly improve your quality of life, but take a lot of effort to do.
3. **Might Do** - Changes that don't make a big difference in quality of life, but are easy and inexpensive to do.
4. **Don't Do** - Changes that don't improve quality of life and are difficult or costly to do.

Focus on the must-dos. Your life will be better for it and you won't miss the rest. *Promise.*

Exercise 7

First, number your home to-do list. Then, plot the numbers on the chart below based on quality of life against level of effort. *Be honest.*

Re-write your to-do list with only the numbered tasks from the must-do quadrant. *Scrap the rest.*



Listen Up!

For every woman who has dreamt of having a home that looks (and feels) more stylish, comfortable, neat, decorated, and bright...

Class is now in session.

Raise your hand if you...

- Collect ideas and hoard inspiration.
- Crave a family room that looks great even *with* that pile of just-used toys on the floor.
- Are waiting for the right moment, more time, or for the next paycheck to redo that room from boring to beautiful.

It's time to stop waiting.

Because you've found your new home for decorating know-how.



Hi! My name is Jackie Hernandez, your Dean of Decorating, Instructor of Interiors and Schoolmistress of Style! Or, you can just call me "teacher."

I'm a self-taught professional decorator (and wife and mom) with a passion for helping other women create the home of their dreams without moving or buying a bunch of new stuff!

[Join me inside School of Decorating](#) to learn how.



www.schoolofdecorating.com