

# Keeping the monster out of your house

**M**y boys and I just went to see one of the summer movies for kids, "Monster House."

I don't want to give away too much of the plot if you haven't seen it, but it shouldn't ruin your viewing experience if I give you a vague story summation. The movie is about a run-down, haunted house in an otherwise pleasant neighborhood. The house is owned by an old, cranky man, and has a monstrous personality of its own, magically absorbing any toys that land on the lawn and scaring the children who come to retrieve their lost items.

While watching the movie, I was reminded that although houses are made of wood, brick, mortar and nails, they do have personalities, and they often reflect or influence the personalities of their owners. As was the case with the house in the movie, I have seen houses that have become run-down, in need of repair, and indeed seem to demand much from their owners, to the point

where the owners are unable to keep up with the needs of the home.

My own house was nearing this point about a year ago, and it was causing me to become an old, cranky owner. It needed a new roof, a paint job, and we had so many projects going on inside that we got used to wiping off the day's construction dust from the dinner table. Now that it has a new roof and siding (we decided we didn't want to paint again), the house feels different and somehow stronger against the elements than it did before.

Giving the house an external facelift inspired us to finish some major projects on the inside, like finally putting down flooring after living on sub-floor for about a year. Same house, but I now feel like I can enjoy it when I come through the front door, instead of feeling suffocated by the monstrosity of the unfinished projects.



**CLAUDIA STALLINGS**  
Homework

Houses that are similar in size, age and price can exude significantly different personalities. Much of what is "felt" by buyers depends on the buyers themselves. Take a recent listing of mine, a nice house, but in need of some freshening up – some interior paint, new carpet, deck stain, etc. The feedback from some of the

potential buyers was that there was too much work to do, that the house was in disrepair, that the house seemed "tired." However, the family that will soon purchase the house is excited by its possibilities. They can't wait to put personal touches on the home and look forward to a home they can reenergize. The different buyers had two different "feelings" about the same house.

So what personality does your house have? Do you feel burdened by its insatiable need for repairs or updates? Does the sheer size of the

house and the work required to keep it up weigh heavily on your shoulders? Or is your house so cluttered with stuff and furniture that you feel like the walls are closing in on you? Perhaps your house is dark and depressing, or maybe you can't relax because it is too formal. Maybe your house suits you just right and makes you happy to be home.

Not comfortable with your house? Decide whether fixing, updating, redecorating or selling is the best thing to do, but whatever you choose, don't let it become a monster house. As the movie indicates, once a house becomes a monster, it may take heroic efforts to bring it under control.

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