

Stay Happily Married

A resource for married couples.

Creating a happy marriage is possible and this site is dedicated to providing resources to help couples who want to stay together. By providing information about qualified marriage counseling, we hope to encourage couples to get the help they need. The site also features articles, other websites, books, and workshops which offer the tools needed to create happy, lasting marriages.



Arranging Your Space to Improve Your Marriage

This is Episode number 47 of Stay Happily Married, "Arranging Your Space to Improve Your Marriage."

Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Today's episode of Stay Happily Married is brought to you by the Rosen Law Firm. For more information, visit us at Rosen.com.

Lee Rosen: I'm Lee Rosen. I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. I'm here in the studio with Dr. Susan Orenstein and Jenna Boyd. Now, many of our listeners already know Susan. She has done several shows with us in the past. She's a licensed psychologist with offices in Cary, North Carolina and in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She specializes in couples therapy, anger management, and also offers services for older teens and young adults. She's been married for 19 years, which I always think is a good sign for giving advice about marriage. And she has two children. And one of the things I don't know that we've mentioned before is that Susan teaches seminars on staying happily married and she in fact did one last night.

Susan, how are you today?

Susan Orenstein: I'm fine. How are you?

Lee Rosen: I'm great. I'm really glad you could be with us today.

Now, also with us today is Jenna Boyd. And Jenna creates balanced living and working environments through practical and simple feng shui organizational solutions. That is something that we've never talked about on this show and you're going to learn a lot about it today. She's a certified practitioner from the Western School of Feng Shui in Solana Beach, California. She's a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and a contributor

to PINK Magazine. She lives here in North Carolina but she does consulting work all over: Atlanta, Chicago, Michigan. Jenna, welcome to the show.

Jenna Boyd: Hi. Thanks.

Lee Rosen: Well, I would say you're sort of an unusual guest for this show. I mean, so often we're talking to people that are really more often than not counselors or people that have some direct relationship to marriage. But what brought you to us today? Let's help explain to folks how you two sort of know each other. What's the connection?

Susan Orenstein: This is Susan. I had Jenna come to my house this past summer because I was intrigued by the idea of feng shui. And I had a lot going on in the summer. I was kind of stressed and a little sick of my house and I thought, "I need a consult." And I called Jenna and she came over and I loved her immediately. Love her energy and her suggestions. And we started talking a lot about what I do and what she does and we started to connect the dots.

Jenna Boyd: yeah. We really started to pay attention to if Susan is working with people on their relationship, there is a direct correlation with understanding what's going on in your relationship and actually how your space is reflecting what's going on in your life.

Lee Rosen: Okay. And I'm like a boring fuddy-duddy practical guy. This is a little out there for average people, yes? Or is this becoming a mainstream thought process?

Jenna Boyd: It's becoming more mainstream. But think about how you're feeling your house. Let's say it's got tons of clutter or it's got artwork that makes you feel bad or things around you that are not positive intentioned, okay?

Lee Rosen: Right.

Jenna Boyd: So if you're living in that, it could be creating animosity in your relationship. It could be creating anxiety within you which is affecting your relationship.

Lee Rosen: Okay. I buy that. The whole clutter thing is a really practical -- I mean, it does kind of bring it home for me because it's funny; in my life, my wife -- she would not acknowledge this, but it's clutter city and I tend to be at the other extreme, which is partly a response to the clutter, I think. But it does kind of -- I mean, I guess you're right. It makes sense that your surroundings -- it all fits together in

an interesting sort of way that would not have really clicked for me normally, I don't think.

Susan Orenstein: It's not something we studied in my program but what's funny is we think about the weather. We talk about seasonal affective disorder or it's a sunny day or it's a rainy day; are you sick of the weather? But most of us spend more time inside in your own home and so that's the environment that's going to affect your mood, your feelings.

Lee Rosen: Have either of you in your practices ever seen really significant -- you come in and you consult with somebody on the way that their space is organized. Have you gotten feedback that their marriage is suddenly working better because of this?

Jenna Boyd: I actually recently worked with a couple and when I came to their house -- I always have people fill out an intentions page ahead of time, kind of what are the three main areas of the space or aspects of their life that they're wanting to work on. And one of them for this particular family was their relationship, their marriage. And it was interesting. She said they had a lot of anxiety. They had kind of a competitiveness going on and it was a lot of aggravation going on in the marriage.

