

“ The best thing to hold onto
in life is *each other.*”

– Audrey Hepburn





PRIVATE



The New *Intimacy*

*How My House Improved
My Relationships*

*“I am discovering that I can—
and probably will—live with
wall-to-wall toys, muddy floors,
and cracker crumbs in my bed
for the next ten years, because
that's the milieu of happy kids,
and happy kids create a noisy,
messy serenity.”*

– Carroll Stoner

Perfect Privacy

We're all familiar with the “before” and “after” shots that splash across blogs and websites...the ugly room that desperately needed to be saved from its preserved seventies decor and now is light and bright, beautiful and perfectly curated. We gawk and ooh and aah, wishing we had the time, money and talent to create such a beautiful space in our own home. I've been one of those gawkers a hundred times over. I've also been on the other side with the beautifully finished home.

After renovating our 1940s house over a two-year period a few years ago, we hired a professional photographer. The home was then featured on

continued on next page

quite a few major blogs as well as in several home décor books, including Desha Peacock's *Create the Style You Crave on a Budget You Can Afford**. The publicity made us proud. We had worked really hard on that home, pouring our blood, sweat, lots of tears, and most importantly, time into that space. My husband did almost all of the work himself, so it was truly a labor of love.

We moved into that house when my daughter was about 18 months old and I was pregnant with baby #2. My son was born in the room that would later become his. The very next day my husband was back to hammering and sawing. My son sat in my husband's lap while he worked

*

Desha Peacock is this month's cover story superstar! Meet her on p. 48

on electrical wiring. He crawled through piles of dirt, dust, and debris, sampling chunks of drywall more times than I care to admit.

Our favorite room by far was the amazing upstairs bedroom suite, only for ADULTS. Not that the kids *never* came up, but it was rare. The master suite included our bathroom and a huge bedroom, with a living area big enough to house our TV and the comfy yellow velvet couch my husband and I snuggled up on, feeling relaxed and special. The space wasn't just beautifully decorated, it was free from the clutter—including toys—that little ones bring into the home.

We also replaced our big, comfy king-size mattress with a more intimate queen so I could reach my arm out and actually find my husband. I found this gorgeous rococo headboard on Craigslist that

I repainted several times to get the color just right, and finished it off with an oversized painted red heart. I wanted the space to be romantic and private, worthy of all those other homes I'd been drooling over for years.

To top it all off, we had a sliding door at the bottom of the stairs that locked and actually had the word "Private" on it. We'd found it when a local high school renovated and replaced their administrative doors. One of the features people commented on the most, the door was both really cool and symbolic. But yes—let me reiterate—we locked our two small children out at night.

Did I love that space and the peace it brought to my chaotic days with babies and toddlers? Yes, without a doubt. The bedroom functioned as a much-needed haven, allowing me to regroup and remember who I was





as an individual. However, I'm not proud of *physically locking out my children*. Not because they suffered any psychological damage, but because I may have!

Sure, we relied on two video monitors, one in each of their rooms. They noisily sat on my bedside table for two years. I could be down the stairs in a heartbeat at the first sign of any distress; however, the emotional chasm I often felt during those years was solidified by that thick, private door. I needed space and a reprieve, but I was shutting my children out of more than my master suite when I slid that bolt into place every night.

Lovely Chaos

When we moved to another old house to start renovating all over again, everything changed. The kids were older (two and four), and I had fallen madly in love with each of them. Over the next year, I began to realize just how significant a part of our family the children were.

For example, it felt ludicrous that Valentine's Day—a “holiday of love”—should be spent in any other way than with my entire family. With the diaper/toddler phase behind us, Mothering didn't feel like a chore anymore, at least not all the time. I could really enjoy my children, and appreciate their amazing little personalities.

Also, I realized that, since they made up half of the family, they were entitled to enjoy the spaces in our home as much as the adults. Trust me—I'm not really a “kids are entitled” kind of parent; I just want them to feel like they're a significant part of the family instead of being shoved off in a corner where they should be seen and not heard.

