



Transitional Design

Merging "his" and "hers" with all-together style

— By Elisa Krovblit

TO DO LIST

- Listen to each other
- Write it down
- List what to keep
- List what to do
- What to achieve
- What to expect
- What is the timeframe
- What are your needs
- Your wish list
- Your absolutes
- Listen to each other

Moving in together is a huge part of getting married. You've spent so much time planning the wedding, searching for the perfect everything, including the perfect home to start your lives together in. For some it will be a starter home, for others a condo. Moving day has been booked, belongings are packed, arrangements have been made. But what do you do when you both have entire households of furnishings? Who gets to keep what? What should be bought new? Do you keep his great-grandmother's hutch, or do you keep the chic dining suite she bought just last year? How about that thing he calls a "desk?" What about her bookshelf of everything she's read, from childhood...

You don't want the beginning of your lives together to be the beginning of the end, but making the decisions about who gets to keep what can cause a battle royale. You need to have some understanding of what you're about to

do before moving day comes and aggravation sets in. Moving is always stressful, even without having to make some pretty monumental decisions at the same time.

Having worked extensively through Toronto, Montreal and Miami, Yanic Simard, Principal of Toronto Interior Design Group, is regarded as a leading expert in the area of transitional design. Design based on the new and evolving needs as you make major lifestyle changes needs to be addressed. Yanic refers to it as "transi-chic" describing it as "a challenge."

Though couples can often have similar tastes and find themselves drawn to similar décor trends, opposites do attract, and there's a difference between male and female sensibilities to take into account too, among other variables.

Simard says that there is no formula to



successful transitional design, but that there are steps to take to help things move smoothly along the way, the most important being to listen to each other. You need to make sure you express your own needs and understand the other's needs as well.

The first things you need to know are the basics. "What's the inventory? What's the vision? Are kids in the plan?" Simard suggests asking yourself and writing everything down to start a plan. You've got to have a few things set. Are you moving into his place, her place or a new place for the two of you? Get an idea whether you're going to be in your first home for a short period of time or if it's more permanent. He sees many people moving into a two-bedroom condo – it's okay for a couple

LIKE YOUR HOME, OTHERWISE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ENJOY COMING HOME.

and works for a while when a baby comes along, but for most, it's not meant to be permanent, and a family home is the next step. Others want an unconventional or unusual space, perhaps focused on careers and entertaining – a funky city loft is where you plan to spend a substantial amount of time.

Maybe you want to go right into a house. Knowing whether kids factor in and how a family will change the dynamic will affect what you might invest in different furnishings and even what you invest in your home.

Next, Simard advises, "make a wish list." You both have stuff. What do each of you want to keep? What do each of you envision for your new home? What is your style? What new things do you want to buy?

Of the couples who commission his professional design services, Simard finds that a lot of young couples have money, but not a lot of time on their hands and need help getting things done. Often, he says, one is all about the design, very knowledgeable and concerned about every detail, while the other says "eh,

it's just a chair." But, he says, "guys tend to be more sensitive than you would perceive."

The goal is to create a harmonious space, one where both people feel

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO LISTEN TO EACH OTHER.

comfortable. It can't be everything one person wants, because the other won't feel the space reflects their needs. Though, he warns, both can't do everything, "one has to agree to lead". Often there's a difference in style between the two, but in design different styles are easily married. If he's more traditional and she's more modern, this can be resolved by tastefully combining elements of each. Go eclectic, make it work.

At this point, Simard says, "budget is key, everything has a price tag." Whether you're hiring a designer or going it on your own, you have to know how much you're going to spend. Individual finances will dictate. There's personal savings and there's potential for a large amount of money from wedding gifts. Do you want to invest this in buying your home? Do you want to use some of it to purchase new



furnishings? Do you want top-of-the-line appliances? Do you want big ticket items or are you both... frugal. Is this where the arguments start because one of you is a saver and the other a spender?

If you have been listening to each other and have a clear plan, your budget will be an easier compromise.

Getting ready for the big move means editing your stuff. Edit on each side. Compromise. "Think about putting pieces that work together." Do it right and it will be fun. Simard advises leaving yourself plenty of time to plan. How long did your wedding day take to plan? "This is more than a wedding. You're going to live with this for the next three to five years. You don't want pressure or bad choices. Make it fun."

Your new place isn't a storage space. If you don't need it, don't move it in. If you can, replace it, sell it or give it away. If it's sentimental, rent a storage space if you must, but don't spend your first few years together living around the furniture and other accessories that you will find inconvenient and grow to resent. Edit. Agree on what's coming, measure your new space to make sure your stuff doesn't just fit, but works in the space. "Make your space livable and comfortable and deal with the rest later."

In fact, Simard recommends not filling your space completely. New pieces will help bridge between what each of you brings. And, Simard says, "it's fun to add, so there's no need to fill it completely."

Now that you're ready to go ahead with planning out your new space, Simard recommends that you make your bedroom a priority. "Get a good mattress. You spend so much time sleeping that this is a must." This is one place where you're going to want to spend money. Your bed can go with you if you move.

Next, think about closets. "You have to merge his and hers. If you move into an



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800-sq.-ft. condo with a 10-by-10-ft. bedroom with one closet, it's compromise, planning and organization that are going to make it work." Simard says it's closet organizers that will solve many storage issues. With a single bar

MOVE WHAT YOU REALLY NEED. A CONDO ISN'T A STORAGE SPACE.

and top shelf, you lose most of the closet space. Having your closet built-in with organizers will add a lot of storage. "It's a reality of living in the GTA."

The rest of your space comes next. Each person will want to do up their

YOU CAN DO IT IN STAGES, BUY WHAT YOU NEED AND ADD LAYERS.

favourite room – the room they use the most. However you go, "keep it simple," Simard advises, recommending a few large pieces

instead of many smaller ones. If you're in a condo or smaller home and plan to make a move to a larger family home within a short period, you may want to make do with certain furnishings – like your sofa set – for the moment, knowing that you'll be buying new to suit your next place very shortly. Or you may want to go with really good furniture knowing that you'll want to upgrade your sofa set for the next house, but this one will look great in the basement rec room.

You can shop around and decide on your priorities. "You can do it in stages, buy what you need and add layers." If you can, mix expensive pieces in with inexpensive accessories, especially if budget is a concern. Big-ticket items should be quality so you don't end up replacing them, while the more inexpensive items, like accessories, throw pillows, lamps and decorative objects, can be temporary. Have fun with those, go trendy, try out colours, it's a good way to experiment with what works for both of you in taste, style and comfort. Simard recommends staying within two styles, working the eclectic if you do, but carrying style through your home so that your pieces will be easier to reuse and rearrange when you move to your next home.

The first time is the hardest.

By the second move, you're used to each other's stuff, it's not his or hers, but yours by then. Make it fun, not stressful, as it's an exciting and happy time of your life. Simard recommends *The New Decorating Book, the Newlywed Edition*, by Better Homes and Gardens. It includes checklists, budget and buying advice, help with prioritizing, and even advice on how to make the most of your bridal registry. You can also contact Yanic Simard – his firm specializes in your specific situation. Toronto Interior Design Group can be found online at www.tidg.ca or call 416-927-8744.