

# Ep #17: Finding Your North Star to Create a Pleasant Space



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kimberly Grigg**

## Ep #17: Finding Your North Star to Create a Pleasant Space

You're listening to episode 17 of the *Decorate Like a Design Boss* podcast. Today we'll be exploring how having a north star can set a clear and defined direction for your décor. This episode is perfect for you if you have difficulty creating floor plans that function or if you're looking for a focal point in your room. Sometimes we aren't even sure what is wrong with our spaces but we just know it's something. We'll be addressing this and what you can do when your space feels a little out of kilter.

So, if you're looking for a space that feels balanced and one that functions well for you then turn up the volume because this episode might just be for you.

Welcome to *Decorate Like a Design Boss*, a podcast for design lovers who want to create beautiful spaces in their very own homes. My name is Kimberly Grigg and I'm a professional interior designer who teaches design lovers like yourselves how to decorate. And when I say decorate I mean decorate like a design boss. If you're ready to create a space that your family loves and your neighbors can't stop raving about well, buckle up honey because it's time to design.

Well, hello there my design loving friends. We have such an exciting topic today but before we dive in I just want to shout out to Sully Moon. Sully says, I've been listening over and over to these interesting and informative podcasts. The topics Kimberly covers and her unique approach really speak to me. She gets right to the point and I always leave with new ideas and feel empowered to go decorate my home to feel totally like me. Well, thank you so much, Sully. This is why I do what I do. I believe everyone should live beautifully no matter your station in life.

If you're a first time homeowner, a renter or someone who is enjoying their forever home I think it's possible to decorate it in a way that is both beautiful and appealing but also in a way that is a true reflection of you. It warms my heart to be getting such awesome reviews. And listen, it's not

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too late for any of you to leave one as well. Leaving reviews helps me grow the show so that other design lovers can participate as well. So just head over to [kimberlygriggedesigns.com/podcastlaunch](http://kimberlygriggedesigns.com/podcastlaunch) and subscribe, rate and review the show. And I have a special treat lined up for you.

If you do this you can enter our contest to win a free membership into my Interior Design Insiders Club. Our Insiders Club has over 100 hours of video training, my fundamentals of interior design Superstar course and a live monthly Zoom group virtual consult. This consult is called the Design Diva Deep Dive Party. It's kind of like a girl pal design party. So, if you'd like a chance to win head over to [kimberlygriggedesigns.com/podcastlaunch](http://kimberlygriggedesigns.com/podcastlaunch) to register. And now on with the show.

So many times, I walk into a client's home and I hear them say, "Something is just not right and I'm not sure what it is but something is awry." Often they'll pick apart the thing that isn't actually wrong but they're on a search, on a hunt to figure out what is wrong. I will also hear, "I'm just not sure how to arrange my furniture, it just doesn't seem to look right any way that I place it." Well, what you need is a north star or in other words you need a focal point. Having a focal point gives you a reason for a room to function.

So, let's just break this down and unpack it step by step and let's see if I can help you make sense of this very, very important element in the design mix. So first of all, when you walk into a space I want you to look for anything that is large and/or obvious. It often is a fireplace, a window with a view, bookshelves or built-ins. It can come in the form of anything that is what I like to term the elephant in the room. Typically, this focal point is not usually something that would be easy to change and often it's part of the architecture of the space.

Now that you've found it I pose this question. Are you creating two or more focal points in the space or are there two or more focal points in the space. If there are this is where the conflict begins. Often I will see a fireplace on

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one end of the room and bookcases built in, in another section of the space and suddenly there are too many wows per room in the same space. The eye doesn't have anywhere to rest.

I also often see people create the same scenario by having a fireplace as the main focal point and then orienting the function of the space like TV watching in a big way in another part of the space. This creates confusing focal points. There are ways to deal with this if say you cannot make the TV a part of the focal point. And we'll be getting to this but first stop and think. Can I just make the function of my space a part of the focal point? If so it will be less tricky down the road and it will be easier to work out the furniture placements within the room.

I of course am going to preface all of this by reminding you to remember there just aren't a lot of perfect houses out there. And if this is your design dilemma then we're going to pick one of the focal points, typically the most obvious or the largest and play it up. And we're going to play the other focal point down. Or we will opt to create two different zones and give each zone its very own focal point. The question also arises, "Well, I don't have anything at all interesting or architectural in my room." And I say, "Well, that's okay, we're going to create interest."

We can always add a focal point with a number of elements including bookshelves or bookcases. These don't have to be built in, they can be furniture pieces. You can also create a focal point with a TV and a TV cabinet. If TV isn't part of your world you can use a lovely piece of furniture and a mirror or amazing artwork over it to add a bold space for your eye to rest. Something else that happens a lot when orienting furniture and creating a focal point is a poorly placed focal point. This often shows up as a corner fireplace.

So back when I was younger and more naïve in my design career I added a corner fireplace in a little cabin that my husband and I own on our nearby

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farm. I could kick myself for doing this, corner fireplaces throw off the symmetry of the room and then you are never quite sure how to orient the furniture. Of course, I have never actually admitted this to my husband because it was my big idea. But I assure you I don't and won't do it again as I have struggled for years to have the perfect placement of the furniture in this space. Friends, it is just awkward.

