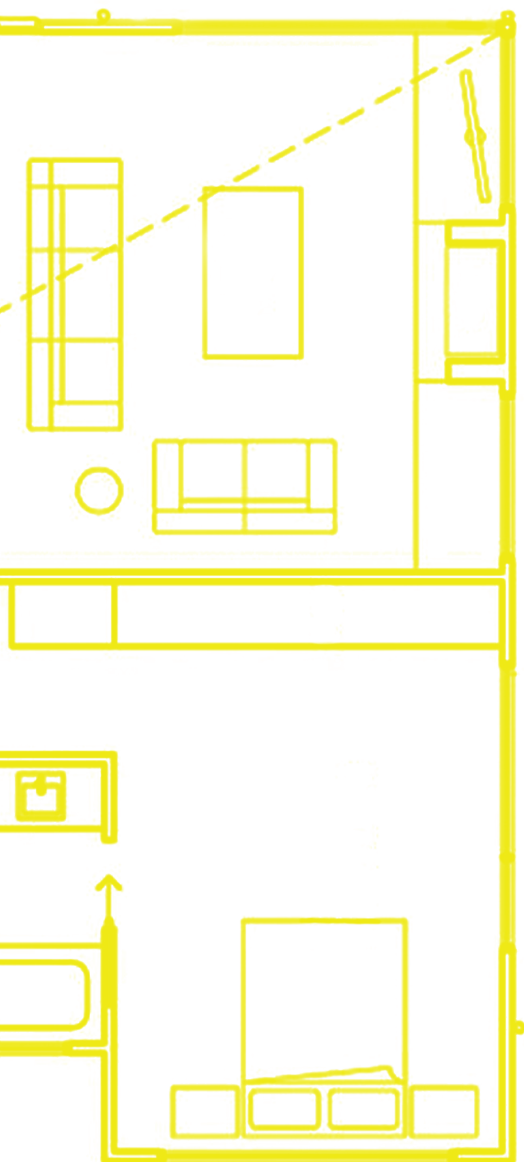


ARCHITECTURE THAT HEALS

Decorating for Psychological Comfort

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Your home should be a restorative space—somewhere you can rejuvenate from the stressors of the world. Psychoanalyst Carl Jung suggested that certain images are primeval—deeply embedded in our collective memories formed through the generations. Colors for example may reflect the following:

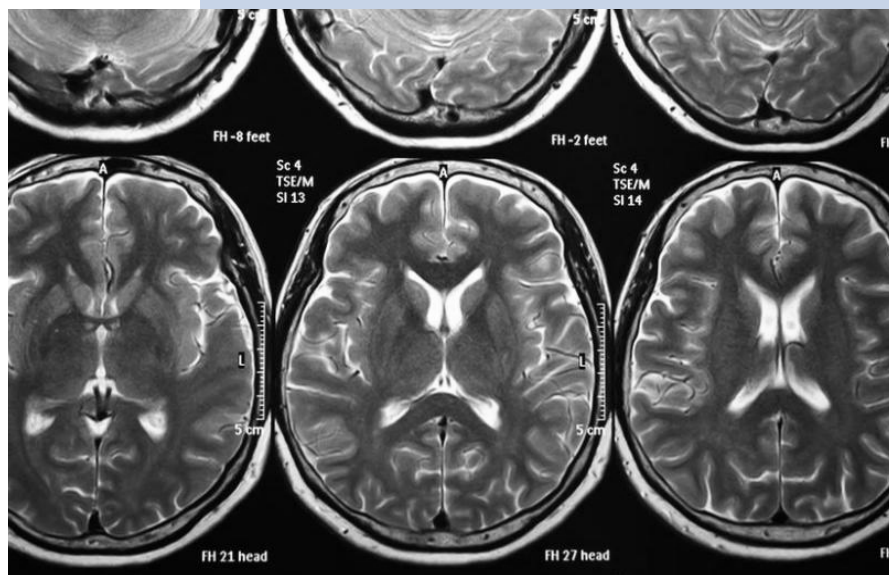
We may be drawn to black due to an intrigue with the unknown, or repelled by it as a symbol of the shadow, a figure of chaos, or death. Green may evoke renewal as in the first green shoots after winter. Blue may be spiritual and associated with calm and tranquility as in the sky, and so on.

