

TAKEAWAYS



DESIGN FOR AGING:

Psychological Health Among Older Adults

An Executive Summary on the Impact of Aging Populations on Healthcare Environments

INSIDE YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT:

Definitions of psychological concepts related to the designed environment.

Functions of personalization, privacy, wayfinding, and access to nature in meeting psychological needs.

Design implications of personalization, privacy, wayfinding, and access to nature.

*This executive summary was created as a benefit for the **Affiliate+** Program.*



AUTHOR

Lou Ann Bunker-Hellmich, PhD, EDAC

March 2015

Design for Aging: Psychological Health Among Older Adults

Defining Psychological Needs

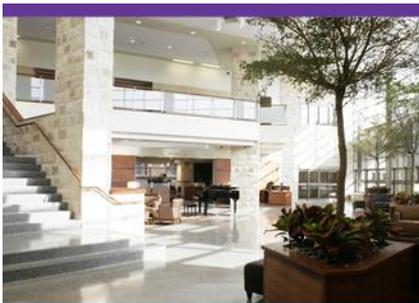
Based on the [Residential Healthcare Facilities Issue Briefs](#), funded by the Rothschild Foundation and published in 2012.

Psychological needs are those specific to the human mind and its function. Several psychological concepts and potential design implications are highlighted in the table below. Opportunities to personalize one’s space, privacy, successful wayfinding, and the restorative aspects of nature all contribute to psychological health among older adults.

Psychological Concept	Design Implications
Personalization	
Intentional modification of the physical environment with personal belongings to define or claim space as one’s own. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provides a sense of control and satisfaction ○ Communicates identity, interests, and values ○ Changes perception of living environment from “the place where I live” to “my home” ○ Helps recall a special event or person ○ Eases transition to a new living environment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Resident selection of paint colors and artwork in room/unit 2) Ability to use/bring own furniture 3) Floorplans and furniture that facilitate flexible arrangements 4) Shelving and built-in niches to display valued items and collections
Privacy	
Privacy is desirable when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Performing personal activities (e.g., toileting, bathing, sleeping, medical examinations) ○ Communicating sensitive information ○ Concentrating without interruption ○ Seeking respite from unwanted social interaction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Private bedrooms, bathrooms 2) Appropriate site lines to adjacent spaces 3) Walls, doors to close off spaces 4) Acoustic considerations promoting privacy
Restorative Aspects of Nature	
Biophilic design theory suggests that evolution has predisposed humans to derive psychological and physical benefits from nature. Visual and physical access to nature, outdoor spaces, and natural light can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reduce pain, stress, and depression ○ Improve sensory stimulation, circadian rhythms, and opportunities for exercise and social interaction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Careful attention to site planning and building orientation to maximize nature views and daylight 2) Nature window views in resident rooms/units, treatment, and waiting spaces 3) Nature art or simulation where windows are not possible 4) Safe, paved outdoor paths with benches for resting 5) Accessible gardens, indoors and outdoors 6) Shade structures in outdoor seating areas 7) Patios with tables for activities and eating



Psychological Concept	Design Implications
Wayfinding	
<p>The process of navigating unfamiliar environments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requires the identification of destination, an effective route, and return ○ Spatial skills decline with age ○ Ineffective wayfinding can cause disorientation and stress 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Signage with appropriate lettering size, contrasting colors, and font type appropriate for the aging eye 2) Orientation cues; clear reference points 3) Pictograms combined with lettering 4) Different colored walls for different areas 5) Display of photos or memorabilia to assist with room identification 6) Signage in consistent locations 7) Vary architectural composition 8) Eliminate long corridors with many doors 9) Provide directional cues alongside windows



**The Center for Health Design:
Moving Healthcare Forward**

The Center for Health Design advances best practices and empowers healthcare leaders with quality research that demonstrates the value of design to improve health outcomes, patient experience of care, and provider/staff satisfaction and performance.

Learn more at
www.healthdesign.org

Related References

Bowman, C. S. (2008). *The environmental side of the culture change movement: Identifying barriers and potential solutions to furthering innovation in nursing homes*. Retrieved from <http://www.pioneernetwork.net/Data/Documents/Creating-Home-Bkgrnd-Paper.pdf>

Brawley, B. C. (2006). *Designing innovations for aging and Alzheimer's: Creating caring environments*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Cutler, L. J. (2008). *Nothing is traditional about environments in a traditional nursing home: Nursing homes as places to live now and in the future*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

Lawton, M. P., & Nahemow, L. (1973). Ecology and the aging process. In C. Eisdorfer & M. P. Lawton (Eds.), *Psychology of adult development and aging* (pp. 619-674). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Joseph, A. (2006). *Health promotion by design in long-term care settings*. Concord, CA: The Center for Health Design.

Ulrich, R., Zimring, C., Zhu, X., DuBose, J., Seo, H., Choi, Y., . . . Joseph, A. (2008). A review of the research literature on evidence-based healthcare design (Part 2). *Health Environments Research & Design Journal*, 1(3), 61-126.