And it was interesting because in their house in kind of the living room, in the main living area where their whole family was spending time, the walls were a dark blue, almost like a police officer blue, which from a feng shui standpoint or just from an overall color standpoint, that is a very authoritative color. So that creates -- it was very dark walls that had a very dark feeling, very heavy feeling. And it was interesting because she was talking about all this stuff and so one of the recommendations was to repaint the walls a lighter, more friendly color and do some other changes with color. They were doing some new furniture and everything.

And the report back was that things did -- once they repainted she was like, "I wish we would have done this years ago. It's made such a difference. The house feels lighter. We feel lighter." I don't know the specifics of their relationship but just that whole element of it going from a very dark, authoritative environment to feeling easier.

Lee Rosen: Susan, have you started to think about this when you're meeting with new patients? Because I would assume you never knew what their houses looked like, right?

Susan Orenstein: That's right. And I hear tidbits but that hadn't been something I'd really been sensitized to until I met with Jenna. So absolutely now

I'm thinking about it and asking people, do you have a certain place in your house that you and your husband or wife can go to and feel relaxed and comfortable and it's a place of your own? And what's it like in your home?

And since I met Jenna we've talked a lot about collaborating and really being able to create a synergy. And we've done a workshop together and we're going to be doing another workshop to see how our expertises can kind of compliment each other.

Lee Rosen: Right. Have you yet gotten to the point where you said, okay, I suggest to you folks -- to this couple -- that they go out and have somebody like Jenna come in and scope out their place?

Susan Orenstein: I have started to. Yes, I have.

Lee Rosen: Really? Wow. That is really interesting. And I will tell you -- I mean, I was a skeptic moments ago but when you start thinking about it, it really does make sense. I mean, you live there. It's your environment. It's going to have an impact. And if it's going to impact anything, your relationships make a lot of sense, that that's where it would play out. Absolutely fascinating.

So in feng shui is there a single objective of what you do when you go into a space? Is it about peace or is it about -- are there different objectives? Does it depend on the client? What are you trying to do with the space?

Jenna Boyd: It really does depend on the client and kind of what their main areas or aspects that they're wanting to work on. And it's all about working with the feng shui principles that work with the five natural elements -- wood, fire, earth, metal, and water -- and aligning those in the space.

And then also understanding that each area of the space represents a different area of your life. So it could be career, relationships, finances, health, spirituality; all of that stuff shows up in an area of your house and so you can start to see how different areas of your space are representing different areas of your life. So if you're wanting to work on a particular area or aspect of your life, you can highlight those and then you can start to move the energy in positive ways.

And also, it's a dance because sometimes you're eliminating things from your environment. Sometimes you're adding things to your environment. Sometimes it's paying attention to, do I really love this? Do I need it? How is it affecting me? Is this where I am today?

Is it relevant to my life today? Is the artwork on the walls telling the story of my life today or 10 years ago? I mean, it's the same as if you have lots of stuff in your closet that doesn't fit anymore. And so it's aligning the space that way.

Lee Rosen: Right. Do you think that there are particular issues that come up in a marriage that are directly related to what's going on in their space?

Susan Orenstein: I think so. One of the trends I've seen with younger couples is that things become so child-centric, that the house becomes about toys in every room. And so I think probably what Jenna might see -- what I'm hearing about is that there are toys on the floor; people are tripping over them. It's great that they're focusing on the kids but there isn't a separate place for the adults.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Susan Orenstein: And then on the other hand I'll hear sometimes where the couple might be so focused on an image or on -- I would say kind of on an image or pleasing other people outside of the family that the house becomes sterile and people aren't really living in it. And so I could see how Jenna could come and talk to them about what's your intention; what's your goal?

And when I was working with Jenna that was the thing that made a huge impression on me is she often asked, "What's important to you? What's the intention? What's the goal?"

Lee Rosen: Right. Makes you think about the way your stuff reflects. That's what I guess happens is you don't necessarily have your stuff in alignment with what your life is all about and it creates conflict of some sort.

What is the deal with clutter? You talked about clutter. Where is that coming from? Why does my wife do that?

Susan Orenstein: My husband.

Jenna Boyd: I think it just comes from some kind of thing going on inside. I'm not sure why it happens. I mean, there's ADD, all these different things that create clutter. But from my perspective I think that when we have clutter it's kind of like resistance to move forward or it's stuff that's blocking the way. You know that saying, if you want something in your life you must leave a space for it.

Lee Rosen: Oh, I am so going to play this.

