

Re-model behavior: Finding order during a project

BY HARRIET SCHECHTER
Copley News Service

It was the worst of times, it was the best of times. In other words it was remodel time.

"Having a remodeling deadline finally forced us to confront our clutter demons," said Tana Fletcher, a Maryland-based writer. When she and her husband decided to transform their basement into a combination workout room and writing studio a few years ago, they dreaded the daunting task of dealing with over two decades' worth of accumulated "stuff."

Although the preparation — or excavation — was a painful process, Fletcher claims her only regret is not having scheduled the remodel sooner.

"That basement felt like a depressing dungeon for too many years," she says.

"After we got it cleared out and fixed up, it became our favorite part of the house." Yes, preparing for a

remodel can be an ideal opportunity to lighten your load and "unstuff" your life. Of course, if you have any pack-rat tendencies at all, this can be a major challenge — but it's nothing compared to living with the actual day-in, day-out chaos of the remodeling process.

So if you're planning any type of home remodel, it's never too soon to get advice from experts who know which pitfalls can be avoided — and which ones can only be predicted and endured.

Ingredients

Lesa Heebner, a Del Mar, Calif.-based kitchen designer and life coach, believes clear communication is a step toward the successful outcome of any remodel.

"But keeping the end result in mind is equally important," she added.

Heebner, who has been involved in hundreds of kitchen remodels (including her own), also notes that problems often result from a

lack of awareness on the part of the homeowner about how disruptive a kitchen remodel will be.

"When you can't use your kitchen, your life can get pretty chaotic — unless you've prepared yourself," said Heebner.

To help clients get prepared, she shows them how to apply her seven-step Recipe for Clarity to the remodeling process, which focuses on "ingredients."

"Ingredients are the material components. In this case, that would mean identifying which appliances and supplies you'll need to set up and stock a temporary kitchen," Heebner explains. "Keep in mind the probable lack of a kitchen sink, which creates the major challenge. Stock up on disposable items to minimize having to wash anything."

Another type of preparation for this kind of remodel involves clearing out your kitchen — don't even consider leaving anything in drawers or cabinets, let alone out

on counters. Heebner recommends purging anything that either doesn't work or doesn't work well.

"And check your lids. If you have pots or containers that are missing them, or vice versa, this is a great opportunity to toss," she said.

Dust you can trust?

Remodeling veteran Paula Jhung, who calls herself "the anti-cleaning guru," is the author of "How to Avoid Housework" (Fireside Books, \$14.95). Jhung's recollections of her own remodeling experiences revolve around the overall lack of privacy inherent to the process.

"You are never alone," she recalled ruefully. "It's no longer your home. You're living with all these characters who look at you sometimes as if you shouldn't be there."

Her advice?

"Move out. But not far away — you need to be near enough so you can keep an eye on how things are going.

You want to be there early in the morning especially, to answer questions."

If you do plan to rent a home away from home during your remodel, ascertain whether there will be any construction going on, in or near the place. Jhung learned this lesson the hard way: the condo complex she chose as her "escape from remodeling hell" started a noisy renovation project the day after she got settled there.

Jhung is bluntly pragmatic about the inevitability of dust.

"Trying to dust during a remodel is like shoveling in a snowstorm," she said.

"Learn to embrace dust, otherwise you'll go nuts."

If you have dust allergies, obviously you'll need to make special arrangements.

Also, be aware that remodeling tends to stir up bugs, she says. And since your doors will probably be open a good part of the time, keep a lookout for vermin or rodents, which can become

unwanted houseguests.

Jhung suggests having your home professionally cleaned from top to bottom as soon as the remodel is finished.

"Don't try to do it yourself," she cautioned. "For one thing, it will kill your vacuum cleaner."

Hire professionals who know how to clean every nook and cranny. Your heating/air-system vents should be cleaned professionally too, she advises; there are companies which specialize in doing that.

Jhung points out that even though you may need to budget for these costs (some contractors do include cleaning costs in their bid), it's well worth it.

"To finally walk in and see clean windows" — she sighed at the memory. "It's so uplifting to have it done — and done right — before you start putting back all your stuff."

Harriet Schechter is the author of "Let Go of Clutter" (McGraw-Hill).

Saving water also saves money

BY PAUL R. HUARD
Copley News Service

It's just water, so use it wisely.

