














Life Stages

I want to have a house that makes it easy to raise children			I have an aging mother -not sure if she will be on her own for much longer	
	My partner works hard - will they remain strong in the years to come?		They talk about retiring far away - but we haven't talked together yet	
We have so much to do in our lives - the addition will be a great help		I need to get in shape - I don't want to turn out frail like my relatives		
We are not sure if we will keep the house when we are old		They think the kids will be with us forever - a blessing or a curse?		We have three teenagers, and simply MUST have more room!

Life Stages

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Our circumstances ~ we always think they will last forever, no matter what

they are. This is our greatest hope and deepest fear all at the same time. Whether it is a squalling baby or a tooth ache, we feel that it will consume us. This aspect of our mind plays tricks when it comes to remodeling. We may make plans for kids and recreation that address temporary problems with permanent solutions. For example, the need for nursery space may tempt you to tear out the library; the teenagers' squabbling may lead you to build an addition to create more bedrooms. Well, you can imagine your surprise when the teens move out in 3 years and your home improvement loan still has 12 years to go. It may seem quite strange to actually think this through, but many of our home dilemmas are temporary; and yet we usually think of massive, enduring solutions. So, as you look at your plans, check out how they will change throughout the life stages listed in this chapter. Also see how the space you are remodeling can flexibly suit your present and upcoming family life stages.

The Decades

It is not usual to think about the stages of your life, and especially not about your children's future phases. Life is too all-consuming to let us see how short the decades are and how quickly the children grow up. As a young mom, people often said to me to enjoy my kids because they grow up so quickly. I thought they were being philosophical, but really – only a relatively short time of your life will be involved in child-raising with them at home. You need to plan for the long haul. Each year, their needs change, but we think to ourselves that it will always be a certain way – this way with them always home. Since that is not true, we need to clear up our thinking to see what is real, so that we can be adaptive and create a home that reflects our life's functions now and in the next phases to come.

An important trap to avoid is 'back-dating' your remodeling project. A number of projects I have seen turn out to be beautiful and wonderful solutions for the family's needs, but such needs that expired a year or two ago. This can happen if materials or resources suddenly present themselves and our focus is on who we were, not on who we are now and who we will be next year. We can notice ourselves doing this with Christmas toys.

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How many times have you picked up an absolutely great toy that your child would have loved – 6 months earlier? But now has outgrown it.

Consider how many years you will have little ones at home to love, and imagine how long you expect to have the house. As you plan to make permanent changes in the house to accommodate a phase of life, be sure that the plan sequence of the next phase also makes sense. Even though no one has a crystal ball, some guesses can be made about the family's needs across the lifespan.



Consider the decades in this chapter and imagine your own life and family across time – what will you do? Talk together about it and share your perspectives and preferences. Put your plans on a timeline and talk together about how your needs and spaces will change in the coming decades.

Little Ones

Kids want space

Plenty of space – that is safe and easy to clean. Make sure your spaces are also easy for you to supervise, and that you are comfortable in them so that you will hang out there and be a part of their lives. Check out how you can incorporate play, homework, chores, laundry, and bedtimes into the space you are making. Do the kids have different categories of play that have different space needs (dolls versus soccer)? Will the kids easily carry out their chores? Will a child's sleeping space be subject to many temptations or distractions? Talk about this with the Home Team to see how these design needs will blend together now, and in the next phases of your house.

Little Renovators

Kids love renovating – they are naturals for chaos and messes. But there can be dangers, so be sure to monitor which project areas are safe for them.