My final and best resolve has been in placing four chairs on the round in front of fireplace. This works well with the asymmetry and balances things out in a pleasant way. Sometimes you don't actually have four chairs on the round to work with and/or you need more seating which includes a sofa. If this is the case I have placed the sofa on an angle but it is rare that this scenario feels settled and balanced.

Instead, I will create a mini focal point on the largest wall beside the fireplace by usually adding a TV and a TV console. Then I can orient the sofa in front of the TV in the same direction as the TV console, add a pair of chairs and have the corner fireplace as part of the angle of the area that I have created. This scenario is one of the trickiest in the design world. And while it is not ideal, these tools and tricks have helped me solve my design challenge in an aesthetically pleasing way. However, if you can avoid this from the beginning I advise you to do so.

So, to summarize this so far because there's a lot of information packed just in this. Step one is to find the main focal point or create one. Stay away from playing up two focal points. If you have two focal points in the same space then play one up and play the other down. A good rule of thumb here is to take the largest and most impactful and make it the main focal point. Step two is that if you don't have a focal point you can create one. Every room needs one to determine the orientation of the space and to help root the furniture placement.

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Now, I want you to determine the function for your space. What does this room need to do? If it's a bedroom then obviously the bed is going to most likely be the largest element in the room and sleeping of course is the main function. If the room is small let your bed do the talking and refrain from adding other tall pieces to the room to keep things balanced. Back in the day when we used to hide our TVs in big armoires the armoire would often be massive and chunky and often overwhelm the space because it would create a secondary focal point.

Creating a seating area in a bedroom is a great idea if you have the space, just don't make the pieces so impactful that you lose sight of the main focal point which should almost always be the bed in a bedroom. This brings me to saying it's best if you walk into the foot of the bed, not the side of the bed if at all possible. An exception to this is when a window is taking up the wall that the bed should be on. This is kind of a pet peeve of mine. I don't really like beds in front of windows but sometimes I have no choice.

But if you're building a home then do make sure to place your beds on paper first before it's too late. You want a main wall straight on for your headboard to sit and preferably not against a window. This is something that builders don't often take into consideration and it is difficult to catch on the floor plan unless you lay your furniture out on the floor plan before you build. It's very hard to have a balanced and harmonious bedroom when you don't have a proper bed wall.

If you're creating a living space and one of the main functions is going to be TV watching then choose the space and place your furniture around the TV watching. Suppose you have a fireplace that is the focal point in your room and the room needs to serve as a TV watching room. Try and incorporate your TV into your fireplace wall if at all possible.

I am very okay and have decorated many a beautiful magazine worthy space with the TV right over the fireplace. If this isn't possible then create a

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TV watching zone and either play up the fireplace and play down the TV or vice versa.

Again, the goal is to avoid having two or more focal points that are on the same weight, scale and value chart or you will create a room that is at odds with itself and most likely you won't even know why. Again, the goal is to avoid having two or more focal points that are of the same weight, scale and value or you will create a room that is at odds with itself and most likely you won't even know why.

So, what if you have a focal point and you really want to play it up? I often want to dramatize the drama in a space especially if this appeals to a client's design DNA. If you're wondering what I mean by design DNA, well, I am specifically talking about what makes your individual heart sing in the design world. You can discover your own design DNA in episodes one, two and three. And I use the design DNA as the most fundamental design tool in the entire process. This is a sure fire way to create a space that is beautiful to you but also one that resonates with you.

So, some techniques I use when playing up a focal point are using a darker paint color on that one wall that is to be the focal point wall. I have also accentuated a wall that is the focal point with wallpaper or some other interesting architectural element like shiplap, or stone, a mural etc. A word of caution though, remember don't create a separate accent wall in a space on a wall other than your focal point wall. This would create a separate accent wall and would also just create conflict. I know this sounds obvious but I promise it happens often.

So, what can we learn from today's lesson? Furniture arrangements can be very logical if you allow them to be. Begin with identifying the focal point in a space and then determine the function of the space. Incorporate these two elements in the most aesthetically appealing way which is ideal when you have one focal point or one wow per room. Many of us aren't gifted

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with this in our homes so to optimize your aesthetic appeal play up the main focal point and play down the secondary focal point.

Many people will say that the fireplace is the elephant in the room but they want to orient around the TV. You can successfully play up the TV or secondary focal point and make it the primary if you give the space more visual impact. Wallpaper, paint or some other interesting element can help if this is your scenario. And of course, if you don't have a focal point it's important to create one around how the space will be used. Focal points are foundational and every space needs one.

Your homework this week is to assess your space. How many focal points do you have in each of your rooms? Now you are armed and ready to rectify this situation. I can't wait to hear and see what you come up with. You can see many examples of how I incorporated focal points professionally in the homes and spaces that I've decorated on Instagram and Facebook at Kimberly Grigg Designs.

Don't forget to subscribe, rate and review for a chance to win a spot in our membership. And that's it for today and you know what I like to say, don't wait, today is a great day to decorate. Kisses, kisses and lots of hugs. Bye for now.

Thanks for listening to *Decorate Like a Design Boss*, if you want more info on how to decorate your space like a pro visit [kimberlygriggdesigns.com](http://kimberlygriggdesigns.com). See you next week.