

HEALTHY HOMES

Consider these wellness-focused design touches that can make you feel better from head to toe

BY SHELBY DEERING



Perhaps now, more than ever, our homes are the subject of greater scrutiny. It's no wonder, due to COVID-19 we're spending a lot more time in them. For many of us, our trips out during the last seven months have been greatly scaled back and all that time at home has caused us to reevaluate our living spaces. In fact, it's resulted in a worldwide surge in home goods purchases.

With this attentiveness has come a shift in what we desire from our homes: namely, how can our homes make our minds and bodies feel their best?

Wellness design has become a popular term in recent years, and the timing couldn't be better for this trend. With many gyms and spas limiting their services or remaining closed, homeowners are looking for ways to bring mental and physical benefits into their living spaces. All it takes is research and the decision to move forward.

"Almost every space in your home can be an answer to healthier living if you are bold enough to address your needs and meet them with the design elements that enhance your lifestyle," says Beth Welsh, interior designer at Interior Changes in Williams Bay.

When asked to define home wellness, Karen Hohman Zlotnik, principal at Geneva Lake Design, says, "It's the active pursuit of creating and maintaining a healthy, balanced home. Just like we take care of our

bodies, our homes need just as much attention. Everyone can achieve home wellness regardless of the size, style and location of their house or family."

Read on to discover how to bring features into your home that just might improve your mood and well-being.

BENEFICIAL HUES

Color has been scientifically proven to impact your disposition. You can choose to promote increased energy or tranquility in a space simply by your paint choice.

"If you need to feel energized in order to exercise, then bold colors might do the trick," Welsh explains. "If you lack relaxation and want your home to feel more peaceful, then subdued tones in green or blue undertones might be called for."

When creating a soothing room,

“Natural light can be so beneficial to your mental health. It can improve sleep, depression and seasonal affective disorder. I also find that natural light is a great energy boost.”

—ERICA MEIER, INTERIOR DESIGNER AND OWNER OF ZANDER'S INTERIORS

Erica Meier, interior designer and owner of Madison's Zander's Interiors, gravitates toward sea-inspired shades. She says, “When I think of wellness and mindfulness, I think of the ocean, so for me I tend toward using soft greens and blues and then I layer in neutral colors that remind me of the color of driftwood.” These colors are perfect for lake homes, too.

Hohman Zlotnik goes beyond the walls when setting a wellness-promoting color palette, opting for throw pillows, blankets, window treatments and accessories that weave in color without the “hassle of painting” as she says.

TEMPERATURE & LIGHTING

Your family's ideal temperature and

lighting settings can be established with the help of a professional.

Hohman Zlotnik says, “I assess each home to see how much natural light they get as well as determine the natural ventilation the home has to offer. Understanding a family's lifestyle helps to determine what works best for them specifically. Temperature and light can improve overall well-being simply by keeping our bodies balanced and regulated.”

“Automation has brought in a new level of comfort and wellness to our homes,” Welsh adds. Today's programmable and Wi-Fi enabled thermostats optimize heating and cooling. “Clients in existing homes,” she explains, “can use Nest products, while new builds have a multitude of options to consider.”

Jason R. Bernard, president of Lake Geneva Architects, has specific ideas around lighting. “Use LED bulbs with a color rendering index (CRI) above 90,” he advises. “The natural colors will remain true and vibrant. The lower the CRI, the blander and more sterile the space will feel. As for brightness, I personally like a bright (3000K) light for tasks and a softer (2700K) light for settling down.”

ALL ABOUT AIR

Bernard stresses the importance of fresh air, saying, “Over time, the indoor environment will fill itself with unavoidable toxins.” He adds, “Invest in an air purifier. As a person who has dealt with the lasting effects of mold

poisoning, I have become much more aware of how your indoor environment can affect your quality of life. A true air purifier can help scrub the air of odors, bacteria and allergens.”

PLENTY OF SUNLIGHT

“Natural light can be so beneficial to your mental health,” Meier says. “It can improve sleep, depression and seasonal affective disorder. I also find that natural light is a great energy boost.”

All our experts agree that natural light is a must in every home. Welsh is a proponent of adding windows whenever possible, using light-filtering window treatments instead of room-darkening ones and placing furniture groupings around an outdoor view.

Bernard shares that all of Lake Geneva Architects' homes are uniquely situated and designed to maximize the views, sunlight and natural features a property offers.

“Be thoughtful on what approaches you use to naturally light a room,” he says. “It does not always need to be direct sunlight. The direct sunlight of a soft morning sun piercing into a reading room is a great way to start your day. But in the late afternoon, you might want to limit the direct harsher sun. Maybe indirectly bounce the light into a family or dining room.”

Paint colors can be another way to emphasize natural light. Meier is partial to ceilings in bright white, while Hohman Zlotnik avoids dark color



schemes that absorb light and make a room feel darker.

ZEN-DEDICATED SPACES

With an increase in people choosing to exercise at home these days, it makes sense to create an area meant for yoga, fitness and meditation. Meier says that she's been "getting more and more requests for spaces like these now that we are working out more at home."

Meier notes that you should choose suitable flooring for the type of exercise you'd like to do. For example, rubber flooring is ideal for fitness spaces since it can handle heavy equipment and absorb sound. She also recommends dimmable lighting and suggests avoiding stark overhead lights if the space is intended for yoga and meditation.

Hohman Zlotnik underlines comfort if the space is being designed with inner peace in mind. She focuses on rugs, window treatments and color selection, and adds greenery to improve indoor air quality. "Every finish and object need to

communicate calm," she says of yoga and meditation rooms.

NATURAL KITCHENS

Natural products can be easily incorporated into a kitchen, something that gives a nod to the wellness-promoting outdoors.

Welsh points out that a backsplash can be a good spot to represent natural elements like locally-sourced stone or a seaside-blue mosaic. Meier says that wood countertops and jute light fixtures are another way to spotlight earthy materials. Hohman Zlotnik is a fan of showcasing wood salad bowls, bamboo cutting boards and stone trivets in a nature-inspired kitchen, often placing these items alongside an indoor herb garden.

At the end of the day, wellness features in a home are personal choices, ones that suit your lifestyle and goals. Meier reflects on this idea, saying, "I think an important part of wellness design is to create a design that is a reflection of the client's personality and emotions,



making sure you listen and understand what it is that will give them mental balance and harmony when they are living in this space." ▲





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