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News & Views

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HOME SELLING

Avoiding Buyer Turnoffs



Even though home buyers are all looking for something a little different, the majority of them share the following turnoffs in common. In some cases, they won't get past the front door if they notice one or more of these problems.

Odours

Odours are number 1 the uh-oh list. Unpleasant odours of any kind; dust, cigarette smoke, cat litter, mildew. Give your home an honest 'sniff test' and get rid of any bad smells - do not attempt to mask obviously bad smells with air fresheners and scents.

Pets

Dog frighten some - others have allergies, and even those who like dogs can find them an irritation and distraction when they simply want to look at your home and property. Its not a good idea to confine pets to a bedroom or garage then instruct potential buyers 'not to go into that area'. During showings plan to remove pets or confine them in crates/kennels.

Bugs & Rodents

Whether its spiders, silverfish, mice, roaches or ants - any bug or rodent shouldn't be in the house or garage. Get rid of them!

Bathrooms

Grimy bathrooms are an instant turnoff. Scrub fixtures, tile, grout, mirrors etc. until they are sparkling clean. Scrub walls or repaint them. Invest in a new shower curtain, bathmat and towels.

Dim Lighting

Dark, dim rooms don't make a favourable impression. Brighten up every room in your home!

- Clean all light fixtures
- Replace existing bulbs with the highest wattage safe for the fixture
- Install additional light fixtures where needed
- Repaint some rooms with colours that reflect light
- Open all drapery/blinds - remove heavy drapery/curtains if necessary - do whatever it takes to let in as much natural light as possible
- Windows should be squeaky clean

Busy Wallpaper

Wallpaper and/or borders in every room is another turnoff for buyers - even those who love wallpaper will seldom like what you've chosen...their colour/pattern preference etc. will be different than yours. You'll want your home to appeal to the majority of potential buyers, so, remove the wallpaper and paint in neutral shades.

Damp, Musty Basements

Dampness or damp smells in a basement is a major concern...the automatic assumption is 'the foundation leaks'. More often than not, its not the foundation leaking but rainwater being diverted 'towards' the foundation instead of 'away' from it. Clogged underground drains, plugged or obstructed eaves or misdirected downspouts can all be culprits.

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Need advice?

Your Realtor is your partner in selling what is likely your largest asset. Whether you need advice about getting your home ready to sell or have questions about current buying and selling trends - call on your Realtor who is available to assist you, every step of the way.

The RIGHT HOUSE

If you've decided to look for a new house, 'thinking ahead' is one of the **musts** when shopping for a home.



Performing this process will help you really focus in on those features that top your **'must have'** list!

Having priority lists is well and good, but, a house must also resonate on an emotional level.

Before embarking on the search for your perfect home, take an hour or so and make a two-pronged priority list. A **'must-have'** column and a **'like-to-have'** column. Once you've established your 'needs' (musts) and 'wants' (like-to-have) your realtor can better assist you with finding that perfect house!

Your 'MUST-HAVE' list ...

should include those features of top priority to you and your family; home type; single-family, condo, townhouse etc., schools & parks, proximity to transportation routes and your workplace, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, privacy, large backyard, granny or in-law suite etc.

Your 'LIKE-TO-HAVE' list...

will include features like; fireplace, neutral decor, main floor rec. room, low maintenance exterior, eat-in kitchen, a particular architectural style, mature trees and/or landscaping, main floor laundry, swimming pool, fenced backyard, 2-car garage etc.

Once you have your lists, give some thought to what items you're willing, and able to compromise on. Give serious consideration to those items on your 'must-have' list.

For instance, if you're the outdoorsy type, a huge backyard and a two-tiered deck will carry more weight than a formal dining room. On the other hand, if you love entertaining, that formal dining room may tip the scales in a house's favour.

This emotional connection - what some may call 'intuition' about a house - is actually quite a rational process. On a sub-conscious level, you're sizing up all the meaningful features of a house to see if they add up to a yes or a no.

Keep in mind that it is important to separate your emotional response to a house from your response to its 'packaging'. Ensure that you are attracted to the 'house' not the seller's furniture or decorating style.

