

Healthy Life

A woman with long dark hair, wearing large white sunglasses and a black and white striped off-the-shoulder top and matching skirt, stands on the deck of a white boat. She is holding a white jacket and a silver bag. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Making Waves

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A GULFSHORE LIFE
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WELLNESS

HOME » BEAUTY » HEALTH



SERENE SANCTUARY

Soak, light some candles and enjoy your favorite book in this sanctuary created by Lisa Kahn of Lisa Kahn Designs (more sanctuaries are found on p. 74). The following pages highlight healthy homes, noteworthy wellness tips from local experts and game-changing innovations.



Chloe painting in her sanctuary with Lisa

My Own Search for Sanctuary

AN INTERIOR DESIGNER'S BUSINESS TOOK AN UNEXPECTED TURN WITH THE BIRTH OF HER DAUGHTER, CHLOE. BY LISA KAHN

FINDING SANCTUARY IN my own life has been an extraordinary journey—one that continues today. But it all started with my baby girl.

My daughter gave me a gift on the day she was born. It took me 16 years to open it. But once I did, my life changed profoundly. The contents of that package set off an explosion of truth and growth. A personal journey of love, healing and interior design has been the result.

Interior design? Yes, you read that correctly. Let me explain.

My tale begins with a newborn baby girl who I felt sure would be that pink little bundle of smiles and gurgles, growing into an adorable, ballet-bound toddler who would endear herself to everyone who met her. You can imagine my surprise when that was not the case at all. A whirling

dervish of surprisingly destructive energy who refused to wear clothes and keep on her diaper, my sweet girl, Chloe, needed constant supervision just to keep her out of harm's way and to protect the people and environments around her. She was dismissed from the early learning center for being aggressive and unable to participate in a classroom experience.

Time passed. School began and a pattern emerged: Teachers raised concerns and held conferences. New concerns were added to unresolved old ones, followed by more conferences. A diagnosis and now another new pattern: trips to see doctors and specialists, followed by trials of medication and then a return to everything natural and organic.

More doctors, more specialists and many

CREATING YOUR OWN SANCTUARY

Our spirits are profoundly impacted by the environments around us. When designed well, our spaces can cradle our bodies AND our spirits. They can inspire us and remind us of what is important in our lives.

To me, sanctuary means a space of our own where we are nurtured, supported in our efforts to explore and express ourselves. Where it's safe to be our most vulnerable, where we can go to discover who we really are. Always knowing that if we stumble or fall, our sanctuary will hold us, house us and remind us that everything is—and always will be—OK.

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authors of books about healing children with behavior disorders. And still no magic bullet. I found myself pushing against these circumstances, resisting the reality of my life.

Fast forward to 8 years old. School situations worsened. New reports were filed, now regarding her “inappropriate behavior.” And suddenly at 10 years old, nighttime seizures. Grand mal, falling down, Darth Vader breathing, foaming-at-the-mouth seizures. More time, more searching, more doctors. Finally, we heard the news that this seizure disorder was a result of the basic wiring in her brain. The seizures were going to start at some point, and impending puberty was as good a time as any.

After trying several different combinations of seizure medications, Chloe’s doctors finally found one that worked. Her seizures then became only an occasional hazard.

So this was one big, HUGE challenge down, but there were many more to go. Chloe’s mood disorder, her difficulty learning, and her inability



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to keep friends — all of these were still before us, and they were affecting her life on a daily basis.

The next blow came when Chloe was suspended from her school that specialized in special-needs children, and it was suggested that she be institutionalized. It's not possible to relay the depth of my shock and sadness at hearing those words. We were almost out of options for Chloe's education.

And that is when a miracle occurred.

THE DAVID LAWRENCE CENTER recommended us for a program with a multidisciplinary approach. They accepted us, and it proved to be not just a fit, but the right fit, and not just for her, but for our whole family. They utilized a team of mental health professionals who worked with my daughter, sometimes daily, and our entire family, weekly. A therapist, a psychiatrist, a nurse, a mentor and a caseworker.