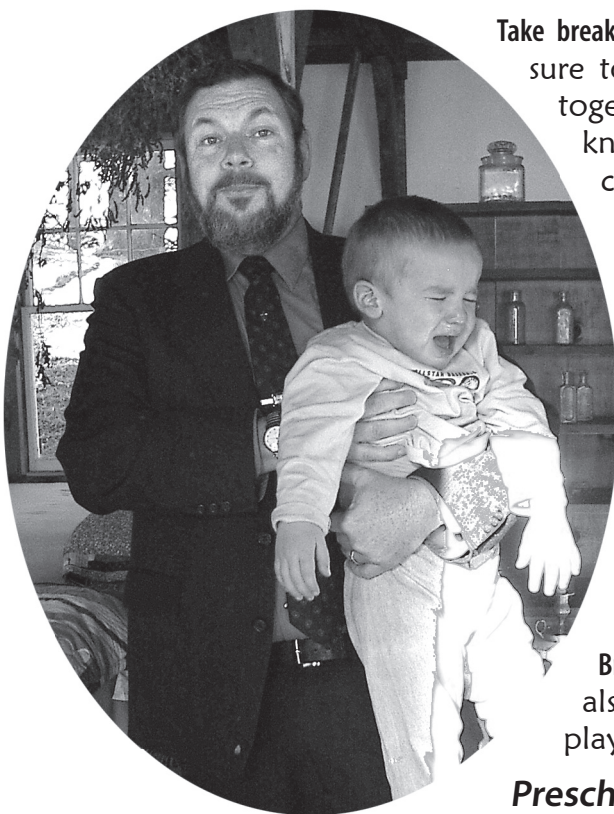
Some renovator stages for little ones -

Babies and toddlers

They may nap, play, or teethe, but much of their day is routine. Try to plan noisy tasks for when they will be unaffected. Get a sitter sometimes, or a 'mother's helper' to occupy them while you are busy on the project.

If you are nursing, be sure to shed the coveralls and wash up beforehand. Wear a hat while working to keep stuff out of your hair, and shake your hair out when you stop, too. Leave those clothes in the mudroom or another area that won't mix dangerous fibers or chemicals with children's clothes. (Also – wash these separately.)

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Take breaks and play with the kids; be sure to stretch and enjoy the time together. And they will let you know if they are being short-changed, so be mindful to be present-minded when you are home with them.

Give the toddlers baby versions of tools so they can copy Mommy or Daddy.

Let them see what you are doing as much as it is safe to do so. Talk with them while you are working, while they are over in a safe space a few yards away.

Bring some safe project materials into their space and let them play with them.

Preschoolers

They still need considerable supervision and will need much of the same care as the younger ones, but require more space and different types of toys. They may even be able to talk with you about the project. You can take the time to teach your child about the steps involved and the safety issues. This is 'home school' in action and quite fun. You will find some hidden talents inherited from each parent inside these little kiddos; and it will be fun to see the junior versions contribute their ideas and preferences to the mix.

Grade school-aged children

These can make significant contributions to the project and they expect to. This is right up their alley, having done countless projects in school. So, be sure to ask them about their ideas and even ask them to make models, drawings, and lists to help out. Make sure you go over their lists and praise them for adding items that you had overlooked. Study their models and take the time to think through the project.

Give them credit for the ideas that result from their stimulus. Look at their drawings and add some of their details to the family's main plans. Even if it does not turn out their way in the end, they will learn from it how to let go of their idea and allow the best one to emerge.

Let them know that their addition to the process is the best gift they can give; and their effort itself is the true gift. Kids can also do some activities themselves – after some supervised teaching.



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Some ideas:

- Painting (with drop cloths)
- Routine nailing or drywall screws (wearing safety glasses)
- Demolition (be sure to check for safety – no asbestos, etc.)
- Sorting nails from debris
- Sorting waste materials
- Be a Go’fer
- Getting food or drinks

SAFETY: Wear gloves and safety glasses & hard hats as appropriate

Any of the above can be paid activities if they are making an essential effort and you are taking up their free time.

Teens

Teens ‘n Space

Teens may act like they want to be in a world of their own. Some families indulge this by building a separate wing for them and exporting them to that alien land. This is not a good idea. While some privacy is important, being underfoot is a blessing so that their conversations can be intermittently monitored, and their TV watching is shared. If you can’t stand their music, don’t abandon them to it – don’t surrender – work it out with them so that they expose themselves to healthy input. You may have seen the outcomes of experiments that impose large doses of harsh angry rock music on growing plants: they wilt. If you find the music offensive, maybe you need to intervene to save your child. You don’t need to be rude about it, but will have to engage with them to find out why they admire it, and then address these reasons. You might come up with methods for putting time limits on their musical exposure. Not so bad. Be creative. Love the kids.

Endurance?

