

Confusion Is The New Mental Health

It's an interesting world, this world of selling a house and looking for a new one, of deciding whether the the details of your life are best lived somewhere other than where you have been for twenty years, or in your current home, where you think, but cannot possibly know, you would be happy for the next twenty.

Does staying mean you are honoring some deep, intrinsic value that you alone hold for your place of residence, or is it an inability to step into a different vision for your life? Does not moving mean being deeply committed to who you are, or deeply committed to avoiding change? These are the kinds of questions on my plate these days, questions to which my husband's answer is simply, "Let's move. Yesterday."

The moment your house appears on Trulia, you become aware of how many people you know who are also buying, selling or thinking about it. It's like when you learn a new word and suddenly see it everywhere. My hairdresser is thinking about it. So are many of our art fair friends. Just last week I got an email from my graduate school professor, whom I haven't heard from in over two years. "We've finally sold our house," it said-- nothing more. Every conversation I have is now about moving, including a particularly exhausting one I have with my imaginary future self, who can't seem to tell me whether or not moving has made her happy.

Putting your house on the market also means stepping onto a kind of public stage. It's like pregnancy: the swell in my belly, the container of my house dreams, now belongs to the world; everyone, it seems, has their finger on the pulse of my move. I'm reminded of my three-month engagement when everyone including my plumber had something to say about marriage, most of it negative. Change, even just the idea of it, makes everyone take inventory, and when that happens, everyone has an opinion.

Everyone, that is, except our parents. The people who in the past could be counted on to weigh in heatedly on everything from career paths to silverware patterns have had almost nothing to say on the subject of selling our house. It is a lack of involvement so utterly disconcerting that my husband and I have had no choice but to become A. acutely ill, and B. gravely depressed.

My husband started it. Just a few hours into a trip to Houston to take artwork to hang at the Carl Jung Center, he called me to say he wasn't feeling well.

"I have a fever," he said, just before crawling into a hotel bed somewhere in Texarkana at 3:30 in the afternoon. Later that night he called again to report that in addition to a fever, a sore throat, and a patchwork of aches, his left eye was beginning to swell. I flew to Houston the following day. Together we hung the show, seventeen pieces in a lovely lighted gallery, a relatively simple task made ghastly by my husband's body-wracking cough and my weepy agitation, my mood du jour since planting a For Sale sign in our yard weeks ago.

When we were through hanging the show, I wandered through the media room. It was there, on a wall under a picture of Carl Jung, that I saw this quote: "Man needs difficulties; they are necessary for health."

Jung went on to say that the meaning and purpose of a problem is not in its resolution, but in our working on it. Which of course brought me back to the issue of real estate, and whether or not we should move, whether our lives are best lived where we are or where we might be going. If Jung is right (and let's face it, he was right a LOT) that our lives are best lived in the question, then my husband and I are exactly where we need to be. Confusion, it seems, is good for the soul. Which is some consolation since it's our new home.