

How to Take the Emotion Out of Buying Your First Home

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Buying your first home can be exciting and scary at the same time. Most people buy with their emotions; this isn't a good idea when you're spending \$150,000 or more for a home. If you allow granite countertops, spa bathrooms, large backyards, pools, finished basements, etc. to cloud your judgment, you could end up buying a money pit. This is a good way to deplete your savings and investments. There's nothing wrong with wanting a home with modern amenities; however, you need to look below the surface of a home.

Financing your first home can be stressful. When you buy your first home, make sure you have a 20% or more down payment. The more you can put down the better. Hopefully, you don't have much credit card debt. A lender will look at your credit score, length of employment, and other criteria to determine how much they'll lend you. You may be better off renting or living with your parents if you can. The more you can save the better.

How to Take the Emotion Out of Buying Your First Home

1. Buying a home is an investment, buy smart. Your first home can be an investment or money pit, it's up to you. It's a good idea to know the area inside and out. Look at comps of the other houses (realtor could help) and watch for neighborhood revitalization. Also, remember that you'll need to stay current with the times. Choose one 'big' project such as kitchen, bathroom, or basement and remodel it. This way you won't be overwhelmed when you sell your property.

2. Bring an 'objective' person with you. If you get excited by restaurant styled kitchens, spa bathrooms, entertainment rooms, etc., bring an objective person with you. They will make sure you stay on budget and ask questions such as, "Are those real hardwood floors?" It's a great way to stay present and look beyond the surface of a house.

3. Make a list of your 'must' haves in your home. Before you begin your property search, make a list of your must haves. This could be location, open concept home, stairs that don't directly face the door (feng shui), curb appeal, large backyard, no busy street, close to highways and shopping, etc. Get it all down on paper because it will make your home buying process easier.

4. Set a budget and stick to it. What is your comfort zone? If you've been approved for \$400,000 and have a \$50,000 down payment, you have up to \$450,000 to spend on a home. How

comfortable are you with spending \$450,000? Find your comfort zone, minimum and maximum you want to spend for a home. This is a good way to narrow your search when there are many properties to select from.

5. Stay open minded. Look beyond the surface of a home. It would be nice if a seller would paint the walls a neutral color before they list their home but this doesn't always happen. Painting is easy and you can do it yourself or hire professionals. If you're into environment and conservation, but a home seller may not be. You may be better off painting yourself because you can use environmentally friendly paint. Unless a seller is into environment and conservation, they won't use a paint that is non-toxic or has zero VOC.

Your tastes may be different from a home seller. You and a seller may enjoy granite countertops but there are many colors to select from. A seller may like dark colors and you may prefer light colors. You may like modern cabinetry in a light color; a home seller may prefer modern cabinetry in a dark color. These are cosmetic changes that are easy to fix. Keep this in mind and don't 'write-off' a home because you don't like the kitchen cabinets. You could be missing out on a fantastic deal and home.

Buying your first home doesn't have to be stressful. Know what you want before you begin searching for 'your' perfect home. Realize that 'cosmetic' changes like hardware and paint are easy fixes. Leave your emotions at home and view homes through an objective lens. You can always remodel which means you can make a home what you want it to be. The caveat is to remember that one day you may want to sell your home. Take into consideration that what you like a home buyer may not.