Both teens and parents believe the myth that they will never grow up. The teens resent it. The parents may dread it. But both can get caught up in the notion of the permanence of the teen years. News flash: It is actually a very short time! There are only about 6 years of it per child. In those 6 years, the teen will physically grow into near-adult size, develop a whole new brain, learn all sorts of social skills, determine their individual and group identity, and get a start on their adult vocational trajectory. So, what can you do as a family, other than sit tight and hold your breath?

The Teen Renovator

Actually, the changing Home of home renovation can be a great metaphor for the changes of growing teens. But they will need the family's assistance to endure and learn from both experiences. By kindly enlisting their physical help on the project you can teach them how to use their new strength for the common good. It is new to them. Remember – everything is new to them – they have a new brain! So, treat them like you would an alien guest freshly landed on this planet – and offer hospitality and much gentle encouragement and positive feedback. Don't count on them knowing ANY of the social skills needed to negotiate the novel tasks of the project (or life, it seems) – just have patience and teach along the way. Once they get the swing of things they will help lead with energetic momentum, and will even be reminding you of important communication maintenance tasks!

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Family Life Stages	
Entering this life stage, or special need	Goal of renovation -> design considerations
Adults-only life	Efficiency, hospitality, hobbies, pets, accommodating vacations (from leaving the house unattended to having many visitors come), business/workspace needs
Having babies	Making room for a bigger family, quiet nursery, ease of supervision
Preschoolers	Childproof, bright, simple, easy to clean
Athletic kids	Large unbreakable spaces
School years	Smooth traffic flow, homework spaces, learning to clean & space to facilitate learning the flow of chores
All teens now	Larger spaces, more entertaining, privacy with supervision
Kids in college	Seasonal use, energy efficiency, privacy and toleration of variations in noise or traffic patterns and schedules
Empty nest	Converting all of the above to adult interests, business uses, or guest rooms; making space attractive for the children's young families and grandchildren to visit
Special hobby	Activity space or unique utility requirements; space for hobby display; interactive hobbies will need space for others to join in (such as playing bridge or music)
Elder care or special-needs child	Rooms accessible to handicapped, esp. bathroom
Our own aging	Kitchen, bath, and sleeping areas on one floor

20s ~ Twenties ~ 20s

The twenties are the independent years – becoming who you hoped you would be when in your teens. Does it happen? Thankfully we do not fulfill the entire vision from our youth – it was designed by a mere child! But we may fulfill many aspects of our vision as early dreams become the seeds of passions we pursue. Since our identity is jelling in our 20s, and relationships are not yet completely stable, this period can be a difficult one in which to plan home renovation. How do young adults build something permanent when they themselves are in such transition? (Ahh, not many do.)

Young Families

Young families in their 20s may have much ambition and time (similar to the 30s), but need to be careful to plan for regular family togetherness with all involved. Otherwise, a partner or the children may feel abandoned by a never-stops-working parent. The young family has more dreams than experience, and so may be vulnerable to disappointment when some members may be left by the wayside while the ambitious one sacrifices everything at a



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breakneck pace. Stop. Talk. Hug. Caress. Obtain agreement before launching into another project weekend.

Return to the Nest

Parents plan for an empty nest, but then may get the young bird back. This stage may be difficult as the young adult is no longer subject to their expectations, but needs the freedom to come and go without irritating the other adults (formerly known as parents). If the 20s person is home for an extended stay, then communication about this may help all get along much better. They may even want to become involved in a renovation to assist traffic flow and also to improve the value of the house. It's time for family talking and for consensus building. A tip: schedules that are agreed upon will need to be specific so that things actually get done, and there aren't crossed signals and unmet promises.

30s ~ Thirties ~ 30s

Space-Planning for the Expanding Family

The family in its 30s is a maturing unit. It is emerging from a collection of people into a blended family identity; and will want to express that identity through family projects and spaces. And its needs for space are ever-growing. It may be difficult for this family to determine which needs are temporary and which plans are wise in the long run, since this age group has so much energy and the family multiplies so quickly. It seems to be ever-adapting as additional members are born and others sprawl into ever-larger space needs. It can seem hard to catch up. In making project plans, a careful review of this chapter, followed by discussion, will give you greater clarity about which projects will best adapt to your ever-changing needs.