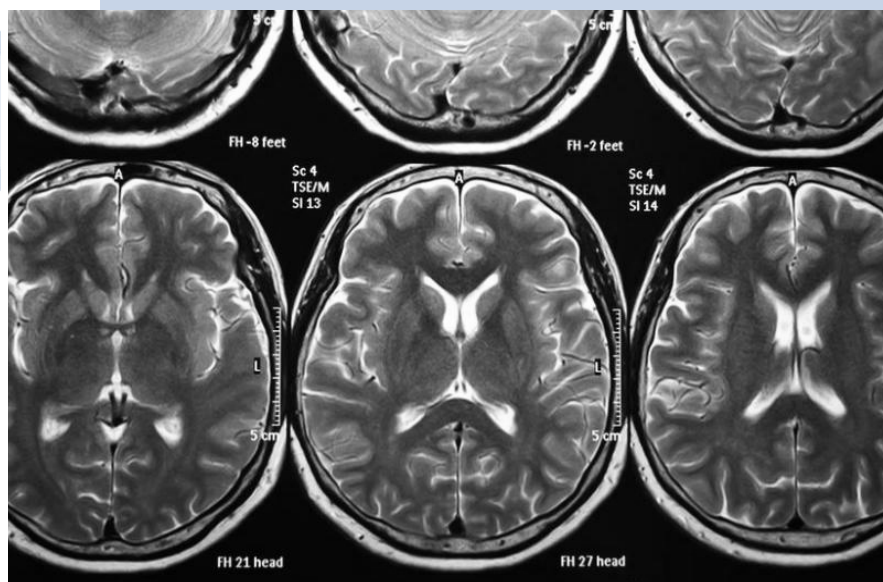
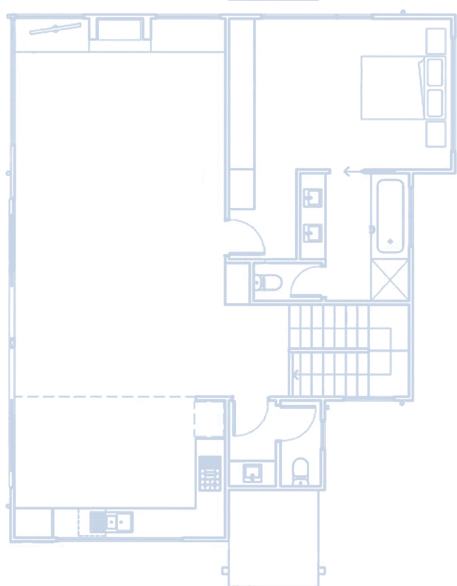
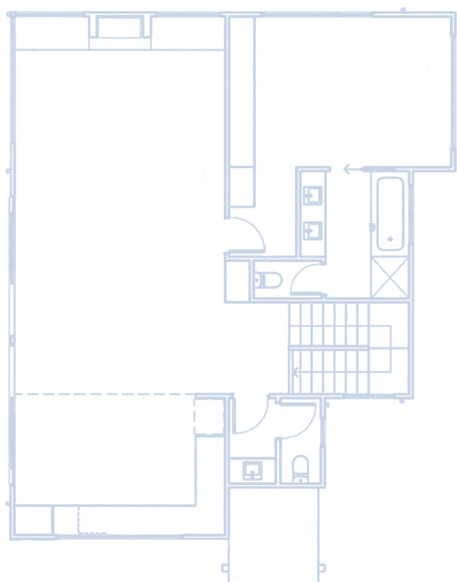
Some spaces that

are crowded and noisy can increase stress and lead to stress-related physical problems.

