



SHADES OF WELLNESS

There's a powerful link between our homes and our happiness, with interiors playing a crucial role in enhancing this connection. Read on for eight easy decorating ideas to boost wellbeing...

FEATURE JENNY OLDAKER

1

BIOPHILIC BEAUTY

From adding houseplants or maximising natural light to mimicking the natural world in our decor, introducing elements of biophilia can significantly help to improve our home environment. Using organic materials, such as wood, stone and natural fibres, in favour of synthetics, can help to further enhance this effect,

grounding us and engendering a connection to nature. Chloe Bullock, founder of Materialise

Interiors and author of *Sustainable Interior Design*, explains that the concept is far from a new fad: 'In Florence Nightingale's book, *Notes on Hospitals*, published in 1863, she shared her extensive knowledge of hospital design, which included biophilic design principles in which nature promotes recovery, with headboards positioned close to windows for views of nature and reading by daylight.'



ABOVE Let biophilic design inspire wall coverings too – like Sanderson's Hedera wallpaper, complemented here by Edward Bulmer Natural Paint's Persian. **RIGHT** Natural light and greenery help to make a connection to nature within the home, with soothing Crocky Road and Secret Room by Earthborn on the walls.



LEFT Living with visual art can contribute to our emotional wellbeing. Room designed by VSP Interiors. **BELOW** Choose tranquil shades like Lily Lily Rose by Earthborn for a calming effect.

2

ART FOR THE HOME

If you feel a sense of peace in art galleries, you're not alone. An increasing body of research suggests that viewing art increases dopamine and reduces stress and anxiety. As such, living with visual art can contribute to our emotional wellbeing, so filling our homes with pictures or

sculptures is important – they don't need to be expensive masterpieces, as long as they speak to your heart and aesthetic senses. 'We are lucky to be living in an age when original art has become so accessible to the average household,' enthuses Tiffany Panter, of London gallery Panter & Hall. 'Whether we own our own homes or not, it is the artwork that adds character to our surroundings, expressing our personalities and creating that sense of home that we all need in our lives.'

LEFT Living with visual art can contribute to our emotional wellbeing. Room designed by VSP Interiors. **BELOW** Choose tranquil shades like Lily Lily Rose by Earthborn for a calming effect.



Westend61/Daniel González/Getty Images; @khandco.; Paul Massey; Mark Boloni, © Photopia Photography

BELOW Long-wavelength colours, such as the red tones of Etruscan Brown by Edward Bulmer Natural Paint, are associated with an energising effect.



3

COLOUR THEORY

'Room colour significantly influences mental health and general wellbeing,' believes Bailey Oates, colour expert at Earthborn. She's certainly not alone in this conviction; colour theory is a growing field of research that offers fascinating insights into our response to different shades. As a general guide, long-wavelength colours, such as reds, oranges and yellows, are stimulating, while shorter-wavelength greens and blues are calming. As with all aspects of home decor, though, there's no one-size-fits-all interpretation, as we all have individual preferences and react differently to different hues. 'Ultimately, colour should spark joy,' advises Emma Bulmer of Edward Bulmer Natural Paint. 'Choosing a colour that speaks to you is what's most important. Trends come and go, but your likes and dislikes will always remain.' ▶

Art and antiques can enhance our health, as in this Dorset house designed by VSP Interiors.



4

TIME TO DETOX

Healthy home decor isn't just about aesthetic joy, it's also about the air we breathe. 'As we now spend an average of 90 per cent of the time indoors, creating spaces that actively support our wellbeing is more important than ever,' agrees Nicola Holden, director of Nicola Holden Designs. 'Thoughtful design means crafting environments that nurture and sustain us. Many synthetic materials, such as polyester, foam and plastics, are made with petrochemicals that release harmful VOCs (volatile organic compounds). Prioritising natural materials in furniture and fittings not only benefits the environment but also creates a healthier, toxin-free home.' Chloe Bullock suggests asking suppliers for transparency about the potential toxicity of materials. 'The Living Building Challenge third-party building certification has a regularly updated Red List of 'worst in class' ingredients to avoid,' she adds.