30s as Renovators

Ambition, getting things done – much is possible in this decade. Much strength is available, and time appears to be limitless. In this age, many parallel projects are often attempted – so coordination will be an important part of drawing it all together. But take heart, this is the decade when people are very ready to learn about relationship skills, realizing there is much to gain without gloating about being all grown up. Not too proud to pick up a book and learn, this family can develop many communication skills. So, crack open those ol' chapters on communication and start your engines! Your family moves from a collection into a blended unit in your 30s, as the adults learn how to communicate, share their visions, and make decisions together. Be sure not to skimp on self-care and nurturing each other. Balance will be important, since ambition is so strong during these years that the 30s family can be in danger of overworking and overlooking the more tender needs of themselves and their children. So, plan into your schedules the time to replenish all of your batteries, and plan time together that helps your children learn from your wisdom.

40s ~ Forties ~ 40s

Prime Productive Years – Much is accomplished by folks in this decade. Personal relationships, work advancement, and children growing up all demand much attention. At home, this family will want projects that help it to become more efficient and perhaps also to invest in leisure spaces. The bustling family may have set routines, but would like the flow to improve. Projects may aim to polish the style of the family – to help it show its values and identity. As you consider your project plans, be sure to look ahead to the next stages

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in your children's growth, and how these spaces will serve the family in 10 years when the kids are gone and you have an empty nest. Will you still be paying the home improvement loan then? Like buying a car, you will want to make sure that the useful life of the purchase outlasts the payments. Perhaps a few tweaks in the designs will allow the spaces to be easily modified later on, converting the house into a welcome refuge for

the young adults and the next generation to visit.

The 40s Renovators

If the renovation will take some substantial time to construct, it is truly important that home improvement in the 40s includes the whole family, or the project will be a burden instead of an enhancement.

Busy is the word for this decade; efficient planning will be necessary so that family members can be aware of their roles and not get in the way or end up feeling resentful. Also, family



planning times give the busy family opportunities to talk and interact – a treasure during these years.

Since this decade sees intense investments in work, home, and community, there can be unforeseen challenges to time. Programming yourselves to stop, rethink, and revise plans is an important step to make for this family's communication maintenance routines.

This is also the first decade of surprising physical aging. Joints and muscles can be more easily injured much to the active person's surprise. The 40s Home Team needs to take care by stretching, and practicing safety and good nutrition as well as facing physical limitations as they come up. When confronting a limitation or injury, it will be important to discuss overall plans and strategies so that projects do not linger. You might want to throw a work party, or hire out certain parts of the task to a strong person needing work or to a skilled contractor.

Keep talking – at home and among your friends – and you will find solutions to the challenges that come up. The Home Team is adaptive and can use its strongest toolbox, communication, to respond to any surprises it encounters.



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50s ~ Fifties ~ 50s

A Gender Thing?

I have heard many times from women in their 50s that they have a pressing desire to finish their house. Meanwhile, I have often heard from men in their 50s that they want to build for retirement. Not all folks conform to this “gender thing,” but some issues arise from these gender differences within the context of life.

Women’s 50s

Women may move from the creative, generative mother years into a finality of nesting, a “getting it right.” Women have often had children earlier and are just getting an empty nest in their 50s. Finally they can put out the delicate items that would have been smashed 5 years earlier. They can have light-colored furniture in certain areas, and they can establish cleaner, if not quieter, homes. All those things that were out of place for years can now be put away where they belong. This sounds so nice, but there is grief with this too. They miss the sounds of children rolling through the house, the tears and the kisses. So, they nest further and look for satisfaction in finally getting things in order. They will want those house projects finished, and may feel an urgency fueled by a lingering desire to have the babies back, and those hugs and smiles they miss.

The urgency also comes from imagining that their life is entering its later chapters and they may say in their heads, “I don’t want to live the rest of my life with an... (unfinished house).” Women can be formidable in this mood, but the tenderness of their marriage can break down this determined veneer, allowing for discussion and acceptance

Men's Mid-life

Well-adjusted men are likely to be content with their achievements and attachments, and look forward to a good retirement life-plan. If they have panic in their 50s about what they have done with their lives, it can result in crisis – the mid-life type – and impulsive behavior. If this is so, it is time to talk together at length – (maybe even with a counselor). Even a happy man may have difficulty making peace with what he has achieved – it requires acceptance of his limitations and an appreciation for how he has played the hand dealt to him over the last 30 years.

