

4 KEY INSIGHTS IN DESIGNING SENSORY SPACES

8th May 2023 - Designing sensory spaces is a crucial aspect of creating a safe and welcoming environment for individuals who are sensory sensitive. Sensory sensitivity, also known as sensory processing sensitivity (SPS), is a trait that affects how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to sensory stimuli. Individuals who are sensory sensitive are more prone to experiencing overstimulation in environments that are too loud, bright, or crowded. Therefore, it is crucial to design spaces that cater to the sensory needs of individuals who are sensory sensitive. (text: SAM x HUS design)

In the 3rd sensory talk hosted by SAM sensory & more and with guest speaker Sofie from HUS design, four key insights were discussed.

The first key insight is that small changes in one's home can help sensory sensitive people feel less overwhelmed. In a world of overstimulation, our home is our safe space where we can control the stimuli.

The second key insight is that there are two main elements in sensory design. The first one, creating a withdrawal place in your own home, such as a small reading nook or a separate space of your own, can help you calm down or stimulate your senses and thus regulating your nervous system. Additionally, taking control of how the stimuli get into your body, such as using noise-cancelling headphones, regulating ambient temperature or closing curtains to block out light, is crucial.

The third key insight is that classic interior design doesn't take into account sensory issues. Neurodivergent interior design does; it puts your sensory needs first and designs around those needs, providing a solution for them through interior design. The first step in the process is to identify your sensory issues f.e. by using a sensory profile checklist (f.e. by Olga Bogdashina). It is essential to note that sensitivities can change over time, and it is crucial to stay aware of these changes.

The fourth key insight is that sensory-friendly design has many proven benefits. Studies in the field of Autism, Human Centered Design and Neuro-architecture speak of fewer overwhelm, better concentration and learning, higher productivity, quicker recovery, and less use of medication.

Benefits

at home	more peace and quiet, less eruptions
in the classroom	more growth, better concentration
in the office	higher productivity
at the hospital	better and quicker recovery
in the elderly home	less use of medication

Designing sensory-friendly spaces is especially important in schools. Designing for individuals you don't know can be challenging. However, generalizing design and giving control to sensory input, such as allowing students to adjust the ambient light to their needs, or use noise cancelling headphones, can help create an environment where they feel comfortable. Additionally, using clear pictograms and wayfinding signs and zoning the different functions in the classroom, such as spaces for group work or individual work or play, can be helpful. Incorporating biophilic design by using natural textures, materials, sounds, addresses all the senses and creates a natural and calming feeling.

Other strategies involve using natural colors, taking inspiration from nature, and avoiding too dark or overwhelming colors. Making sure acoustics are good is something that is often overlooked, yet is essential to avoid overwhelm of the senses.

It is also essential to keep the home organized, as clutter and not finding your stuff can be overwhelming. Grouping similar items, such as having a designated spot for books, toys, games, etcetera, can help create a clear and organized space.

In conclusion, designing sensory spaces is crucial in creating a safe and welcoming environment for individuals who are sensory sensitive. Solving sensory issues through design can be done by giving control to the individual. Finally, sensory design at the workplace, in schools, hospitals, and elderly homes can have a profound impact on the well-being of individuals, leading to better concentration, quicker recovery, and higher productivity.

ABOUT HUS DESIGN

If you would like to get to know more about sensory friendly design, don't hesitate to contact Sofie from [HUS design](#). She can help you with your home, school, workplace, institution,....

ABOUT SAM SENSORY & MORE

[SAM Sensory & More](#) is a brand that specializes in creating fashionable and [comfortable sensory-friendly clothing](#) and [accessories](#) for people who are sensitive to sensory input. Their products are designed to provide a sense of calmness and comfort throughout the day. Ideal for anyone looking for more peace and calmness in their body and mind.