
HOW TO MINIMIZE 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 ENTIRELY WHEN SELLING, BUT YOU CAN MINIMIZE IT BY TAKING THE 5 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 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 perhaps the worst problem of all...they show up unexpectedly. 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 when the eleventh does something unprofessional, it damages the reputation of the previous ten agents. It drives responsible agents mad!

My job is to control 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. Here are some ideas for minimizing that pain.

SOLUTIONS FOR REDUCING "SHOWING STRESS"



1. Move out first. *But if that's not an option...*
2. Pack most of your scattered belongings in preparation for moving. Leave just a few "staged" items around. Put your boxes in storage or stacked neatly in a garage. 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.

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 during showings, don't "lurk." Instead, go read on the patio or sit on the front porch (if it's warm out), or hang out in the kitchen. When they want to look at the kitchen, tell them you'll get out of their way and go to a bedroom. In other words, don't hang out in the same space that the buyers are looking in. Just remove your "presence" as much as possible so buyers feel comfortable imagining themselves in the home.

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. Your decor is fabulous. You adore your cherry wood kitchen cabinets. Your expensive carpeting is the perfect color.

But buyers will still want to rip it out, paint over it, and change it.



Buyers will opine that your paint is too dark, your stone fireplace is dated looking, or your light fixtures 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.

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

Real estate agents spend hours upon hours with their buyers, going from home to home until everyone is completely exhausted with trying to find the perfect home.

The last thing the buyer's agent (or the buyer) wants is for a seller to start playing tour guide. I remember one home seller who hovered over us while touring his home, so he could detail everything he'd ever done to the home. He wanted to physically point out things like the expensive control box for the sprinkler system, fresh toilet seats, and the new water heater he'd installed. He wanted to emphasize the wall paper he'd put up just a year ago, tell us the cost of his kitchen cabinets, and tell us stories about living in the house.

You may be thinking, "What's wrong with pointing out important features to a buyer?"

Nothing is wrong with pointing out features, but there's a right way to do it. Hovering and pointing out details takes a lot of time, and buyers are mostly comparing homes based on how the home makes them feel compared to other homes they're looking at. Knowing that the seller spent \$2,000 on "better" quality sprinklers will not make buyers love the house 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. Even though the listing describes all of those features in detail, and the buyers' agent has probably provided those details to the buyers, it's useful to call attention to those details while live and in person...just not by being an in-person tour guide.

5. KNOW THAT YOU WILL HIT 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 actually 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, the 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 *that 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 *that 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.
- Let me order 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 those issues in advance, go ahead. If you can’t or don’t want to, then don’t hide the issues...but don’t call attention to them, either.

Even with preparation, there are almost always 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.”)

Knowing how to manage negotiations is a critical part of my job.

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 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 WHEN IT COMES TO BEING A GOOD LISTING AGENT. CALL ME FOR A LISTING APPOINTMENT THE MOMENT YOU START THINKING ABOUT SELLING.