Buying a home you can live with, and in, happily ever after (or at least for a good many years) requires input from both your heart and your head.

If you heed the call of passion, listen to the voice of reason - as well as doing the math - you'll end up with a home you can love and afford!



Get out rain's stains

- Splattered silk or wool. Heat your iron to the highest steam setting. Hold iron 2 inches (5cm) from the water marks and allow the wafting steam to penetrate the fabric. If the spots don't dissipate immediately, use the 'burst' option, but aim the iron away from the fabric on the first burst to rid the appliance of potential spatters.
- Waterlogged leather. Pat sopped shoes, boots, and bags well, inside and out, with a clean towel. Stuff with crumpled newspaper to protect shape and absorb moisture. Air-dry away from direct heat sources. Polish shoes as usual, and treat bags with a neutral leather conditioner.
- Mud-spotted suede. Don't scrape at fresh mud - it'll smear and worsen stains. Instead, let it dry completely, then whisk off clumps and dust with a soft brush. Rub out any darkened spots with a soft kneadable art eraser. To lift matted nap, gently buff with a fine-grit emery board.

Tis the Season

The season of runny noses and barking coughs presents quandaries for the well-mannered but ill person. Just because you're sick and feeling sorry for yourself does not let you off the hook when considering how your actions affect others. Of course, the best thing to do when you are sick is to stay at home, well away from the rest of humanity. If that's just not an option, here are a few suggestions:

Let people know you're sick

There's nothing worse than greeting someone with a warm double-cheeked kiss, only to be told moments later that she's got the worst cold she's had in years. If you've made social plans with friends and you feel sickly, but well enough to go out, give them a heads-up. Allow others the chance to avoid you if they choose, and be gracious if they decide their health is more important than this particular visit with you - this applies to your sick children as well.

No hand shaking

Germs travel more effectively by a handshake than a peck on the cheek. In business situations, own up to the cold and explain that you won't be shaking hands in order to avoid spreading the bug. Also, keep your hands off other people's stuff during cold and flu season. This is especially true of food and drink. Most experts agree that handwashing is the single most effective practice to prevent the spread of germs.

Direct your sneezes

Try to sneeze - and cough - into tissues, or your sleeve. Keep tissues handy and use them! Cotton hankies may look good but they are not as sanitary as using paper tissues that are thrown away. Remember to wash your hands after smothering a sneeze, or blowing your nose.

Fending off a cold

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Stay well rested.
- Eat a balanced diet that includes plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Discard tissues after each use.



Emotions are contagious!

Has it every happened that you meet someone who's in a bad mood and the next thing you know, you're feeling gloomy too?

'Catching' another person's feelings can actually happen! Volunteers were shown pictures of angry or happy faces for 30 milliseconds, followed by photos of neutral faces.

The volunteers responded by mimicking the facial expressions they were shown, and that in turn triggered the actual feeling in the brain.

Researchers say that people who tend to have strong emotional reactions but appear relatively calm on the outside are the most susceptible to 'catching' another person's feelings.

Tip Talk

In The Garden

Winter care for Concrete

Here's how to prevent those nasty cracks from appearing in your concrete furnishings, pots, statuary and bird baths during the winter.

The thing to remember is that concrete is a very porous material which absorbs water, rather than draining it. When water freezes, it expands and can crack concrete.

Waterproofing your concrete is a good way to ensure that it won't crack. Apply a onetime treatment of a silicon-based water sealer, if you are sealing a birdbath, be sure to choose a nontoxic sealer. Alternatively, use a paint formulated for outdoor use and reapply it annually. Where possible, turn over or cover bird baths or pots to prevent them from collecting water. To seal existing cracks, an epoxy resin will do the job. Choose one that is specially formulated for use with concrete, again, whenever possible choose a nontoxic product.

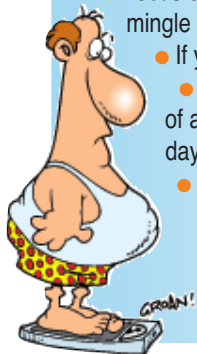
Nontoxic Grass Killer

If you're planning a site for a new garden bed or patio, carpet remnants work great to kill off the grass (or weeds). You can cut the carpet pieces to fit, and they'll completely block out the sun. Unlike plastic sheets that require stacking or weighing-down, carpet remnants are heavy enough so they won't blow away. Come spring, lift the remnants and you're ready to start working in your weed-free site.