That's the latest message to homeowners from a diverse group of interests ranging from plumbing-product manufacturers to the government.

There's also been exponential population growth in many areas of the country, putting a strain on water supplies across the nation.

You can start saving water — and saving money — right at home. It doesn't take a crash course in water management to make a difference, just the willingness to use water wisely.

Your bathrooms account for nearly 75 percent of the water used in your household. Do the math — the bathroom is the first place to check when you want to stop water from going down the drain.

American Standard Inc., a manufacturer of plumbing supplies, offers the following information and tips on water conservation:

■ **Plug leaks.** A leaky toilet, which may be silent and go unnoticed, can waste up to 200 gallons of water per day. Check for toilet tank leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the toilet bowl within 30 minutes. (Flush as soon as test is done, since food coloring may stain tank.)

■ **Eliminate sticking levers.** If the toilet lever frequently sticks in the flush position, it allows water to run constantly. Replace or adjust it.

■ **Keep flushing to a minimum.** Dispose of facial tissues, insects and other such waste in the trash rather than the toilet.

■ **Improve toilet performance.** If your home had its toilets installed more than 10 years ago, replacing an old toilet could automatically and permanently cut your

home water consumption by 25 percent or more.

■ **Repair or replace dripping faucets.** If your faucet is dripping at a rate of one drop per second, you can expect to waste from 75 to hundreds of gallons of water a week.

■ **Replace older rubber-washer faucets.** The lifetime, drip-free performance of ceramic-disk valves can save you money spent on maintenance and wasted water due to leaks. You also get smooth and easy handle control.

■ **Replace faucets without aerated flow restrictors.** These restrictors incorporate air into the water stream. The result is a bubbling flow that provides excellent rinsing action while reducing water usage. Removing the flow restrictors from these aerators is not recommended as it may reduce the effectiveness of the aerator and may make temperature control more difficult.

■ **Replace old shower heads.** New shower heads are restricted to 2.5 gallons per minute and technological advancement in the direction of water streams and the materials used result in a more satisfying rinse while reducing your water usage. Removing the flow restrictors from shower heads is not recommended as it may make temperature control more difficult and increase the risk of scalding.

■ **Practice "lather-rinse-repeat."** In the shower, turn water on to get wet; turn off to lather up; then turn back on to rinse off.

■ **Turn water off while brushing.** Don't let water run while shaving or brushing your teeth. A single-control faucet permits easy one-handed operation and control over both water flow and temperature.

Around the rest of your home, check for the following:

■ Seek out hidden leaks.

Read your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.

If you have a well at home, check your pump periodically. If the pump kicks on and off while water is not being used, you likely have a leak.

■ **Regulate water temperature.** Insulate your water pipes to keep your cold water cooler and your hot water hotter throughout your home. You'll get the right temperature faster while reducing both water usage and energy costs.

■ **Refrigerate drinking water.** Store drinking water in the refrigerator rather than running the tap while you are waiting for cool water to flow.

■ **Thaw food overnight or in the microwave.** Do not use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods.

■ **Wait for a full load.** Operate dishwashers and washing machines only when they are fully loaded.

■ **Use a slow, steady stream for washing by hand.** A single-control faucet permits easy one-handed operation and control over both water flow and temperature.

■ **Turn off ice makers.** Use trays instead.

BY DIANNE CROWN
Copley News Service

In an old bathroom, even the seemingly small jobs can become an undertaking, especially when you want to keep that vintage look.

But you can get the results you're looking for. The main thing, said plumber Ken Easterday, is choosing where to spend your money.

"Save your vintage look, but get rid of your vintage plumbing," said Easterday.

When something old is leaking, like a faucet or bathtub drain, a plumber will often find rusted threads and rotted pipe.


Sometimes repair parts are available, but usually the entire faucet will need to be replaced. That's a good investment, said Easterday, who has been in business long enough to see the effects of time and use on old cast-iron and galvanized-steel plumbing.

"Today, most plumbers use copper in the water lines and plastic in the drain lines," he said.

"Plastic drain lines have been such a blessing to plumbers, mainly because they last longer without ever wearing thin. It's easier to run plastic pipes underground and in walls, clogged lines are much easier to clear and material doesn't build up inside like it did in the old cast-iron.

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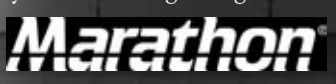

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