Jenna Boyd: Right. So it's all about creating the space. And sometimes we have to create the vacuum so that things can kind of come to us. So if we have a bunch of stuff, whether it's on our desk, in our bedroom, in our living room, in our garage, whatever, it's kind of like glomming up the flow of energy to move in. And so if you can move through that stuff and create the space then it creates the path for a positive flow of energy.

Lee Rosen: Okay. Path for positive flow of energy. But you walk into my house and you sit down with me and my wife and you figure out there's a clutter problem here. Suddenly you go from -- you've got all this training in feng shui and this background in organizational and all of that stuff. You're kind of on the front lines in people's homes. I mean, when you point some of these -- I can see you kind of having a dangerous job. Do you carry a weapon?

Jenna Boyd: No. I just work from my heart. I don't know. Well, I will say that my job is a very personal job. I would say that I find out a lot about my clients and their lives. I mean, I learn a lot about people because it's different. I mean, Susan, when you have people in your office and you have 45 minutes with them and it's a conversation. When you're in their space, you're not only talking with them but you're getting the visual of what's actually going on. I mean, sometimes I feel like -- in some cases, not every time, but there are times that I feel like I'm a therapist, you know?

Lee Rosen: Right.

Jenna Boyd: Because all this stuff is coming up. I mean, sometimes it's very on the surface and then sometimes people cry. I mean, I've had the full -- not every time, but it's the full range of everything. You open up a closet and it reminds you of this; you have belongings in there. You know, it's different things for different people.

Lee Rosen: It's complicated, yeah. So aside from clutter, what other things do you run into that you think really are impacting marriages? What are the big pieces of this puzzle that you see that you can address?

Jenna Boyd: I would say in the bedroom primarily is a problem. A lot of times in today's bedrooms they are packed with everything from home offices to TVs and DVRs and toys and libraries of books, pictures of the family, lots of pictures of the kids. And all of these things are distractions. So from a feng shui standpoint we want to create one sacred space and that would be, let's say, the master bedroom. And so we want to eliminate all those distractions from there.

Now, all those things are important but they just need to reside in a different area of the space so that you at least have that quiet space, intimate space that you guys can relax and have a nice setting together.

Lee Rosen: When you're finished helping someone is there -- like, let's take that master bedroom. Is that space pretty Spartan feeling or looking or -

Jenna Boyd: No. It's all about creating a more comfortable space. I will tell you that I've also gone into bedrooms where it's like super designer. You know what I mean? So it's almost like you can drop a pin on the bed and you almost want to change that up too.

Like I had a client one time where she had this piece of artwork in the hallway and she's like, "Oh, we love it. That's what we got on our honeymoon." And I'm like, "Well, why don't you bring that in your bedroom?" But they had all these pictures of children and this kind of stuff and it was like we need to move -- one of her intentions was to work on her marriage. So it's like we're trying to get her to bring that energy, that energy that she -- she lit up when she was like, "Oh, we got that in Mexico. It's such a good memory." We want to bring that energy into the bedroom. It doesn't need to be in the hallway going down the stairs.

Lee Rosen: Right. Fascinating. The whole thing is just -- I will say that I had never thought of this in the way that you guys are presenting it. It makes a lot of sense.

What would be the -- obviously space results in stress. It results in different issues in the marriage. What do you think -- of all the people you've seen, what kinds of things are you seeing that might really be rooted -- or least the problem is contributed to by something that's going on in their space?

Susan Orenstein: I think lots of couples today because the remedy for so many couples has been going on a vacation. So I'll ask people, "When's the last time you felt really close and you had intimate moments?" And they'll think about two years ago, six years ago a change of scenery.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Susan Orenstein: A vacation with a hotel room without the clutter, without the picture of the kids, in a really special time.

Lee Rosen: Right. I love the vacations, yeah. I mean, I'm sure most people have that experience.

Susan Orenstein: Right.

Lee Rosen: You think that's not about the island or the cruise ship. That may be in part at least about the way their lives work in that space.

Susan Orenstein: Right. Well, I think both. They're intentionally creating a different time, a time and a place away from everything else. But what I like to help people think about is how can you create that idea of a vacation and setting aside time and space a little bit on a daily basis so that it doesn't have to be just every six years or every two years?

Lee Rosen: Right. That is really interesting. And it's fascinating you say that because I am in love with hotel rooms. I mean, I love to go check into a hotel. Now, I go to Charlotte, to our office down there, and it's like the high point of that for me is I am staying in the Hampton Inn, you know?