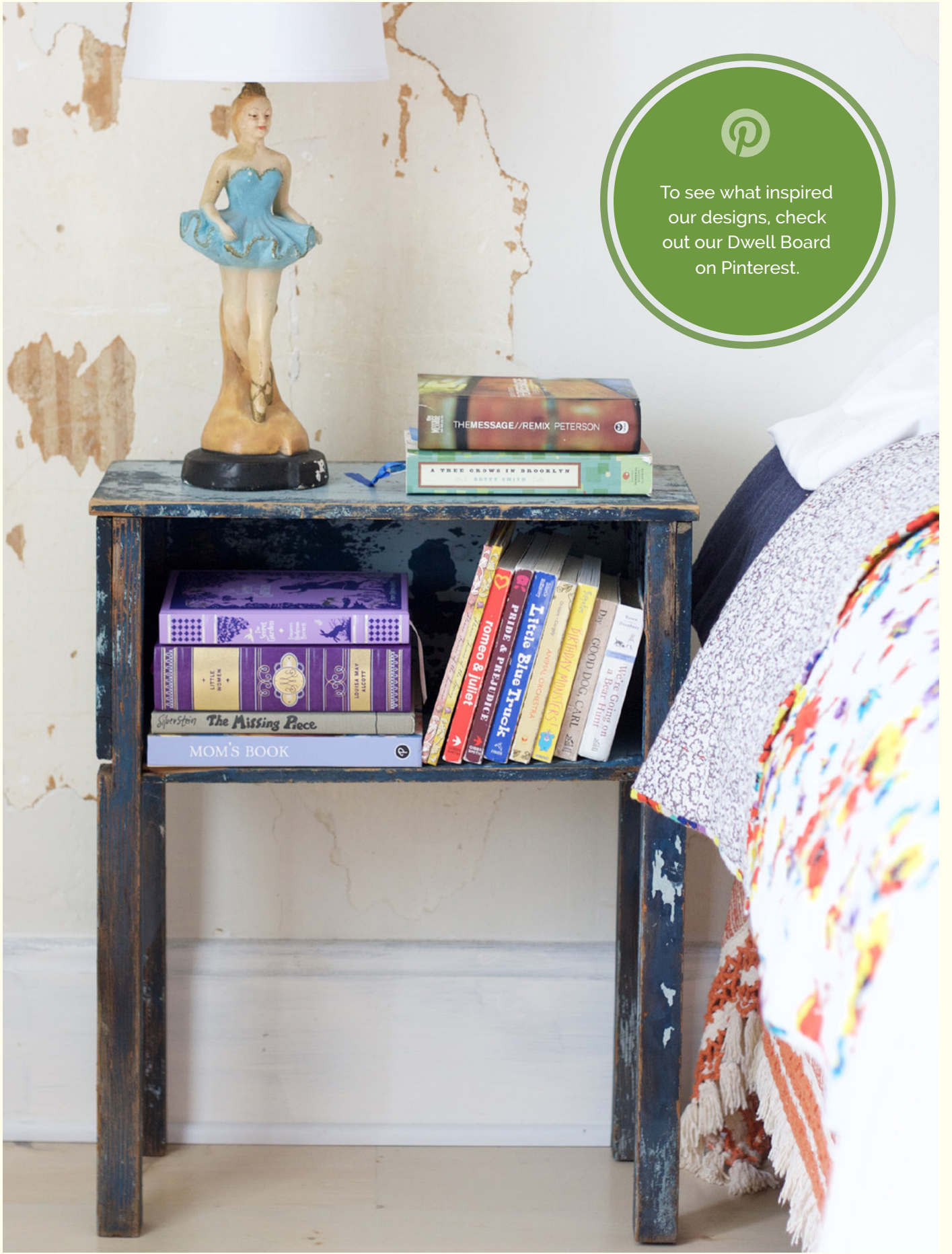
In our new house, there is no “sacred master suite” upstairs. Instead, three decently sized bedrooms are tied together by a landing and one bathroom we all share. The space isn't huge, but cozy fits our family right now. With this arrangement, our proximity

dictates our closeness, not just as a couple—as a family. We didn't manufacture a new version of intimacy; we were forced into it. You want to hear the big surprise? I LOVE it!

Ironically, we've got a door at the bottom of our stairs in this home too, a feature I used to think was unusual. The door locks just as our previous one did, but, this time, we're *all* snuggled up in our little nest together every night. Our once private and perfect “adults only” space has now become a place the whole family congregates.

