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# Columnist Marni Jameson helps turn your hellhole into a haven

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By LISA MARTIN / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

Anyone who's ever stepped barefoot on a Lego in the middle of the night or settled for a hand-me-down sofa will find an ally in Marni Jameson.

The 47-year-old syndicated columnist shows how to turn the humblest of homes into a haven with her latest book, *House of Havoc: How to Make – and Keep – A Beautiful Home Despite Cheap Spouses, Messy Kids, and Other Difficult Roommates*. Think Erma Bombeck's wit, Martha Stewart's gumption and Rachael Ray's verve in one humble yet helpful package.

She will be in [Dallas](#) on Feb. 8 to appear on *Good Day* on KDFW (Channel 4).

Jameson offers advice on everything from curbing indoor air pollution to picking a china pattern you won't want to ditch by your first anniversary.

What sets the book apart from a typical how-to design manual is its personality-oriented approach.

"At my house, good relationships trump good design," says the mother of two teenagers, who lives in a 5,500-square-foot home (plus a giant basement) with views of the Colorado Rockies. "My goal is to live better and more beautifully with Them."

"Them" also includes husband Dan, whose tight-fisted sensibilities provide fodder in his wife's columns. She admits he recently earned points by transforming her mucky mudroom into a showplace. This welcoming space now boasts wainscoting, a built-in bench with cubbies for each family member and a new energy-efficient washer and dryer. The crowning touch: Retasking an old French tablecloth to use as a cushion.

"It's a workhorse of a room," the author says, "but when it's under control, I love to come home to it."

For Marni Jameson, that's precisely the point.

*Lisa Martin is a Dallas freelance writer.*

Top 5 tips from *House of Havoc*

**1. It isn't about perfection;** it's about improvement. If you live with others, it's a given you live in havoc. But

you and havoc can peacefully coexist. Look for that sweet spot between what expert organizers suggest and behaviors that won't give everyone in your household facial tics.

**2. Divide and conquer.** Embrace sane strategies for managing time, stuff, space, meals and housekeeping. ("Do a load a day" to conquer laundry, she suggests.)

**3. Choose furnishings that make your home livable and beautiful.** A white sofa plus kids usually equals high blood pressure. So give yourself a head start by picking dirt-friendly flooring, sturdy print fabrics, slipcovers, already distressed furniture and other slob-proof furnishings.

**4. Kick clutter to the curb!** One surefire way is to buy everyday household items right the first time so you don't jam your cupboards with stuff you don't love, like sheets that don't fit or feel good, towels that don't absorb or dated dishes.

**5. Get a glue gun and go.** You can be frugal and still have a great-looking home. (*House of Havoc* includes a whole section on easy, inexpensive design tricks.) *House of Havoc*

Marni Jameson

(Da Capo, \$17)