Lack of light, particularly in the elderly, can change circadian rhythms (which are patterns that control our sleep-wake cycle) and lead to delirium or cognitive confusion.

Some shapes make





“We react to spaces, colors, and textures differently because of another interior—our unique psychological processes—shaped by our experiences, our culture, and our familial memories.”

us feel penned in. For example, square rooms seem to feel less crowded than rectangular ones; windowless rooms can create claustrophobia.

Some colors, like shades of yellow, are like the sunshine. They can boost one’s mood and create a sense of optimism. Shades of blue can be calming. Others, like red or a secondary color such as orange, can be

jarring. Some shades in combination with other colors can be perceived as warm.

Textures are another element. They represent comfort, a primeval need we have to be touched and held when distressed. Items that are textured may substitute as transitional objects; throws and stuffed pillows may be for adults what teddy bears are for children—they comfort and ensconce when distressed.

Yet, despite these generalizations (e.g., that textures equal comfort) some people prefer hard surfaces, sharp geometric designs, and rooms that are clean and devoid of knick-knacks. They may feel uncomfortable in a room with stuffed armchairs, throws, and warm colors.

Why? It may be because we react to spaces, colors, and textures differently because of another interior—our unique psychological

processes—shaped by our experiences, our culture, and our familial memories.

Certain colors or combinations may evoke memories—good and bad. Certain designs or an era may be something one is drawn to or repelled by. Maybe you were forced to visit great-grandma in her old dusty house filled with uncomfortable and itchy sofas. Or, you grew up in a home that was cluttered and chaotic and this is your comfort zone—or just the opposite. Or perhaps in adolescence you moved toward individuation and identity formation by defining yourself by a style and an era that was in sharp contrast to that of your parents. Black may engender a feeling of solidity and comfort for some; pale shades of green may be too evocative of decay (think “hospital green”); or yellow may not be all sunshine—it may be too brash, too cutesy.

And this is where we refer to home as a “healing space.” Your home should reflect your unique psychology. Birds know this: they find just the right twigs to create their nests. An eagle’s nest is different from a sparrow’s. Each has their own requirements. Yet, we may be an eagle and decorate our nest to reflect a sparrow’s taste.

Why? It may be based on what others have put together for us (so our home looks like a showroom); or we simply are not paying attention (cluttered, not coordinated). It may reflect a sense of confusion based on impulse buying that results in jarring colors or styles that don’t mix well. Or, it is designed based on what others believe “looks good” or have dictated is “in,” but has no relationship to who we are.

Although it may not be realistic to have your entire home reflect your psycholog-

ical needs, mainly because your spouse or partner, children, or your situation presents limitations, you still need a place somewhere in your home that is a psychological comfort zone. There are ways to get there, even on a limited budget. Decorating for psychological comfort isn’t a luxury item. It is a necessity. Moreover, an unlimited or large budget doesn’t necessarily guarantee you will end up with a home that is congruent with your needs. Getting there means paying attention to what you need.

Look around. Is your home a reflection of someone else’s taste or a generic taste based on market analysis? Is your home a psychologically comfortable space? Take the steps to answer these questions with a “yes.” Decorating to make your home a psychological comfort zone is not a luxury; it is core to your well-being.

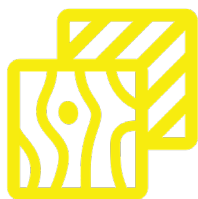
HOW-TO

construct a psychologically-comforting home



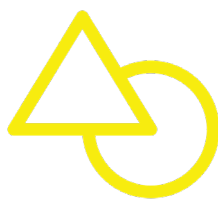
COLOR

What colors make you feel energized and happy?



TEXTURE

What tactile sensations make you feel good?



SHAPE

What shapes make you feel at ease, and why?



THEME

What places make you feel at home, and why?