

The Connection Between Your Home and Your Sense of Well-Being

Did you ever visit a restaurant where it seems like you could spend hours lingering over a meal, chatting with friends? Compare that to a casual fast food place. The differences in lighting, furniture and even music can encourage us to relax and stay a while, or eat quickly and get moving. But our surroundings can do more than set a mood – they can directly influence our well-being.

“Your home and work environment are an important influence on your sense of well-being, but they are often overlooked,” says UW Health psychologist [Shilagh Mirgain](#). “These are the environments we spend the most time in, so it’s only natural they would have an impact on us.”

Brightly lit rooms have been shown to improve depression and anxiety. The presence of plants or even of treasured mementoes can do more than lift our spirits, but can actually influence our physical health. And yet despite the influence of our surroundings, we may not give much thought to how we can use it to improve our well-being. But with some simple tips and a few changes, we can help ensure our home and work space support our good health.

Create a Healing Environment

Some tips to create a healing environment to thrive:

Cultivate Comfort

Is your home inviting for guests? What about yourself? If you enjoy spending time with family or having friends over, consider whether your furniture encourages it. Are there comfortable places for multiple people to sit? Just like the restaurant, your home space can help encourage people to linger and enjoy time together.

Clear the Clutter

The home is supposed to be a refuge from the world, where you can relax and recharge. But if it’s dirty or full of clutter, it may be more of a source of stress than of healing. While everyone has their own way to clear the clutter, doing so can help you feel lighter and more positive. That stack of unopened mail is a constant reminder of things you need to do, which can feel draining. So start by tackling that pile. And once you do, look for ways you can help keep it clutter-free in the future. It might be starting a new habit, like going through the mail as soon as you get home or folding and putting the laundry away as soon as it is washed. Whatever it is, take small steps and make changes one at a time.

Brighten the Light

There's times you want bright light and then there's times you don't, and it all depends on the time of day. Letting in natural light in the morning, and keeping the house bright throughout the day can help keep you feeling alert and awake. But as the afternoon wears on toward evening, then it's time to start dimming the lights more. A brightly lit house at night can make it harder to wind down from the activity of the day and fall asleep at night.

Revel in Your Senses

Many people had the experience of living in an apartment or rental house with its off-white walls. After a while it can feel a little bare. But as you consider colors, think about how they can shift the feel of a room. A deep red wall might be a bold addition to a dining area, while blues and greens can help create a peaceful environment. Curtains, artwork or photos are more ways to enhance a space visually, while opening a window for fresh air, or soft music can help engage the other senses and create a sense of calm.

Notice Nature

Research shows that even short contact with nature is beneficial to our well-being. As little as 3-5 minutes of contact with nature has been linked to reduced stress, reduced anger and a boost in positive feelings. Some of the same effects are seen if we have views to nature or can bring nature into the living space through plants or fresh flowers, aquariums and even fireplaces.

Quiet the Noise

Silence can be golden. We are bombarded by noise throughout out the day. Even just having the radio or TV on in the background can make it hard for our minds to take a break. Set aside time throughout the day to just enjoy the quietness around you.

Cultivate Joy

Find ways to bring joy into your surroundings. Maybe it's the space to enjoy a hobby or place where family photos are displayed – small additions can help create a sense of space that is nurturing and creative. When you are able to create a space that is a personal reflection, it can help you feel refreshed at the end of a long day.

