Full house: Welcoming new additions to your household

There is no doubt that the structure of the home and the very image of what a family looks like would be unrecognizable to our parents' generation. The family unit of generations past had two parents raising at least two children until those children became adults and moved out, never to return. Today, homes and families are diverse, and so too can the pathways of how each member of the household got there. Although we may *know* that family can look a lot of different ways, when it comes to how we *feel* and our *personal space*, there can be a bit of a lag in understanding. The changing landscape of the home comes in a lot of different forms: whether it's a new baby, a blended family resulting from new partnerships, an adult child returning home after being away, an ill grandparent or other family member moving in to receive needed care, or friend facing financial struggles, it's likely the home you know will undergo change at some point. For a lot of us, home is our safe space where we can relax and be at peace, and it can be destabilizing when that feels threatened. Here are some go-to tools and reminders to keep your home feeling safe and calm, while swimming in the inevitable tides of change.

Communication

This can never be overemphasized: communication is and always will be key in making transitions smooth and new arrangements possible. When something bothers you, rather than silently trying to cope (which can feel noble but often leads to passive aggression), say it out loud and say it soon. Being clear and honest has huge benefits when it comes to harmonious living. This doesn't only apply to problems – expressing gratitude and appreciation for a good meal or a clean bathroom goes a long way as well!

Expectations and boundaries

When someone new is moving into your home, you can't expect things to go the way you want them to without setting some preliminary guidelines. Be up front about your needs and what you expect: do you need the dishes to be done before the lights go out at night? If someone won't be spending the night at home, do you want to be informed? How do you hope to handle the division of household labour – as more people in a space will of course bring more work. Ask yourself what you need in advance of the change, then try to share it as clearly as possible.

Space

How would you feel if new artwork appeared on the dining room walls? What about furniture being rearranged? Is there a space in the home that you want to keep as just yours, or as a strictly quiet space? Spend some time thinking about the space as actual physical matter: the space itself is actually inseparable from what goes on in it, so don't underestimate its importance. Be honest with yourself and those you are sharing the space with in regards to what you need in terms of rooms, walls, cupboards, and floors.

Adjustment and adaptability are easier said than done, so be patient with yourself and the new additions to your home. The capacity of your household will have to stretch to accommodate new members, and that will demand flexibility. Resentment and irritation will probably rear their heads at some point, and that's normal: change is difficult to accept, especially in the place you rely on most for stability. In the midst of the difficulty, remember some of your reasons for allowing your household to stretch in the first place: they're likely coming from a place of deep love, generosity, and optimism. Those feelings are big enough to accommodate just about anything.