

Preparing to sell your home with love is very much like choosing a spouse | Home & Living

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It's February, the time when Valentine's Day takes the lead with its beautiful message of embracing love. It's also the month when an increasing number of sellers nationwide decide to put their homes on the market.

On the face of it, these two things would seem to be totally unrelated. But let's challenge that theory.

Selling your house is not unlike someone wanting to get married without having found the right partner yet. Where would he or she start? What would he or she do? How would he or she prepare? Would he or she want to become more attractive, maybe even increase the "lovability" factor?

Buying a home is an emotional decision – very much like choosing a spouse. In the majority of cases buyers fall in love with a home, and that's the reason they buy it. The seller's job is to make the home as lovable as possible to attract the perfect buyer for the highest possible price.

Using the analogy of a would-be spouse looking for would-be spouse, let's look at ways you can make your home more attractive for the buyers.

Be proactive. Our would-be spouse is ready to look for a date. What will he or she do? Dress up nicely? Get a new and updated hairstyle? Exercise to get in better shape?

Once you have decided to sell your home, it's time to get proactive. Deep cleaning is a must. Consider hiring a professional stager before you do too much decorating. For a relatively low cost you can have a stager go through and make recommendations based on knowledge of today's buyers' preferences.

Staged homes sell faster, according to the National Association of Realtors 2017 Profile of Home Staging (www.nar.realtor/reports/profile-of-home-staging). Neutral, fresh paint can make your home welcoming. Use pictures, typography art (themed with love, family and other homey mottos), plants and other decorations to give the would-be buyer a warm first impression. And, of course, you can't forget curb appeal. Grooming the yard and adding some color to the landscaping will surely catch a buyer's eye.

Be transparent. We might have found a potential partner for our would-be spouse. Shouldn't our would-be spouse be honest and upfront about his or her past? What kind of relationship would be built if truth weren't at the core? If one found out about the other's hidden flaws after the wedding, it would be a tough pill to swallow and could ruin the relationship.

The same applies to sellers and buyers. Transparency builds trust, which leads to a smooth, successful transaction. So what can you do as a seller to provide transparency?

Have home and termite inspections conducted prior to going on the market. Have as many items repaired as possible. If you live in a high flood-hazard area, you should also get an elevation certificate ahead of time. Having copies of inspection reports, repair receipts and elevation certificate available to buyers at or prior to showings will go long way in establishing the trust and goodwill.

Even if you weren't able to make all the repairs, the fact that you are being upfront will increase the buyer's comfort level, which, in turn, can lead to a better offer. To top things off you can offer a one-year home warranty to the buyer at closing. For under \$500 you can get a decent policy that also will cover you during the listing period.

Create a strong online profile. Think of all the real estate websites that your home is going to be advertised on as online "dating sites." In essence, that's exactly what they are.

Our spouse-to-be would use his or her best picture and complete a full profile. With the help and guidance of your Realtor, you would use the best listing photos and create a strong profile for your home. (Work with your Realtor as a team to make sure you have high-quality photos, accurate data and an adequate description of the home, showcasing all the highlights and unique features.)

Now we are getting closer to the big day.

Tie the knot. If you have followed the steps above and your home is priced correctly, taking into consideration your Realtor's advice, you should have no trouble with finding a buyer pretty quickly. Because of your proactivity and transparency, you have greatly reduced the number of possible speed bumps that can come up during a transaction.

The wedding day will represent the closing day. The would-be spouses exchange vows and sign the papers, only they do it at an attorney's office or a title company instead of at the courthouse. Congratulations to the newlyweds, and happy early Valentine's Day.

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