

Comfort zone

Fiona Applegarth looks at ways to improve your bedroom to ensure that you enjoy an all-important good night's sleep

We all know how difficult it is to get up in the morning after a bad night's sleep. It's well known that good sleep is essential for us to feel well, rested, think clearly, react quickly, and be energetic for the day ahead.

Studies show that when you lack sleep, you're more likely to make bad decisions and take more risks. Cutting back by even one hour can make it difficult to concentrate resulting in lower performance at work or school.

So, what steps can we, ourselves, take to help restfulness every night?

One of the major contributing factors is environment. In other words, the bedroom. For most people, the bedroom is their own personal space. Whether it is shared with a partner or not, bedrooms should serve as a haven and reflect harmony and relaxation. It's definitely worth spending time to create a room that is pleasing and comfortable, and encourages you to want to be there.

Choosing colours

A colour is a very powerful tool and psychologists agree that our mood can be greatly affected just by interacting with specific colours. By choosing colours that you feel most comfortable with, you'll find the greatest contentment with your décor. Don't let friends or family try to influence you – this is your own personal space.

It is worth remembering, however, that strong colours such as red emphasise energy, and it's the neutral colour palette that will evoke a sense of serenity and tranquility.

Don't be fooled by thinking that neutral colours are boring. Whites, beiges and chocolate browns can be combined with warm hues, and textures and patterns can be used to add depth. Using tone on tone shades can provide the perfect backdrop for achieving a serene room.

Creating a monochromatic palette is easy. Simply choose one colour and go one value up and down from it in the spectrum.

By using accents in bright bold colours for bedding and accessory items, for example, you'll be able to switch these, and alter the mood of your bedroom seasonally, or whenever you want a fresh look.

Clutter is undoubtedly a major stress factor, and a messy room will distract and make you feel uncomfortable – so make sure you have enough storage.

Adjustable shelves mean you can organise the space you

have for smaller or larger sweaters in summer or winter. Pull-out trouser racks, shoe racks and good internal lighting are other additional features.

Comfort is a priority, so having a bed that helps your relaxation is of paramount importance. We don't need to be reminded that we spend a large proportion of our lives in our bed – so it's worth the investment.

Apart from the decent mattress, make the bed really comfy by adding a plump duvet and lots of fluffy pillows. Splash out on some really good bed linen that feels great against your skin.

Dressing the bed allows you to be creative and will be instantly pleasing when you enter the room. Special touches such as the choice of scatter cushions and bed throw will transform the room, and can add that feeling of luxury or glamour.

Striking headboards are incredibly popular today, and designing your own provides an excellent opportunity to create a very pleasing statement or focal point for the bed.

Attention to detail can reinforce the feeling of order and calm and bring an immense sense of satisfaction to a lot of people. Adding personal touches such as photos of your family, or an enjoyable holiday, add to the sense of well-being as memories of good times are evoked.

The sense of smell is one of strongest senses, and many forget or underestimate its importance in everyday life. Enter a room that is fresh, and emitting your favourite fragrance lifts your spirit immediately. Flowers, scented candles, room sprays are all widely available and make good gifts for the home.

Last, but by no means least, don't under-estimate the importance of good lighting. Lighting is not only functional, but decorative and atmospheric. Good lighting can transform a room and has a direct influence on mood.

Although natural light creates a pleasant ambience, we are not always lucky enough in this country to rely on the benefits from the daily sun. There are so many good products available on the market today and with good planning the possibilities for transforming a dull area are limitless.

For those light sleepers, don't forget to add black-out lining to your curtains or blinds to maximise light blockage.

All in all, with the ever increasing pressures of daily life upon us, it is worth remembering that with a little thought and effort, you can easily increase your own sense of well-being even with a few small changes.

So go on, go for it. You know you're worth it. ●

essence info

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