



Can Someone Fix the Deck?

While talking to friends at a recent event, the discussion turned to things like work, free time and the precarious balance between the two. Regarding the house, we asked, just because we may be physically able to do something ourselves, when is it better to admit our limitations and turn it over to a professional?

This discussion was relevant to me because I, like many women, am married to a man who enjoys a challenge, is relatively handy, and likes to learn new things. Because of these very attributes he is also hard-working, involved and interested in life, which means he is also generally over-worked and distracted. As a result, I am starting to feel that nothing ever gets done around the house. In the midst of four family members who lead very active and relatively productive lives, I ask myself: can't someone just stay home and fix the deck?

Well, if we do, let's replace the redwood planks with stamped concrete! While we're at it, should we add an arbor for shade? Better wait until we can do it right.

And, when we do the bathroom, let's just gut the whole thing. Then, should we use travertine, ceramic or subway tiles? Should we remodel the kitchen at the same time? It is starting to feel overwhelming. More research needed.

When it's time to paint the outside, should we replace the siding instead? We should probably install new gutters first, as that is what caused the damage to the siding in the first place. That will be a big job...

Then, we occasionally fantasize about more frivolous things, like adding a woodstove to the Master bedroom, some more landscaping to the yard, a big screen TV to the family room, or new doors throughout the house. Soon we realize updated heating and cooling are probably more important, and that will be a huge investment, too.

So our progress is hampered by our ambition. Home improvements can be intimidating, demanding and expensive, so it's definitely easier to wait 'until': until we can afford it, until we can do the next step, or until we know exactly what we want. Meanwhile, we are living in limbo, which can feel frustrating and limiting. And, the bottom line is, nothing at all is getting done!

Our homes can be maintained, improved and sometimes remodeled one board, one tree or one appliance at a time. Home maintenance is a lifelong process, so let's try to keep moving forward, slow and steady, because if we wait for perfection, we will surely fall short. When everyone is amiable, take some time to agree on a list of priorities, and work on that list, one by one. We may not be living in our dream house, but it's the best investment we have in the long run, and it's worth maintaining.

Speaking of which, I think someone just stepped through a plank in the deck!

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A weekly columnist for the Calaveras Enterprise, Linda Lawrence is the owner of HouseCalls for Redesign, and was trained and certified by IRIS (Interior Redesign Industry Specialists). She has lived in Murphys for nearly 20 years and specializes in one-day home makeovers, using your existing furnishings, art and accessories. Contact her at housecalls4redesign@comcast.net or at 728-2732, or visit her website at housecalls4redesign.com.