In the evenings, before the kids go to bed, the most intimate, fun, and sincere times happen. Usually my husband takes them up to wrestle or do gymnastic tricks on our bed. We read, talk, pray, and become a family again after being scattered during the day. I used to think intimacy happened behind “private” closed doors with my

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To see what inspired our designs, check out our Dwell Board on Pinterest.



husband. But 16 years of marriage, two kids, and five houses later, the meaning and practice of intimacy is completely different.

We made the very deliberate decision to turn the queen mattress in for another king so the kids could easily wrestle, snuggle, and crawl into our bed in the middle of the night without too much disturbance. This proved to be no small affair; we actually had to tear a wall out around the door to the stairway to bring the mattress up.

For a while, the king mattress was on the floor, which meant the kids could be completely wild without any worry of them falling off and cracking their heads open. Alas, civilization won out and we purchased a cheap, temporary steel frame. It looks nice and “normal,” but I do worry quite a bit more when the kids are doing cartwheels a few feet off the ground!

Instead of being consumed with décor decisions, I’ve concerned myself with how the setup is affecting our conversation and

playtime. The glaring overhead light—we call them “illegal lights” in my family—was vetoed in favor of a lamp by the bed and I found a weathered end table upon which it sits. The soft glow when we read books at night feels more peaceful, and—shall I say it again? More intimate.

Despite their affordability, the end table and lamp suit my sensibilities. I take great pleasure in well worn pieces, peeling paint and all. The

continued on next page



I admit the layout of our home dictated the level of intimacy our family now enjoys, but my heart was ready for the change.

little table has myriad hues of my favorite color—blue—and a shelf for the dozens of kids' books that somehow migrate to our room. How I love seeing our books all mixed together on this little table!

Part of the reason I haven't "decorated" is practical—the room isn't finished yet. Trim still needs to be installed and painted, and wallpaper under the paint has been partially torn off in places. Sometimes it's annoying; other times, I feel like I'm living in an Anthropologie catalog, which is a good thing!

Waiting, though, has given me the time to bring in pieces serendipitously. An antique chair that used to be in Lula's room matches perfectly with the ancient rug we found at a flea market in Prague on a trip to Europe for our 15-year anniversary.

The colors in these two items are muted versions of a quilt I bought on sale that I simply couldn't live without, all of which perfectly matches the vintage coverlet currently covering our hideous (temporary) steel bedframe.

I didn't attempt to match any of these things, but somehow they all ended up with the same tones and color scheme: deep-seated orange and purple, with hints of reds and blues, and touches of neutrals.*

Items in the room that are purposeful are the matching pillow covers that spell "LOVE," another reminder of the most important element in our home. Similarly, our one-of-a-kind, 15-drawer dresser that Jay built out of a grandiose teak workbench I fell in love with many moons ago reminds me how blessed I am to have a husband who is able to create designs out of my dreams. Even if my tastes change, this is one piece that will always find a place in our home because it speaks of his love for and his desire to please me—a very practical reminder every time I get a pair of undies out of the drawer!

*

See how Sarah's mix of neutral and warm tones inspired this month's color palette on p.46



The other unique features of our room are the built-in closets and window seat—something I've long wished for. The odd layout of our upstairs meant that, for all practical purposes, there was no closet space in our master bedroom. Since the room is rather large, we were able to use up some floor space for beautifully customized built-in closets, also an example of my husband's handiwork.

Speaking of window seats, one of my favorite recent memories is of the kids coming in early in the morning just as the sun was coming up. Jay and I were still groggy, so they moved to the window seat to give us a minute to wake up. I looked up to find them silhouetted there in that space, perfectly framed, whispering quietly. *My sweet babies.* I grabbed my phone, of course, and snapped away. I didn't want to miss that precious moment.



Unexpected Intimacy

Intimacy is messy and rich. Messy as in toys right under my feet as I'm cooking, and blankets and sheets thrown all over the floor after the latest wrestling match. Rich as in late night conversations that reach the depths of my stoic daughter's heart and super tight arms around my neck from my extra cuddly son.

I admit the layout of our home dictated the level of intimacy our family now enjoys, but my heart was ready for the change. Being forced into a different situation caused my perspective to change too. Now we're turning other unusual aspects of our home into opportunities to further the culture of love and intimacy in which we want to live.

Since the layout and function of our home has a huge influence on our relationships with each other, we're learning to be purposeful in our design choices.

