



Outgrowing your small Victorian terrace doesn't mean you have to move out. One creative couple bought the house next door, knocked through and created a spacious family home, says **Tessa Williams**

WHEN Clive Brill and Elaine Bedell ran out of space in their terraced house in east London, they simply took a sledgehammer to their neighbour's wall and smashed their way through. But hold the police sirens and men in white coats: it was, in fact, Clive and Elaine's wall. They had just bought the house next door and embarked on a six-month project to transform two smallish Victorian houses into one generously proportioned family home.

The couple and their children, Joe, 11, and Flo, seven, had reached a stage where the house was overflowing with toys, books and memorabilia. They had lots of beautiful furniture and family treasures, but kept tripping over PlayStations and doll's houses to reach them.

"We'd been searching for a bigger place, but couldn't find anywhere we liked in the area," says Elaine, a BBC executive.

"When we heard next door was for sale, we looked at each other and cartoon light bulbs appeared above our heads."

The theory was simple: buy next door, knock through and enjoy double the space. However, the practicals were far more complex. Supporting walls had to be removed, the two lower-ground

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Lateral thinkers



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The rest of the wall has been knocked down to turn two rooms into a single, airy space with light pouring in from four windows. "When the walls came down, there was suddenly so much more light," says Elaine. "When we first saw it, it knocked us for six. We couldn't believe it was our home."

Upstairs, more clever tricks make the original small rooms fit in with the generously proportioned spaces downstairs. The dinky bathroom, for instance, has a wall of mirrored cupboards to double the sense of space. And in the master bedroom, two rooms have been knocked into one to create distinct sleeping and dressing areas.

The look seems effortless, but every detail