When looking ahead at this age, men tend to imagine that their retirement will be a time of leisure and – hopefully – finally getting to do as they please after so many years of hard work. They may develop an ambitious plan for how and where they will retire, and wish to build a bungalow in that place to support the active



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life-style they envision for their future. But these days, people rarely have the money for a second house, and so substitute projects may be the focus. Ambitious projects may be the result. Talking about men's dreams and the realistic outlets for them can help their families plan wise use of joint resources to meet everyone's needs.

Putting It Together

As you can see, the two genders may have different goals when building in this decade. Sharing resources of money and time may result in some conflict. You will need to talk it through to identify the deeper desires and notions that are driving particular ideas, and then see how they all might fit together. If the ideas compete for the same resources, you will need to compromise. Taking portions of each and blending them may be an option that pleases. See the chapter Deep Communication for some hints about how to conduct such talks.

60s ~ Sixties ~ 60s

Lifestyles during the 60s often have traveling involved, either to warmer climates (here in NH, we call these folks 'snowbirds'), or to visit grandchildren, or to explore the world. Houses need to be independent for this age group, with heating systems that do not need tending, roofs that shed ice readily, and indoor spaces that clean up easily for the senior on the go.

It is time to finish up many major projects. If you will be keeping the house, it is time to renovate for the later years. If you are selling, it is time to get that 'Curb Appeal' going. Time management will be essential in these projects, and changes that come with aging may be quite alarming for the family, so the chapters on communication and time planning will be very important to check again.

70s ~ Seventies ~ 70s

Many folks in their seventies like to get around, travel, visit, drive, and tend to their own needs. People in their 70s are often able to paint and decorate, and also build smaller projects. While moving a large finished piece may require assistance, designing may still be a strong skill. Be sure to plan for helping the 70s person – but don't take over; they treasure their independence. If you are 70 and surprised at your need for help (and maybe you never planned for this), please be sure to ask for help. It may surprise you, but it won't surprise those around you who love you; they have been waiting to give you a hand.

My own mother was fond of moving furniture well into her 70s and finally cracked a vertebra moving her baby grand piano at 75. It barely slowed her stride, but she did simmer down and ask for help after that.

80s ~ Eighties

+ plus

Projects and Considerations

Not too many 80-year-olds get into renovating themselves, but may need accommodations built that require help – like ramps, railings, and accessible bathrooms. There is likely to be much variety between people in their 80s, and even in an individual on different days. So, don't make any



assumptions. If you are helping this person renovate, be sure to include them as a member of the **Home Team** in decision making, as they will be living with whatever you build. Ask them about traffic flow, colors, and materials, as well as how they would like to participate in the teamwork. They may be good at making calls, waiting for deliveries, painting, decorating, and supervising young workers.

Planning for Your Own 80s Needs

If you expect to still be in your home in your 80s, and your roof is designed to be raked after major snowstorms, you will need a new design or will have to figure on regular assistance with this task. As you design the spaces now, consider how they may be later modified for handicapped access and ease of maintenance when you no longer can perform the tasks.

Another consideration is living alone in your later years. Most couples do not pass on at the same time, so one partner will often live alone for some years. Will you want that? Will your partner? This discussion can bring up some considerations that certainly go beyond home improvement, but will help you plan on healthy and peaceful elder years. Will you perhaps sell, or will you sublet space in your house to others during those years? Who will manage and maintain the building? If you will be living alone, many folks will worry about you. So, setting up your environment for regular check-ins in the future will not only ensure your safety but quiet others' concerns. These design considerations may be easy to accommodate in your 40s as you put walls up and plan traffic flow. Just look ahead and imagine what views a pair of 80-year-old eyes will see.

Notes from Life Stages

Whew! That's a lot of years! Ok - let's see what we can scope out together for you -

Your current life stage

Go over the chapter

Notice the issues of your current stages:

- 1.
- 2.

Add any additional issues that pertain to you

- 1.
- ?

Circle the oldest age each of you expect you will still be at this house:

20s - 30s - 40s - 50s - 60s - 70s - 80s - 90s - 100s

For each decade included, look back over the chapter and see if there are any added issues that need to be in your planning for this project

Mull it over

Talk about it in a series of conversations

Get some good nutrition and exercise - consider it an investment along with your house

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