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## Don't get mad — redecorate (or how to move on without moving out)

With six out of 10 British couples admitting to arguing over the way they decorate their home, a certain amount of compromise is required. A bathroom strewn with girly products, for example, is bound to aggravate him; and as for a state-of-the-art plasma-screen television that dominates the entire living room ...

"Making choices about decor is always a source of conflict," says Simon Buhl Davis, in-house interior designer

"Couples will argue about anything and everything. Often one of them wants a simple, natural look, while the other wants bold colours. Ultimately, it is usually the woman in the relationship that makes the decisions. Men tend to capitulate — they want an easy life."

It's not always the girls who demand their own way, though. One

thirtysomething metrosexual, who was living alone in his south London flat until his girlfriend moved in last month, says: "One bone of contention is the mugs. My beloved likes her tea and has more mugs than a Whittard clearance sale. My mug stand has space for only six at a time." The solution? "A purge of the novelty items and a mugs-of-the-week rotation system."

All very mature. If you split up, however, the person left in the former love nest has the painful reminders of a broken relationship — and those bright-orange walls they never liked. So the problem becomes how to move on without moving out. The motto is don't get mad — redecorate.

Ask Jo Wood. Seven months after her husband, Ronnie, the Rolling Stones guitarist, fled the marital home in Kingston upon Thames for his Russian

girlfriend, she is redecorating. "I've taken down all these annoying things Ronnie used to stick on the walls, and I'm putting up wallpaper," she said last week. "I'm much happier."

Jane, a recruitment consultant in her early forties who split from her husband 18 months ago, is finding similar solace in shaking things up. When her husband moved out, after a decade of marriage, she was left reeling. "But you do start to emerge from the shock and horror of the

break-up," she says, "Now I'm thinking about what changes I want to make."

"I have got rid of lots of stuff — his rugby boots and sports videos — which was quite cathartic. I now want to make it completely my own, as opposed to living in a museum of what was our life together. I'm going to start with some luxury linen."

Christine Webber, a psychotherapist, writer and broadcaster, says that women are generally much better than men at dusting themselves off and starting over. "Don't do anything drastic at first," she advises. "Box up all evidence of your ex, but don't

**"USUALLY, THE WOMAN MAKES THE DECISIONS. MEN TEND TO CAPITULATE — THEY WANT AN EASY LIFE"**

destroy all the photos. Let things settle before you make any big changes, and get a friend to help you with ideas. It is always good to start with the bedroom — but don't stuff it with cuddly toys, as women tend to do. At some point, there will be a new man in there."

You can always use the break-up as a learning curve. Several years ago, Fiona McLean, 43, a public-relations manager, split with her long-term boyfriend, whom she affectionately refers to as Ted Bundy. "I still haven't redecorated," she says, "but I did go straight out and buy the same Porsche kettle, Nespresso coffee machine and touch-top bin as my ex. I realised it was his expensive gadgets I found attractive — not him."

Emma Wells