Susan Orenstein: Right. Maybe we should open up a line of sample little soaps to remind us of hotels.

Lee Rosen: Right. But it is fascinating because you're right. There's nothing magic about the Hampton Inn in Charlotte. I mean, it is really nothing magic. But there is some element to that that I guess really does come from the space.

Jenna Boyd: All the distractions are not there.

Lee Rosen: Right. Boy, we are going to have to get you over to my house. So what would be the first thing that you all would suggest to a couple - - if someone's listening to this and they're like, "Okay. I want to do something with my space to help, to at least make things a little bit better." What's number one on the list?

Jenna Boyd: I would go back to the bedroom, eliminate the distractions. Pay attention to the artwork in there; what kind of feeling is it creating? Look at the colors in there. Remove a lot of the excess stuff from around the space.

Lee Rosen: Makes a big difference. Absolutely fascinating. Are there other things we need to know about feng shui and how it impacts marriages? Other things we should be talking about or have we sort of got the idea under control here? Everybody looking at me going we're sort of there.

Jenna Boyd: I think it's pretty good, yeah.

Lee Rosen: Yeah. I will tell you, a skeptic 20 minutes ago. Today, 20 minutes later, you've turned me around. Really where you did it is I started thinking about the clutter in my house and this whole idea -- your example from the vacation, that just really hits home. And I think more people than I would have imagined are going to relate to what we're talking about and it may make a difference for them.

What do they do? Like you go out, you go in people's homes. If they're in this area obviously they can find you, and it sounds like you travel some. But are there people all over the country that are available to do this sort of work?

Jenna Boyd: There are lots of feng shui consultants all over the country.

Lee Rosen: So easy to find. And what does it cost? If I brought you into my house and said, "Help me. Fix me. Solve me," what do people spend to do that?

Jenna Boyd: Probably around \$200 or \$300.

Lee Rosen: So to save your marriage, small price to pay if it makes that kind of difference.

Susan Orenstein: And I'll tell you an example from when Jenna came to me is I was thinking, "Do I need a new couch? Do we need to add onto the house?" All these big things that would have cost a lot of money. And she turned a couple of pillows over to a solid color instead of stripe and that made me feel so different. And I know that sounds bizarre but Jenna's able to make a few small changes that you can really feel. So you don't have to go spend \$10,000 to add onto your house or get a new couch because Jenna does it with intention and fitting what you're really looking for.

Lee Rosen: Right. Obviously you have the training and the background, you've gone to school in this. Just casually I met people that will walk into a room and say, "Oh, you should move this or that." And they just have an eye for it. And people like me anyway, just no sense of that at all. So it does sound to me like having someone that can come in and straighten things out -- and I've always thought of that as like, well, it would look nicer. But to realize that it impacts not just the way you feel but the way your relationship works, pretty big deal.

Well, I appreciate you both coming by. Susan and Jenna, I really appreciate you being here. I think that we've probably changed some people's -- I don't know about changed, but opened people's eyes to something that never would have occurred to them because this really never would have clicked in my mind. I just thought the

clutter was annoying but it never really connected with me that that colors your perception of a lot of things. And I live in my house more than I live anywhere else ever. That is where I am most of the time, except for those wonderful vacations that you reminded me about. So thank you both for being here.

Let me tell you guys a little bit about both of these folks and how you can meet up with them. Susan has a practice and, as I mentioned earlier, offices in Cary, North Carolina and in Chapel Hill. And she has a great website. We're going to put a link to it in the show notes at StayHappilyMarried.com but the website is OrensteinSolutions.com. You can also just call her office if you're interested at (919) 654-7311.

Jenna has a great website also and it's ElementsOfHarmony.com. And we'll put a link to that at StayHappilyMarried.com also. Her office number is (919) 757-2732 if you want to get up with her. And it sounds to me like it would be a great investment of a few hundred dollars. A lot easier to fix your space than to -- boy, I'd rather do that than a lot of things that we talk about that are a lot harder work. This sounds like try this first.

Thanks so much for listening today. I hope that you will join us again next week. In the meantime, if you have comments about this show or any of our shows, anything at all, we love to hear your feedback. We love your suggestions, ideas for guests. Just the feedback is wonderful to get. We really appreciate all the e-mails and the phone calls. You can shoot us an e-mail at comments@stayhappilymarried.com. You can also call the comment line and leave a voice mail at (919) 256-3083.

Until next time, stay happily married.

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