We worked hard with the team, invested an abundance of time and energy in our family and our future. And it finally occurred to me that

there wasn't a guaranteed end point or solution to the challenges I was facing in raising my daughter. The frustration and feeling of helplessness could actually go on indefinitely if I let them.

And with this realization came an unexpected feeling of calm resignation and surrender. I couldn't fix it, so in that moment, I finally stopped trying to. It was then, that moment of acceptance, that was a turning point for me.

When I stopped trying to change our circumstances and rather began to embrace them, suddenly the tool to do so became clear to me. When I stopped trying to change my daughter and rather began embracing and supporting the lovely young woman she actually is, the tool to do so became apparent to me. That tool is sanctuary.

THE PUZZLE WON'T ever be finished. Not really. Today, our story is still unfolding and our puzzle is a work in progress.

It's the story of a much-needed toolbox.

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So what do toolboxes, sanctuary and putting together a puzzle have in common? We all need sanctuary—that place to soothe our souls. We all need a toolbox containing keys to our survival so we can do more than just get by—so we can thrive.

Here is the truth that I now know: I have the most remarkable daughter who wakes up every morning and faces her world courageously and tries her very best.

And now I see something else I didn't see before: I have the most beautiful story to share and oh so much that I want to do.

So, see? I told you there was a happy ending. But it's not really an ending; it's a beginning. And oh, what a beginning...

Lisa Kahn, interior designer and CEO of Lisa Kahn Designs, shared this excerpt from her blog "My Own Search for Sanctuary" (Dec. 16, 2015), edited lightly for Healthy Life. To read more, visit Lisa's blog at findingsanctuary.com.



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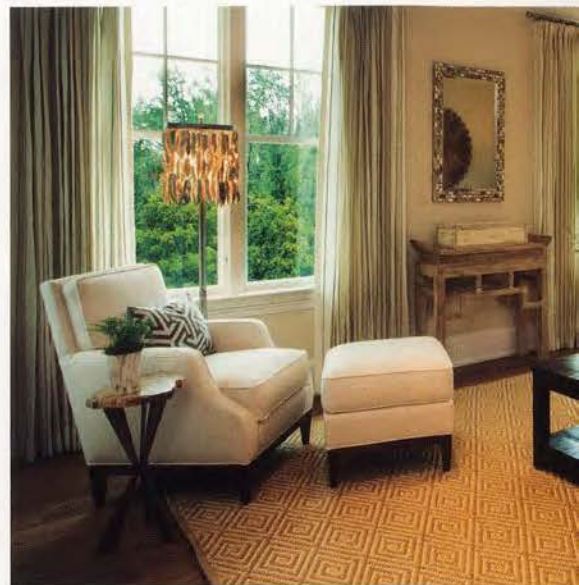
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WELLNESS
HOME



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SANCTUARY STRATEGIES

If you've been wondering how to get started creating sanctuary for yourself, these tips are for you. There's nothing hard here—no paint samples or fabric swatches required. These are just some simple things you can do right now. So let's get started.

1. TIDY UP

Straightening up and treating yourself to a clean, neat environment is inspiring and calming. You might even be able to hear yourself think. (And if you tell my mom I said this, she will know that she finally won the Battle of Neatness—do not rat me out.)

2. ERASE THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN YOU AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Maybe, like me, you live in a warm climate and this is as easy as opening the sliding doors onto your lanai. But if you live in a locale with a cold winter, set up a space by the window so you can look outside. I promise that keeping your eyes trained on Mother Nature will bring relaxation into your space and into your mind. And if you don't even have a window? Grab some beautiful pictures of mountains, the ocean or even a forest—whatever natural scene makes you pause to study it and want to take a deep breath.

3. EMBRACE THAT NATURAL WORLD AND BRING IT RIGHT INTO YOUR SPACE

For me, opening up the house to the fresh winter air is simple. But maybe for you that fresh winter air is not 70 degrees but more like 7 degrees. If so, how about put a pretty, fresh potted plant on your work surface, or a bowl of shells you collected at the beach last year? Maybe a stick you gathered on a hike you took with a friend, or a rock you fished out of a river.

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