

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

But what if you can't see my disability?

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Since 1988, The Fair Housing Act has included protections in housing for individuals with disabilities. As a real estate agent and fair housing instructor, when we think about discrimination in housing, we think mostly about color, race, and perhaps people in wheelchairs. Those are the common faces of housing discrimination. However, discrimination can happen in many ways and to many kinds of people.

Discrimination happened to my clients: An autistic family with 2 children both with varying degrees of needs. Their rental complex harassed them, prohibited them from making reasonable modifications, and continuously threatened them with eviction (for autistic - related behaviors). With time, effort, and patience, the family was able to buy their own detached home along with a \$10,000 grant for safety & disability modifications.

Real estate and lending professionals are great people, but when a disability gives little to no visual cue, they will treat customers and clients like everyone else. The problem is we (yes, I am a late identifying (not yet formally diagnosed), high-masking individual) aren't like everyone else. Not only do we want and need special accommodations, we each need our own unique set of accommodations.

The professionals we deal with have to go off of auto-pilot and get to know their neuro-divergent clients on a hyper-individual basis.

The bad news? You have to speak up! The good news? The right professional will listen. Here are some tips to help you:



- You can interview real estate agents and lenders before choosing one. Buying or selling a home is a big decision. Do not let anyone make you feel rushed.
- Industry rules have changed - In order to see homes, you do have to sign a buyer agency agreement (if someone tells you that, that is true); however, if you aren't sure if they are a good fit yet, ask for a non-exclusive contract or a short time frame until you are sure. Contract terms are negotiable. You can do this!

- Make a list of what is important to you/your needs. Hand that to the professional and ask if they can accommodate you rather than having to verbalize everything and risk forgetting something important.
- It's ok to bring along an advocate or buddy.
- Many real estate activities can be done virtually these days so if you have social anxiety, the process may not be as scary as you think.

Buying, selling or renting is overwhelming for everyone so you are not alone. A lot of real estate professionals just haven't had the opportunity to learn how to make the experience more accessible to the neurodiverse community. With a little bit of courage and communication, I hope to continue to increase homeownership in the neurodivergent community. You deserve a real estate experience that works with your brain - not against it.