The average person will gain 2.5 to 4.5 kilos (5 to 10 lbs) between the 1st of December and New Year's Day...

Here are a few tips to help you maintain your weight this holiday season...

- Never eat on your feet - fast grabs at parties or get-togethers really do you in. Try the classic 'sit down and eat slowly'.
- Always make a point of carrying something; a drink or purse. With busy hands, it's harder to graze.
- Don't arrive hungry - have a veggie based mini-dinner before you go out to help prevent you from overeating.
- Focus on the celebration, not the food. Dance, talk, mingle and move around.
- If you don't love it, then don't eat it!
- Curb fat and calories the day before and the day of a party, squeeze in a walk the day of and/or the day after party to help burn off some extra calories.
- If you are making or contributing a food item for a function, unless the hostess requests you bring something specific, opt for a healthier, lower calorie dish or drink that you enjoy. For example, choose cranberry juice instead of the egg nog.



Peace on Earth

If there is to be any peace it will come through being, not having.

Henry Miller

Peace is not a passive but an active condition.

Mary Roberts Rinehart

Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace.

Buddha

When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace.

Anonymous

Peace, like charity, begins at home.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.

Marianne Williamson

Amaryllis

If you'd like to decorate your home this Holiday season with a few of these stunning flowers...it's time to get them potted!

These giants start to grow as soon as they're planted. Choose a weighty pot about one size larger than the bulb - amaryllis bloom better when pot-bound but are top-heavy when in flower. Pre-soak the roots in lukewarm water, plant in a sandy soil mix, leaving approximately one-third of the bulb above soil level, and place in direct sunlight. Limit watering at this point to encourage blooms. Flowers should appear in about 6 to 8 weeks. Amaryllis bulbs come in large, miniature and double-blooming varieties, and in a range of colours including, white, pink, peach, red & burgundy.



The word Amaryllis means 'sparkling' in Greek. Big, bold and bright, amaryllis can brighten your windowsills even on winter's bleakest days. Amaryllis are tender bulbs from South America, they produce large, robust lily-shaped blossoms in a variety of colours. They are easy to grow and are ideal for forcing into bloom indoors from Christmas through April. If you want blooms for Christmas, look for the many 'Christmas-flowering' choices available. Good quality bulbs may produce as many as 6 blooms on a single stalk which will bloom for up to 8 weeks!

During the growing season, give the plant as much sun as possible - water & fertilize on a regular basis. Amaryllis are easy to carry-over from one year to the next, and, with proper care, amaryllis can continue to thrive and flower for up to 75 years!

Follow these directions for Amaryllis blooms next year...

- * As each flower fades, remove it by cutting the flower stalk 5 cm (2 inches) from the base. *Don't* disturb the foliage because it produces the food for next year's flowers.
- * Keep the plant well fed and watered in a bright, sunny location. Stop watering and feeding in early fall. When the foliage wilts/droops, cut it off.
- * Place the pot in a cool 5° to 10°C (40° to 50°F) dry place for a minimum of 6 weeks. Do not water or fertilize during this dormant period. When you are ready to begin the growing cycle again, move the pot to a sunny, southern window. Begin watering and feeding on a regular basis and you'll have blooms in 6 to 8 weeks.

'Tis the Season

Shopping, decorating, gift wrapping, baking, school concerts, making lists, entertaining and get-togethers... it's no wonder we often feel overwhelmed in the month of December - the entire month can feel like one long and endless to-do list!

That's even more reason to carve out time for yourself - every week. We get worn out if we are constantly 'on task'. If you don't give yourself time to let your mind calm down, you're more likely to be tired, irritable, get run down and sick, and life just won't be as enjoyable.

Give yourself four hours every week, in one solid block of time, to do something just for yourself. That can mean anything from doing a favourite hobby you've let fall by the wayside, enjoying an afternoon of reading, walking, or watching a movie, having a manicure/pedicure, or getting together with a friend or two for a quiet lunch.

