



## Tweenage Magic

WHEN JANE HARBISON, MOTHER, BUSINESSWOMEN AND FOUNDER OF DREAMING BIG FOR LITTLE GIRLS, RAN A POLL ASKING PARENTS WHAT THEY WANTED MOST FOR THEIR CHILDREN, 'HAPPINESS', WAS THE OVERWHELMING RESPONSE. FROM THIS DISCOVERY, JANE SET OUT TO CREATE SOMETHING THAT WOULD HELP YOUNG GIRLS TO DISCOVER WHAT REALLY MAKES THEM HAPPY. WE SPOKE TO JANE TO FIND OUT MORE.

### What inspired you to start the 'Make my Bedroom Mine' workshops?

It came from a combination of things. I am Deputy Chair on a girl's school board and I sit on stage each year watching the girls graduate hoping they are going into the world with an idea of what they love doing and confidently do something with it. The other comes from having an about face in my own career, going from an accountant to a creative, and loving the move. So, the Dreaming Big for Little Girls workshop, 'Make my bedroom Mine' is a small introduction into identifying what makes you happy using creativity.

### Can you briefly describe the workshops?

It is an interior design workshop for girls 10-15 years old, where the girls create a mood board for their bedroom using our 10 principles of good design. This is an age when they

are starting to develop their own style, so the workshop is a unique, fun way for the girls to express themselves and explore what makes them happy and feel safe.

### You partnered with award-winning designer, Virginia Bishop for the project. What depth does that bring to the workshops?

Virginia balances guidance and freedom perfectly in the workshop. While sharing the technicalities of what makes a room 'feel' right she allows the girls to create something that is just right for them. Two girls can have the same feeling word and the same favourite colour but create two completely different mood boards.

We aim to create an environment that is safe for the girls to develop a sense of self-expression and the diversity created is testament to that.

### Why do you feel it is important for kids to understand what makes them happy before they reach teenage years?

When you are happy you are capable of contributing effectively to the world around you. Teenage years can be a difficult time as you navigate who you are and where you fit. Having visual cues to your happiness can, in a small way, equip you to dealing with some of those difficult times when they arrive.

### How does interior design help with that journey of self-discovery?

Interior designers and architects say that space has a very real impact on how we feel, and neuroscientists and psychologists are not far behind with research that supports it. They discuss the way aesthetics affect our decisions, emotional responses and the way we feel about ourselves.

We believe that whether we are consciously aware or not, our environment has a profound effect on our state of mind. We like to work with the girls to shape that affect and to make the space authentically theirs. This is why we start the process well before they arrive, by asking them how they want to feel in their room.

### The workshops are targeted at tween girls. Do you feel this is a particularly important age for this experience?

We have found that as they reach 10 years old they desire to insert their own stamp on their space. Interestingly, recent social research indicates that tweenies respond to things more so than engaging with people, so having a bedroom full of things that they love is positive. Older than 15 their interests lie more importantly in human interactions, although I think the aesthetics of space plays an important role in our wellbeing regardless of age.

### How will this help them as they grow up?

I believe it is important to love what you do. If you do what you love, you will stick with it. If you stick with it you will get good at it. If you get good at it, people will reward you for it.

I recently asked a career officer at QUT (Queensland University of Technology) if loving what you do was enough for a successful career. She said yes, as long as it leverages your character strengths (the things you are naturally good at). It is one of the reasons I encourage everyone that is interested in our workshops to find out what theirs are.

### Head to [dreamingbigforlittlegirls.com](http://dreamingbigforlittlegirls.com) to find out more about the 'Make my Bedroom Mine' workshops.



"IT MAKES US SO HAPPY THAT THEY ARE CREATING THEIR OWN SPACE TO FEEL COMFORTABLE IN. THANKS TO BOTH VIRGINIA AND JANE FOR THE INSPIRATION AND CONFIDENCE THEY HAVE GIVEN THE GIRLS ABOUT INTERIOR DESIGN," – Brioney Kirby.

