

# More lessons learned in 2022

As we just wrapped up the year, one where in the last half alone we moved my daughter and her husband into their new home, fended off mosquitoes, sent houseguests to charm school, and renovated my kitchen, I want to share with you a handful of lessons learned along the way.

Last week, I shared highlights from the first half of 2022. Here are my top takeaways from the last six months:

In JULY, I lurched into the treacherous realm of mother-in-law-dom, after my daughter and her now husband bought a new home. I flew in to “help.” My daughter’s top priority was to replace the shower in their bathroom. I looked at the situation and, though no one asked me, said, “Replacing the shower will likely involve more than just the shower. You might want a bathroom remodel!”

Silence. I continued to bumble forward and just got myself in deeper.

“Mom, I just want a decent shower,” my daughter said. I dropped the subject.

Eventually, they consulted a contractor, then an interior designer. Both gave them the same advice I did, but it was just better in every way coming from them.

Lesson: When your kids are setting up their house, zip your lip. Offer your opinion if asked and know they will very likely come to the right conclusion without you. Meanwhile, you won’t risk being added to the not-welcome list.

In AUGUST, I vanquished mos-



AT HOME WITH  
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quitoes on my patio. No, really. When I first got an email about a new smart mosquito system that connects to your wi-fi and that lets you release mosquito repellent in a defined area from an app on your phone, I thought, “Oh brother! More gadgets to waste your money on that don’t work.”

The system lets off a synthetic version of a substance in chrysanthemums we can’t smell, but small biting insects can and they don’t like it.

Though this sounded far-fetched, I read reviews about the new Thermacell LIV. Then I talked to a few outdoorsmen who verified that the company has been making a portable version of this mosquito repeller for a couple decades, and they wouldn’t think of going hunting or fishing without one clipped to their belts. Duh, obviously, I gave it a try.

Lesson: Although men’s hunting tales rarely apply to better living, this one does. I have spent much more time, often hours a day, on my patio bite free. I’m stunned, but even better, so are the mosquitoes. Just recently I learned that Time magazine listed Thermacell LIV as one of the

Best Inventions of 2022. Indeed.

In SEPTEMBER, I received a publicity pitch to talk to a sort-of design psychic. That was a first. The publicist promised that her client, interior designer Margarita Bravo, could reveal what the aesthetics of someone’s home said about them.

Intrigued, I invited Bravo (who admitted, this wasn’t her idea) to visit my home virtually, so she could give me a “design reading.” Over FaceTime, I tooled her around my house. She rattled off her impressions: I wasn’t afraid of color. I have a curated mix of traditional, rustic and glam. Art is important to me, and my home really says, “This is who I am.” Phew!

Lesson: Bravo’s exercise reminded me: You’re not after a look. You’re after your look. Interior design is not about having a house that looks a certain way but about showcasing the personality of those who live there.

In OCTOBER, I performed a public service just in time for guest season. At the prompting of a dear reader (and all readers are dear), I wrote about the dos and don’ts of being a good houseguest, including abiding by the three-day rule. And, because the success of any host-guest visit depends on many unwritten rules, I wrote a few more down.

Lesson: We all need a little reminder before we wear out our welcomes: Ask to be invited. (Don’t invite yourself.) Mind your things. (Don’t leave them all over.) Mind your business. (Don’t snoop). Pitch in. Chip in. Don’t arrive early and don’t

overstay. Just don’t.

IN NOVEMBER, I explored a question that fascinates me: What makes people move? At the core of most moves whether to a house bigger or smaller, closer or farther from family, in or out of a city, less or more expensive, or in a warmer or colder climate lies the hope that on the other side, life will be better.

Otherwise, why would anyone dismantle their home, put all their worldly possessions in boxes and trucks, and yank themselves like rootbound molars out of their communities?

So I was intrigued by a study that found that more than one in four (26%) Americans moved to a

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