

## **Family-Friendly Furnishings**

**Kid-proof your home. Keep your style.**

*by Jacqueline Rupp*

With little ones running around, jumping on sofas and spilling drinks throughout the house, enjoying a stylish interior may seem like a far off indulgence. The term "stylish family-friendly furnishings" doesn't have to be an oxymoron. You can create safe, beautiful and inviting designs right now in every room.

### **Family-Friendly Fabrics**

Today's fabric choices offer families anti-stain features without sacrificing style. For instance Microfiber fabrics repel moisture and come in a variety of patterns and textures, even suede look-alikes. "We selected two microfiber sofas," says Lori Nieves, a mother of three from Philadelphia. "This fabric made it easy to clean off spills and it's very soft."

Interior designer Catherine Avery, ASID, owner of Connecticut-based Avery Design, specializes in family-friendly interiors. She recommends leather, because of its natural distressed look, or ultra suede. Avery also suggests textiles designed for outdoor furniture. Because of their strength, they can hold up to household wear.

For families not in the market to make a major sofa purchase, slipcovers offer a budget-friendly, quick-fix solution. They aren't just for worn seating though. Avery suggests using slipcovers to protect special pieces during especially messy toddler years.

### **Furniture for the Future**

Keep durability and flexibility in mind when shopping for living room furniture. Look at the construction of pieces to ensure they will stand-up to daily punishment. "Families should not buy cheap furniture for the living room with the thought of replacing it later. It's better to buy a sofa or chair with a high density of foam and well-made structure," says Avery.

To maximize comfort levels, look for multifunctional pieces. "We have a bench instead of chairs at our dining table," says Nieves. The benches make it easy for the kids to climb up and sit by themselves. "I can push the bench completely under the table and let them run around."

"It's better to buy two sofas and a few chairs than one sectional," explains Avery. "You can move this seating around and change the layout of a room as the family changes. People tend to sit in a favorite spot, which results in one part of the sectional wearing out, requiring the whole piece to be replaced." She says parents need to remember to purchase furniture they can enjoy by themselves, as well as when the kids are around.

### **Soften Things Up**

With sharp corners and hard surfaces, coffee tables present a hazard. Amy Ryan-Tavener, creator and owner of soÖftables, says the inspiration for her extra-soft tables came from being a mom. "My daughter was nine months old, crawling around and pulling up on our slate coffee table. We shopped for something soft yet firm, but found nothing." SoÖftables are child-safe, cushion-topped custom-made coffee tables. "Nearly two million injuries a year are caused by hard surfaces like coffee tables, so you want to protect your children as much as possible," advises Ryan-Tavener. Besides the custom tables, soÖftables also offers soÖftable Top, a temporary table topper that flips on quickly.

### **Safe and Sound**

Dr. Angela Mickalide, Director of Education and Outreach for the Home Safety Council says it's important to realize that no room can ever truly be child-proof. She does offer these tips for making home safer for little ones:

- Eliminate long drapes and install repair kits for blinds that have long cords.

- Make sure electrical cords are out of reach.

- Install wall mounted brackets and anti-tip kits on flat-screen TVs, entertainment consoles and large furniture pieces like bookcases and dressers.

- Place heavy items in drawers and shelves low to the ground.

### **Keeping Clutter in Check**

Having kids means assorted "stuff" can pile up. Avery suggests these design options for handy storage solutions:

- Ottomans that open for accessible and discreet storage.

- Baskets and bins for storing toys. These can be hidden in the shelves of a coffee table or bookshelf. "This makes toys accessible and easier for children to clean up and keeps things out of sight for grown-ups."

- Simple built-in cabinets with glass doors that protect delicate items, while letting you see your treasures.