

Renovation Psychology® Advice for the Home Team Toolbox



*Dear Dr. Debi,
We are putting on an addition on the front of our house that includes a new picture window and several more windows and doors. My partner wants to get the low energy glass and is even talking about replacing all our windows. I think this is more than we need. How do we figure this out? ~ Signed,
Open Window*

Dear Open Window,

There are going to be several parts to your decision-making about windows. Of course, you will want to look at savings and beauty, but you also need to figure in the life left in the windows you have and even about your commitment to the house you are in.

You and your partner may need to sit and chat about your long-term plans for this house. This can bring up thoughts about retirement, empty nest, or even commitments, if you are not already in a long-term relationship. This sort of opens the window on some other discussions that can be very good to have when you are not frazzled and tired. So, perhaps have a casual chat about your long range plans and see what comes up. It is important to be casual about this, as it is not a legal contracting meeting, but an opportunity to just catch a view of the basic lay of the land, so that some planning can go on.

Don't go hog wild about these options brought up during the little 'talk', but just let them figure into the numbers, considering the range of choices facing you. As you look over the project estimates, don't try to hammer your partner into one or another position, just because they said they wondered about that option. It may be that the range of options will not affect your outcome, or perhaps what you learn about their impact may even help you decide among options in your life planning. It is a two-way street, so be sure to remain flexible in your discussions.

Now, for the math, if you are thinking of selling in the next 5-10 years, you might make some different choices than if you expect to use the house yourself for 30 or more years. As you figure the cost/benefits of the replacement windows, you will be multiplying the number of years you will use the house yourself by the cost savings per year of the energy efficient materials. Aha – psychology, science and math – all coming together for a wonderful convergence, to help you decide!

But cost is not the only factor in your decision-making. You will want to also figure in whether the looks of the whole house being done will offset the extra costs if you do go ahead with it now. Another option in this regard may be to reserve part job (or even the bid) for later when you may find it easier to afford or may know more about your choices.

To factor in the looks, you can go around and look at the parts of the house you are considering replacing, but with a new eye. Before you do this, imagine in your mind that you are just visiting your house. Pretend you don't know why the trim is not installed under the porch; just pretend you are new on the scene. Now, go around and take a look. You will see what matches and what doesn't and may have some ideas from this little walk, about the value of taking the steps that are being outlined in your new plan.

So, you have hard numbers from your estimated length of usage of the house, times the cost saving of the proposed materials, to give you the savings you may enjoy. If these numbers do not clinch the deal, you will then be comparing the costs of doing the project plain & simple versus this energy efficient way and that will be the bidding price for the other dimensions of your decision – the looks, the feeling of completion, the availability of time & energy to do the project now.

As you take the care to do this, you will bring fresh air into your planning process, for a decision that yields light for your home – now and tomorrow.

Dr. Debi

*Dr. Debi Warner is the Founder of Renovation Psychology® and author of **Putting the Home Team to Work**, available now online at RenovationPsychology.com. Dr. Debi provides advice for greater domestic harmony to folks who are renovating their home – for True Home Improvement. This column is offered for enjoyment and enhancement and is not intended to replace your personal medical care. Dr. Debi has a consultation practice, visiting home sites all over New England from her studio in Littleton, NH at the Tannery Marketplace. Photo by Bob Jenks, St. Johnsbury, Vt.
© 2006 Renovation Psychology® Visit www.RenovationPsychology.com Questions are welcome.*