

[A space of her own](#)



Rooms in fashion blogger's home reflect her unique style, function.

by Shara Rutberg

Scroll through Christina Roach's @mybalancedstyle [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) pages, and at first, you may think it's simply a place to discover ways to harmonize your wardrobe, beauty routine and home with posts like "3 ways to rock a moto jacket" and "My favorite patio set." But dig deeper, and you'll learn that the willowy mother of three with the megawatt smile works hard to balance much more.

In 2016, Roach, of Niagara Falls, New York, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The middle-school teacher balances life with MS, a husband, her children and a rapidly growing influencer community of 20,000-plus followers. Key to that balance is her home — with décor she strategically designed to help manage her fatigue. "It's my oasis," says Roach, 40.



Blogging has had an emotional payback for Christina Roach, since she gets to connect to a community of inspiring women.

Two weeks after giving birth to her third child, Roach began experiencing numbness and tingling in her fingers and feet and tightness in her chest. Doctors' initial thoughts were postpartum depression.

"But I had been a health and wellness freak since I was a teenager," Roach says. "What I knew more than anything was what I was feeling — and the difference between anxiety and numbness and tingling."

Even with a newborn and two small children, Roach quickly became her own best advocate, initiating more testing, seeing different doctors and conducting endless hours of online research. She was confident of her MS diagnosis weeks before her doctors made it official.

She struggled through being in a "deep dark place" mentally and physically for about eight months after her diagnosis, but through expert insight and tons of research, she found a route to balance.

She's motivated by the love of her husband, Bob, her "rock," and her children, Gavin, 9, Stella, 7, and Shae, 5. She follows the Wahl Protocol diet, works out regularly with a trainer, walks 4 to 7 miles a day, takes "a million" supplements, receives monthly infusions and takes a disease-modifying drug.

While she hasn't had a relapse in close to four years, she "has slowed down," though it may not appear that way online. "That's the beauty of social media," she says with a laugh.

A lesion in her neck caused permanent neuropathy in her left leg that has been difficult to

manage. "It's extremely painful. I feel weakness, and I feel I'm losing movement in my toes."

Fatigue, however, is the symptom that affects her daily life most. In fact, "On the day we were moving into our new house, I was unable to get out of bed and maintain my balance to walk." Fortunately, family and friends were there to help.

About a year ago, her fashion blogging hobby began to grow into a nearly full-time job as an online influencer. "I started it out of pure joy, just posting outfits and inspiration, then grew it into a savings and deals page," Roach says.



Every morning, Christina Roach walks down from her bedroom and opens the French doors that lead to a room walled mostly by glass, her "happy place."

Today, she has 20,000-plus followers of her Facebook group alone. "It's grown huge in a year." The emotional payback through the dark days of the pandemic has been just as valuable, she says. "It's been such an amazing escape. The community of women is so uplifting and inspiring."

Roach is developing a website that will allow her to expand her online presence to include more blogging about wellness and living with MS (she's raised close to \$50,000 so far with her Too Inspired to Be Tired Walk MS team). "I knew very early on in my diagnosis that I

wanted to help motivate and inspire those with MS or any kind of disease to stay active and positive, physically, emotionally and even socially — regardless of physical limitations,” she says. In addition to raising funds and awareness in her local community, she speaks regularly with newly diagnosed people who reach out to her through social media or friends and family.

A teacher for 19 years, Roach took a hiatus when she contracted COVID-19. She said her anxiety and MS symptoms were worse than the COVID-19 symptoms. Being home full time with three young children has brought an even deeper appreciation for how she designed her home, which the family moved into in 2019.

Roach describes her home décor style as similar to her fashion style: “classic with a little bit of an edge.” While that’s the flavor, the overarching theme is “minimalist,” she says. The challenge was to decorate and to keep maintenance to a true minimum.

Simple, streamlined

“To me, ‘minimalist’ means not a lot of clutter, simple, streamlined, modern and easy to clean,” she says. “I have the energy to be a teacher, a wife and mother, work out and be a blogger, but something’s got to give — and that something is the house. The less clutter, the easier it is for me.”

Roach and her husband turned a room that had been an office into a play and storage room for the kids. Keeping toys in that room does wonders for keeping the rest of the house clear. “I have a robot vacuum that can run for two hours, and because there’s no clutter, it doesn’t get stuck in corners or between things,” she says. To fight ever-encroaching clutter, “We make it a point to go through the toys every couple of months and donate things,” she says.

When she decorated, she chose classic over trendy. “That way, we won’t have to waste energy changing the décor to keep in style.” Greys, whites and blacks run through the home. Each room, however, has a “pop of edginess,” she says. Just as she personalizes a classic outfit with a unique or bright accessory, she tries to put one thing in each room that adds personality. In her bedroom, it’s two artsy canvases above the headboard. One says, “I like her butt.” The other says, “I like his beard.” The girls’ room have 3-D butterflies climbing a wall. Gavin’s room has a giant image of a hockey player on the wall.

Three seasons room

Nearly every warm morning of the year, Roach walks down from her bedroom and immediately opens the French doors that lead to a room walled mostly by glass. “It’s my happy place,” she says. “It’s the reason we bought the house.” With views out to the backyard and pool, the room offers “calmness and sanity.” It also brings light into the home. “Lighting for me is huge,” she says. “This room is like being outdoors.”

Functional and fashionable style



Modern industrial-style lighting and lamps

“We don’t get a lot of light in Buffalo winters,” Christina Roach says. “Like a lot of people with MS, I’m deficient in vitamin D. And really, I just like to have lighting that illuminates a clean, crisp style.” She and her husband swapped out all of the light fixtures and lamps and installed new ones with funky industrial metal and vintage-inspired glass. They add mood-boosting light and “a fun edge to the modern style,” she says.



The Influencer Room

Roach transformed the spare bedroom into the headquarters for her @mybalancedstyle blog. Shelves of shoes line the walls. Racks hold clothes to be reviewed from collaborating retailers. The full-length selfie mirror commands a place of honor on the wall. “This room is my source of inspiration where I find peace of mind,” she says. One of the keys to its allure? “No kids allowed,” she adds with a laugh.



Wall art

Roach treasures two framed classic photos hanging on the wall of her influencer room — one of Coco Chanel’s designs and one of Louis Vuitton’s designs. “They’re my style icons, my inspiration,” she says.

Shara Rutberg is a writer in Evergreen, Colorado.