



## Find your happy place

You don't have to take yet another bubble bath to unwind. These women turn unusual spaces into relaxing oases.

By Jen Matlack

“When I need a respite, I go running on a nearby wooded nature trail. It's close to home, but I feel like I'm far away in the country. Spotting birds, rabbits and squirrels while I exercise always soothes me.”

Trish Coughlin, 44, Atlanta

“If I feel stressed, I head to my kitchen to make one of my mom's traditional Indian dishes. When I take in the scents of cumin and mustard seed, I'm comforted because it smells like home.”

Raksha Varma, 25, San Francisco

“Sitting in the rocking chair in my daughter's room makes me temporarily forget about my endless to do list. I rock back and forth while she's peacefully sleeping and count my blessings.”

Heidi Suppelsa, 38, St. Louis

“To chill out, I go to my loft, turn on the ceiling fan and pet my dog, Ralph. I focus on the soft whirring hum of the fan, run my fingers through his fur and feel completely detached from the world.”

Lauren Littlefield, 26, Indianapolis

“I grew up with maple trees in my yard, and whenever I sat beneath one, I felt secure. I still find solace in the towering maples that line my property now. Whatever the season, I'll stand under one of them and absorb its strength.”

Tracy Higginbotham, 44, Syracuse, New York

## FISHING FOR FRIENDS?

It's a good bet that you're more than happy to share your buddies, but what should you do if you introduce someone to a pal and they start spending all their time together—without you? This phenomenon has a name: *friend poaching*. Experts define it as mining someone's social network with intent to steal; we call it an act worthy of a middle school bully. But however old you are, “it's natural to be possessive of a friend, especially when you've invested time in the relationship,” says Rebecca Roy, a psychotherapist in Los Angeles. To prevent hurt feelings and preserve close ties, try this advice when you think a precious pal is getting poached. —Sarah Jio

**Speak your mind but do it calmly.** Being excluded hurts, which can bring out the mean girl in all of us. Rather than reacting in anger, which could drive a bigger wedge between you and your absent friend, let her know that you value her and feel left out. Broach the subject with the poacher only if you want to preserve that relationship, Roy says. Otherwise, she isn't worth your energy.

**Don't take it personally.** “It's easy to assume you've done something wrong,” Roy says, “but a shift in a bond isn't always a reflection of some deficit in the relationship.” What you offer might be only part of what your poached pal is seeking; that doesn't mean you're any less valuable to her. Keep on being your wonderful self and your buddy will come to appreciate you even more.

**Wait out the infatuation phase.** Like any relationship, new friendships can be more intense in the beginning, so give your pals some time for their mutual admiration to run its course. If that doesn't happen and you're still on the outs, you may want to consider letting them go and moving on. If they don't prize your companionship, don't waste your time. Spend it with others who do!

Cut a pal loose if she uses you as bait to lure buddies.



## Power down, cuddle up!

On an average day, women reach for electronic devices (BlackBerrys, TV remotes) nine times—that's three times more often than they reach out to their partner for affection, finds a survey conducted by International Communications Research in Media, Pennsylvania. The next time you get the urge to send a text, harness that desire and give your mate a big squeeze instead.