

Motherly advice on life and home

Mom's never stop being fonts of unasked-for opinions

Don't talk with your mouth full. Stand up to shake hands. You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.

One benefit of being a mom is that you get to dole out unasked-for advice. It goes with the job.

The same is true for home design columnists. As the mom of two, stepmom of three, "glamma" to five, and a home and lifestyle columnist, I am a virtual font of unasked-for opinions.

You know where this is going and you're right. I am going to abuse my position and the occasion of Mother's Day to tell you what I think, and, more to the point, to tell you what I've learned mostly the hard and painful way over the decades, so just maybe you can avoid the same trouble.

After I scratched down a few of my maxims for this column, I bothered my two, 20-something daughters, who have endured my unsolicited advice longer than anyone else and who are only slightly scarred. I asked them to recall advice I had baked into them. They delivered. The exercise proved a) they did hear me, b) their memories are superior to mine, and c) whatever goes wrong in their lives is my fault.

As the list grew, I was surprised — though why should I be? — to see how much of my advice about life, love, work, and what to wear, also applies to home design. Then, I never could see the line between



AT HOME WITH
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where home design stops and home life begins, because there isn't one.

So, this Mother's Day, please indulge my advice-dispensing nature and see if any of the following unsolicited advice is worth heeding.

- They can't win if you don't play.

The comparison game is a cancer. Compete where it counts, perhaps in school or at work, but not where it doesn't. You will always find someone who is faster, skinnier, richer, prettier, or smarter, who has a fancier car or a better house.

And that only matters if you let it matter. Those who want to lord whatever they have over you can't win if you don't care, compare, or compete. Make your home beautiful for you and those you live with, not to impress anyone else.

- Make up your mind up in a moment of strength; don't change it in a moment of weakness.

When deciding to do something difficult, like leave a job, end a relationship, move to a new city, or choose lipstick color or bathroom tile, think it through when you're calm and clear-headed. Consider the options and ramifications.

Then, once you've made up your mind, go. Don't chicken out or revisit the decision when you get that acid feeling in your stomach. It's OK to be afraid, but trust yourself and keep moving.

- The closer something is to your body, the nicer it should be.

When I originally shared this advice with my daughters, I had undergarments and pajamas in mind. (Don't cheap out in these categories.)

But the tenet includes anything that touches you. That includes bras, boyfriends, and bed linens.

- On fashion: You can wear short. You can wear low, and you can wear tight. But you can't wear it all at the same time. Pick one.

It's fun to be a girl and to look attractive. It's another to look trashy. In home design, every room needs a spike, a little eye candy, like a pop of color, against a backdrop of restraint. When everything in a room says look at me, the room loses its allure.

- Make your bed every day.

We've been over this, but this single habit lets you start every day with a small achievement. It builds discipline and creates a sense of accomplishment that will spill over into the rest of your life. Trust me. (While you're at it, pick up your clothes.)

- The right thing and the easy thing are rarely the same thing.

The right thing is passing up that third brownie. The right thing is listening politely to an older relative share political views you disagree with and keeping quiet. The right thing is also cleaning out what's accumulated in your closet or garage. Make getting rid of stuff that's taking up space and congest-

ing your life a habit. I know, it's easier to close the door on the mess and binge watch "Yellowstone" or eat ice cream out of the carton. Do the hard thing. It builds character.

- Take charge of your time, because a task will expand to fill the amount of time you have.

Don't let a project eat up more time than it warrants. Define your priorities and put your efforts where they matter.

Yes, keep house, but don't spend all your time fixing up your house or all your time working to pay for your house. Your house is supposed to serve you, not vice versa. Spend your time wisely. It's all you have.

- Your job is to figure out your gifts and use them to make the world better.

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