

# Real Estate News

By Marian Goetzinger, Pine Knoll Shores Realty



## Coping with change

When I was a little girl, I remember closing my eyes really tight so that the “boogeyman” couldn’t see me. I also thought that if something I didn’t like came up, I could ignore it and it would go away.

Change is hard, and when the change comes with something scary like a boogeyman or a pandemic, we can be paralyzed by our fear. When we were first told to shut down our real estate office and stay home, I was paralyzed. Being a real estate professional has always involved much personal contact with people, from showing property and holding open houses to sitting around the closing table. I couldn’t imagine how we could continue our profession in the midst of a worldwide health crisis. I still enjoyed the first few days of playing Scrabble with my husband, sleeping in and counting the rolls of toilet paper. By day three, I was frustrated, irritated and scared. It was becoming obvious that this scary thing was not going away anytime soon. I tried closing my eyes really tight and I tried to ignore it, but those things did not work.

I resolved to get up, dress up and show up every day even though I couldn’t leave my house. I could sit down at my home office desk and connect with customers, clients and friends. I had my computer and my cell phone. I could reevaluate and make plans and figure out ways to do things differently. I added more reading to my morning devotional time and focused on motivational inspiration books and made sure to keep up with the practical advice coming in daily by email from our state and national realtor associations.

I stumbled across *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Dr. Spencer Johnson and read it again. I first read it when I was new to the real estate world and the little book was just out. It is an amazing business fable but it would do well for everybody to read today, business person or not. It very simply points out that if things change and we do not, we will not do well.

I am eternally grateful for the North Carolina Association of Realtors and the National Association of Realtors for stepping up their communications with their members with valuable ideas and advice on how to handle the change in our business because of the pandemic. They shared ways to cope and stay safe in this scary world while still managing our business and assisting our customers and clients.

We discovered that we could still do real estate work without returning to the office. We focused on virtual viewings and upped our computer skills. I personally found that my paperwork and reaching out to friends, family and clients by phone improved. Most of us did quite a bit of dropping off items to front porches to avoid contact, but we sure missed all the personal contact that has always been such a wonderful part of our careers. When we were told we could return to our offices with safety protocols in place, we were thrilled to go back to the office but things were not back to normal.

In our office we practice extreme cleanliness habits and social distancing and keep masks handy for ourselves and visitors who may come in without one. We do everything possible to avoid contact and have realized that much of our work can be done remotely. Nothing replaces personal contact, and even the best virtual tours are not the same as actually walking around a home and through the house. Sometimes we just have to get inside. Here’s one way to do it:

Suppose I have just listed a home for sale. I contact all my prospects and notify the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) that I will have that home open on a certain day and time for two hours. All interested buyers and agents will be able to walk through during that time. They must wear masks (we provide extras for those who forget) and take off shoes or cover them with booties, which we also provide. Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes are provided, and all who enter the house are asked to refrain from touching anything, but if they forget, they must wipe that surface down with a disinfectant wipe. We have at least two agents present to hand out safety protocol instructions and make sure everybody follows them. We start by wearing our own masks and setting a good example. It actually works quite well. There is usually a good group of people, all learning to distance and stay safe together. There is a lot of laughing and joking about how our lives have changed during these times. I have always felt that as long as we can laugh about problems, we will handle them better.

Some realtors have always refrained from asking prospects to ride in their car for safety reasons. Now we all ask them to bring their own car and follow for different safety reasons. We all wear masks, and we keep our distance. We don’t shake hands, and we don’t hug our friends. I miss all that, but for now it is recommended and doable.

The big message in this article is be safe. Don’t be offended if your real estate professional does not shake your hand and keeps stepping back if you move closer. Know that we are all trying to learn new ways of doing our jobs and keeping everybody around us safe.

How’s business? Surprisingly, most of us are as busy as ever, listing and selling property. We are learning new ways to do things and having fun doing it. If you have questions about buying or selling real estate in the middle of a pandemic, call your favorite realtor and ask.

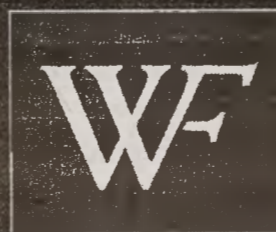


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