Imagine that you're pulling out your own personal batteries and recharging them. At the end of those four hours, you'll feel revived, energized and more able to handle the stresses of the season - and life. And, don't make the mistake of telling yourself you'll take the time when you've finished everything else on your list! If you say that, it will never happen. You must find the time and say to yourself... 'Yes, I've got 50 other things to do, but this is important, too.'

Quick and simple ways to relax, de-stress and regain your calm.

Perform a Kindness

Whenever you see an opportunity to do something that brings peace or kindness into the world, do it. Hold a door open for someone. Thank a sales clerk. The more you practice this exercise, the more opportunities you'll see.

Say Thank You

Simply say 'thank you' from the heart whenever the chance arises. You'll be surprised by how differently even total strangers will respond to these words when they are spoken with sincerity.

See everything as a Gift

Pause during your day and devote a few minutes to seeing everything in your life, right now, as a gift. Once you adopt this perspective, you'll find the positive lesson, outcome or potential in any situation you face.



Driving in Winter Conditions

Winter Survival Kit

The CAA recommends you keep the following items in your vehicle. Be safe! Be well prepared.

- Shovel, ice scraper and snow brush
- Sand or kitty litter or traction mats
- Flashlight, warning light or flares
- Booster cables, tow chain/rope
- A compass (if you drive in remote areas)
- Paper towels or cloth
- Extra clothing, gloves/mitts & footwear
- Blanket (survival blankets are best)
- Emergency food pack with water
- Matches and a 'survival' candle in a deep can (to warm hands, heat a drink or use as an emergency light)
- Small fire extinguisher and first aid kit
- Extra windshield washer fluid
- Fuel line antifreeze
- Reflective vest
- Charged cell phone



HOLIDAY SEASON

Fire Safety



The holiday season is a very special time of year. For every homeowner along with the decorating, baking and festivities come some unexpected fire hazards and safety concerns. It's an ideal time to consider some common sense fire prevention.

- Now is the time to check all smoke detectors! It's also a good time to practice your family fire drill and evacuation plan and confirm your meeting place outside.
- If your chimney has not been inspected this year, now is the time to schedule an inspection and cleaning.
- As you travel merrily from room to room decorating, be sure to maintain proper clearances with all heat sources and do not block exits with your tree or holiday displays.
- If you plan to use your fireplace during the holidays, don't place your Christmas tree too close. The heat of a wood fire will dry out a natural tree very quickly, creating a serious fire hazard, and sparks are always a major concern. Avoid draping the mantle, this includes stockings, greeting cards, garlands, and especially natural evergreen boughs.
- Don't use outdoor lights inside and don't use indoor lights outside. Inspect all light strings and replace bulbs before putting them up. Do not staple light strands. Do not use damaged or frayed cords, destroy and discard them. If you are using extension cords, inspect them as well, the same precautions apply.
- Never leave burning candles unattended. Never use candles on, or near, a tree or other evergreens.

Keep in mind that that beautiful tree with its twinkling lights and glittering decorations presents one of the most serious fire hazards and deserves extra consideration and precaution.

- Set up the tree away from heat registers or any other heat sources.
- If you choose a real tree, choose a freshly cut one. Store it outside, away from sun and wind, until you're ready to bring it indoors. Just before bringing the tree inside, cut an 1 to 2 inches (2.5 - 5cm) off the bottom of the trunk so the tree can take in water easily. Keep the tree moist, fill the tree stand with enough lukewarm water to cover the cut end of the trunk, and keep it at that level.
- Use only noncombustible and flame-resistant decorations on either real or artificial trees.
- Turn tree lights **OFF** when you leave the house or go to bed. As an extra safety precaution consider using timers for both interior and exterior lights.
- Keep electrical cords away from the tree's water supply.
- Take a few extra minutes on your way to bed, walk around the house; ensure candles have been extinguished and lights are turned off.

Following sensible safety and precaution guidelines will ensure that you, your family, and home enjoy a safe and happy

Holiday Season!

