

5 WAYS TO REDUCE THE STRESS OF SELLING YOUR HOME

According to some studies, selling a home can be as stressful as getting a divorce or going through bankruptcy. You can't eliminate stress when selling, but you can minimize it by taking the steps described below.

1. THIS MAY SOUND SELF-SERVING, BUT CHOOSE THE RIGHT LISTING AGENT

Our industry is rife with agents who don't understand business, don't know how to provide customer service, and don't communicate well. They may "know real estate," but they don't know how to "do real estate." This is evident from start to finish—from showing homes to closing deals.

Consider home showings, for instance. As a listing agent who represents home sellers, I frequently hear from my sellers about the bad habits of some buyer's agents: They don't turn off lights, close doors, or wipe their feet. They let their client's kids run amok, they break things, and they show up unexpectedly. They even steal. Keep in mind, that's really a minority of agents...but those problem agents do stand out! Ten agents may show up and behave professionally, but the eleventh damages the reputation of the previous ten by doing something unprofessional. It drives responsible agents mad!

My job is to minimize negative factors throughout the transaction. That starts with controlling the showing situation by managing the lock box, being strict about showing instructions, and helping you get your house ready for a bombardment of strangers. I'm here to help,

and that may even mean helping you pack up your valuables to prevent theft or breakage.

No matter how you prepare your home, showing it will still be uncomfortable, simply because you have to keep your home in show-ready condition. Together we can work out a system to make it at least tolerable for the duration of your marketing time.

2. KEEP YOUR HOUSE 10 MINUTES AWAY FROM BEING "SHOW READY"

It is a huge pain to have to show your house. A huge pain. There's no getting around it. And the longer it takes your house to sell, the more painful it is.

Solutions for the stress of showing

1. Move out first. But if that's not an option...
2. Pack most of your belongings in preparation for moving. Live minimally in your house.
3. Clean as you go. For some people that's easy. But if you're the type of person who'd rather play than clean house, you may not always have the tidiest of homes. No judgement there, but if that's you, spend a long time getting everything deep cleaned, then close off areas you don't need to use. It'll be easier to do maintenance cleaning in the areas you still use while selling. And if a buyer complains that things aren't as clean as they were when he first saw the house, spend a little money to allow the buyer to bring his/her own house cleaner in before moving in. There's an old saying that "no one's dirt is as clean as your own dirt," so no sense in arguing about cleanliness.
4. Have a plan for leaving the house during showings. If you have a dog or kids, this can be a bit harder to arrange, but is still important.

If you can't leave the home, don't "lurk." Buyers can't wait to get out of a house where they feel the seller lurking in the background. Tell the buyers you'll go read on the patio while they're looking, or you'll take the kids

for a walk, or you'll be in the front yard, etc. Just remove your "presence" as much as possible.

3. LET GO OF THE HOUSE EMOTIONALLY

I've sold a fair number of houses and I understand that no one loves your house as much as you do. You love the gardens you worked so hard on. You think your decorating is great. You adore your cherry wood kitchen cabinets. Your brand-new expensive carpeting is the perfect color.

But buyers will still want to rip much of it out.

They'll say things that make you spitting mad, like opining that your paint is ugly, your stone fireplace is dated looking, or your light fixtures would have to be changed. Right in front of you, they'll discuss getting rid of your expensive carpeting or chopping down your favorite tree—the one your kids played in as they were growing up.

You must view your house as a commodity. Buyers are trying to fit themselves into *their own house*, not fit themselves into *your home*. They will want to remove anything that doesn't feel like them...and they want the freedom to talk about it with one another while they're shopping for a home. So if you don't want to hear it, then try to leave the house when it's being shown.

4. DON'T BE A TOUR GUIDE

Buyer's real estate agents spend hours upon hours with their buyers, going from home to home until they're completely exhausted with trying to make the buyer's dream come true.

The last thing the buyer's agent (or the buyer) wants is for a seller to start playing tour guide. I've been in homes where the seller spent 45 minutes detailing everything he'd ever done to his home. I knew what he was doing. He was certain that his real estate agent wasn't doing enough to "sell" all the special features of his home, so he was taking matters into his own hands.

It doesn't work. Or at least it doesn't work any better than typical showing strategies and takes way too long. Buyers know quickly if this is the house for them, and just because the seller spent \$2,000 on "better" quality sprinklers, or the water softener is only 3 months old, the buyers are not going to love it any more. They'll try to be polite, but they'd really like to leave.

A better strategy is to tape a small sign to anything special that you want to call attention to. Then if the buyers are interested in the house, those extras will be a nice touch that can put them over the edge.

5. PREPARE FOR TURBULENCE ON THIS FLIGHT

Once you get an offer, let your agent pilot the plane (metaphorically speaking). If you're running up into the cockpit every time there's a bit of turbulence, you'll just distract the pilot...but you won't change the turbulence. It's much better to hire an excellent pilot in the first



place, so that when turbulence does hit, you are confident he or she will handle it correctly.

In real estate transactions there is ALWAYS turbulence. There is never not turbulence. Turbulence will happen. Always.

For example, a problem always seems to arise with the house itself, no matter how perfect you think it is, and no matter how many advance repairs you made. In many cases, that issue is something you didn't know about. Or something you'd always lived with, but never thought of as a problem.

There's a better than average chance *the house issue* will arise at the worst possible moment, often at the closing table...just when you think you're finished. Keep in mind that a good buyer's agent will press for advantages for the buyer, which means they may use *the house issue* to negotiate for more concessions.

Your best security for those last-minute negotiations is what you do in advance to prepare. Here are a few things I suggest, even before you start marketing your home: Have an advance home inspection, which will be in addition to the buyer's home inspection. Get a preliminary title report, which will prevent any surprises on the title, such as old easements. Take photographs around the house to "prove" that things are where they are supposed to be, which prevents last minute claims by buyers that you "removed" something (usually light fixtures). Look for the kinds of issues that buyers might notice, such as stained carpeting. If you can fix it, go ahead. If you can't, then don't hide it...but don't call attention to it, either.

Even so, there will be surprises that none of us could foresee. Here are a few things that I've encountered:

- A piece of drywall not being fastened down properly, causing the buyers to demand *all the drywall* be replaced. (Solution: We provided a drywall inspection demonstrating there were no further problems.)
- A damp spot in the ceiling after rain, causing the buyers to demand an entire roof replacement, instead of the simple repair called for. (Solution: We asked the roofing company to certify that their repair would solve the problem, and the seller offered to pay for the repair and an extended warranty.)
- Buyers claiming a repair was done incorrectly and refusing to close until it was re-done...because the repair used average materials instead of high-end expensive materials. (Solution: We stood firm, politely letting the buyers know they didn't have any grounds to prevent closing. Also in this case, we

served them with a Notice to Perform, which is a legal way of saying, “you only have 24 hours to close, or you’re going to have a problem if you don’t.”)

CONCLUSION

When it's time for you to sell your home, I'm on your side, and ready to stand up for you. Together we'll try to control the showings, eliminate problems during showings, manage your time effectively, and stand up to the challenges that will create turbulence during the sale. Experience counts for a lot when it comes to working with a good listing agent. Call me for a listing appointment the moment you start thinking about selling.