We want our kids to know we're accessible and available to them. Not only are all of our bedrooms shoved together in our current home, we have gone one step further—a big step for us! Our bedroom door stands wide open throughout the night and the kids are welcome to roam in and out as needed. And, almost every night, they do.

"I had a bad dream", "I can't find my bunny," "I need more water," "I wet the bed," "You didn't kiss me good night"... Believe me, intimacy has

its frustrations too. I frequently tell my husband that our kids are trying to slowly kill us through sleep deprivation. (I may or may not have moved my stuff out of the "family" bathroom due to feeling a bit too cramped.) But we haven't once considered going back to the "perfection" privacy afforded us.

When I can hear all the movements that take place during the night, I feel like I'm doing my job well. More importantly my heart is full of love and a kind of intimacy that I didn't know existed. My son calls out in his sleep, and I go in to rub his back and straighten his blanket. When I find my daughter, who sleeps like a rock, in a sweat, I pull the covers back just a little.





How could I have missed these peaceful, sweet moments for the first few years of their lives? Regret would make me sad and I know the only reason to look back is to double-check that my *now* is working. At a time in my life when I felt like if someone else touched me just one more time I might scream and never stop, I needed that “Private” door.

Now, I cherish the moments when my son burrows under the covers from the bottom of the bed and snuggles right against me, face pressed to mine. That sweet, soft skin and stinky boy feet make me smile, feel at peace, feel complete. Now when I reach out my arm, I might find my husband, or a random children's book. Or, I just might find a small person seeking comfort. To me, that is intimacy.

Sarah Sandidge can often be found reading a book. When she's not reading for fun, she's reading for work as a freelance editor, which is also fun. Her love for language, cultures and sociology makes people fascinating to her even though she's a bit of an introvert, albeit a chatty one. When she isn't glued to a written sentence, she is spending time with her family, mostly taking care of her two beautiful children somewhere in the heart of Missouri. See how cute they are on Instagram @LulainLondon.

Ways to Create Intimacy in Your Home

1

Create Cozy

Use rugs, pillows, throws and soft lighting to create peaceful places that are comfortable and cozy. Tuck a colorful, exotic blanket onto your couch to instantly add inviting, casual comfort. Can't afford anything new? Try moving things around to the most important spaces.

2

Create Conversation

Look for “nooks” or unused spaces in your home to set up additional conversation areas. Arrange comfortable furniture so that chairs or sofas face each other, and have large floor pillows or other low-to-the-ground options available for young ones.

3

Curate Calm

Clean and organized spaces are more conducive to conversations; though if you have small children, they may want to bring a favorite animal or toy to the conversation nooks! Aim to have at least one technology-free conversation nook for an opportunity to truly connect.

4

Curate Comfort

Be aware of varying moods and personalities before delving into a serious or intimate conversation. Some family members are night owls while certain friends only open up after the first cup of coffee. Respect boundaries, and take advantage of your observations.

5

Curate Community

Intimacy comes from trust, honesty, and togetherness. Encourage the entire family to clean up, when needed. Stack freshly laundered towels as a team. The bonds you make during these routine tasks will heighten the chance for meaningful conversation when the work is done!

Darling Clementine

corresponds to
Benjamin Moore
2169-20

Our Beloved Queen

corresponds to
Benjamin Moore
CW-625

Mama Fox

corresponds to
Benjamin Moore
1314

Lady Aubergine

corresponds to
Benjamin Moore
2070-20

Winterlover

corresponds to
Benjamin Moore
2108-60



CELEBRATE WARM & COZY

Our February color palette celebrates all that we love about winter: comfort food, cozy nights by the fire, and cloistered fun. Fill up even the largest of rooms with these warm, saturated colors. You might not need that fireplace after all!

Other suggested pairings:

Darling Clementine & Lady Aubergine. Purple and orange have a longstanding love affair. Use these colors for a sensual powder room or a daring playroom.

Our Beloved Queen, Lady Aubergine, and Winterlover. Mix these shades of blue, purple, and beige to engineer a soothing, yet rejuvenating, master bedroom.

Mama Fox, Winterlover, and Our Beloved Queen. This fun spin on the classic red, white, and blue palette will turn your front porch into an inviting bohemian-chic gathering space.



Color Inspiration

[Click here](#) for a closer look at the February color inspiration board.