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Jeffrey Fisher: A recliner for dear ol' dad (that is, the dad who appreciates good design)



JEFFREY FISHER, SPECIAL TO NATIONAL POST | June 7, 2015 | Last Updated: Jun 7 9:38 AM ET
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Push-back Tate recliners by Vanguard offer a comfy place to watch TV. Room by Kelly Taylor Interior Design.

Hi Jeffrey,

My husband and I have a TV room off our kitchen that we spend a surprising amount of time in and are in the planning stages of freshening it. Fresh paint, new furniture and television and that should just about do it. My husband has been talking for years about wanting a reclining chair and, with Father's Day coming up, I'm thinking of giving in and surprising him. In your opinion, am I making a huge design mistake, and should I just stick to giving him new BBQ utensils? My adult kids think I'm crazy.

Janice

Hi Janice,

No one loves a good BBQ more than I; had you asked my opinion 10 years ago, I may have sided with your children. Since then, I've had two notable experiences that helped to change my mind. The first was working with a client who mandated he have a recliner in his great room. During the process of sourcing his recliner, I discovered that reclining chairs no longer are the over-stuffed cliché we once generically referred to as La-Z-Boy. (In defence of La-Z-Boy, they too have moved along with the design times.)

My second mind-changing moment excising judgment toward the reclining chair comes from actually experiencing the gloriousness that is reclining. I have a friend who has a not-so-chic recliner at her cottage, and it's the chair most fought over by guests, myself included. She had to add a second one last year.

Assuming my humble opinion has tilted the scales in favour of adding a recliner to your TV room, you need to think about what kind of recliner you're in the market for. There are essentially three styles:

Two-position As the name suggests, two-position recliners feature only a reclining or upright position. Easy to use with either a button or lever, this recliner typically needs three feet of space behind it, making it ideal for large spaces. The two-position is what we often think of as the bulky over-stuffed recliner, giving the chair a bad rap; but they're comfortable nonetheless.

Wall-saver Popular with small condos or dens, the wall-saver (or space-saver) requires less room than a standard recliner. Instead of needing a full three feet, wall-saver recliners need just a few inches and often have a number of reclining positions.

Push back These chairs recline without a lever or button, requiring the person to lean back and exert pressure on the back of the chair in order to recline. Push-back chairs are typically sleek and, with the absence of a lever, make it look like any other armchair.

My inspiration photo above by Kelly Taylor Interiors (ktid.net) features two Tate recliners by Vanguard. With straight lines, a metal base and leather upholstery, the Tate is a pushback recliner measuring 39 inches in depth when closed and 69 inches reclining. If you and your husband are the primary users of your study and space is at a premium, you may choose to do as Kelly has and use only two recliners as the primary seating. This gives you both your own private lounging space without ever having to fight over the best spot on the sofa for watching TV. It's like flying business class without leaving home.

If you have room for a chair and ottoman, the Re-Vive chair by Natuzzi (above) is a favourite of mine. It's a recliner, rocker and swivel chair all in one, designed to work in harmony with your body. It's even more comfortable than it looks in the photograph, and if you only have space or budget for one, prepare to do battle over whose turn it is to recline.

I recommend surprising your husband with a picture of a recliner in a card rather than actually choosing one for him. Recliners and their comfort are a very personal choice, and what you find comfortable may not be what your husband finds comfortable. I recently helped a friend choose two for her family room, and now, a month after the fact, her husband wants to give his recliner to their adult daughter. And I don't think that's what your kids want.

Jeffrey

Send your decor question to askjeffreymfisher@gmail.com