RIGHT Introduce natural materials, such as wood, and embrace vintage pieces in your schemes for an aesthetically pleasing look and healthier environment, free from toxins. **BELOW** Interior designer Charlotte Boundy's home (also pictured right) combines rustic wooden floors and furniture with joyful, expressive artwork, enhancing emotional as well as physical wellbeing.



5

CURB THE CLUTTER

'A clutter-free environment reduces mental overwhelm, increases focus, and creates a sense of control,' asserts Cinzia

Moretti, creative director of Moretti Interior Design. 'Achieve this through implementing storage solutions to suit each room, from baskets or shelves to multi-functional furniture.' The best storage solutions are those that are not just practical but also enhance a room, so keep in mind that useful storage space doesn't have to come at the expense of visual appeal. Also look at every nook in your home to explore its full potential for adding storage and reducing clutter – hooks on the backs of doors, mirrors with hidden storage and side tables with space underneath are all easy wins for maximising your use of space and helping to keep clutter at bay.

TOP RIGHT Employ subtle but effective storage and keep spaces clear of clutter for a calming, stress-free environment. Chester Dove Grey two-door hallway cupboard, £999, *The Cotswold Company*.



Jon Day Photography (2); Paul Whitbread (2); Philip Sowels/Homes & Antiques; Rachael Smith Photography

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IN WITH THE OLD

With their meticulous craftsmanship, rich patina and sense of historic resonance, antiques offer a sense of stability and timelessness that is too often lacking in a world of mass-produced goods and instant gratification. Thanks to this pleasing sense of permanence – not to mention the sensory pleasures of their tactile curves and aesthetic beauty – filling one's home with antiques can provoke a very real sense of delight. As antique furniture tends to have a more natural composition than modern pieces, it is consequently far less likely to emit harmful compounds, making for a cleaner and more pleasant atmosphere all round.



ABOVE Both natural light and thoughtful artificial light contribute towards our wellbeing at home, *David Hunt Lighting*. **BELOW** Bernwood mural wallpaper adds personality to walls, £250, *Laura Ashley*.



Maximise natural light, as shown here in the Meadow Spa at Thyme, painted in Edward Bulmer Natural Paint's Drab Green.



Antique and mid-century pieces add depth and character.

7

LET THERE BE LIGHT

The effect of lighting on our mental health – and, by association, our physical wellbeing – cannot be overstated. While each room's function has a bearing on the lighting effect required, there are some basic rules of thumb to keep in mind. Mimic the patterns of natural light where possible, and aim to maximise natural light in the daytime. 'Sunlight boosts serotonin levels, improving mood and energy,' says Cinzia. 'It also regulates circadian rhythms, promoting better sleep. Use sheer curtains, mirrors to reflect light, or position furniture to allow sunlight to flood the space.' After dark, artificial lighting can be employed to reflect the onset of evening and foster a sense of calm. 'Soft lighting promotes relaxation and helps you wind down after a busy day. Use dimmable lights, warm-toned bulbs, or string lights to create ambience,' says Cinzia.



8

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

A seemingly obvious but powerful tool for increasing pleasure and wellbeing is simply to fill it with the things you love. Personalising each room and filling it with patterns, furniture and objects that spark an emotional connection enhances the sense of peace that we feel in our home, and solidifies our connection with the space. 'Incorporate elements that inspire feelings of joy,' notes Nicola Holden. 'Think vibrant colours, playful shapes, collections of objects that evoke a sense of abundance, and designs that encourage celebration. These little details can make a big difference in how your home feels day to day.'



Take it SLOW

By viewing your home as an eternal work in progress, the decorating process becomes a journey that celebrates your own style and the building's narrative, says Jenny Oldaker

Having recently renovated our hallway, my immediate temptation has been to kit out the room with a full complement of furniture, fabrics and objets. And this is so often the way when decorating – we want to see a room ‘complete’ and feel we can tick it off the endless to-do list. But is this really the way we should approach our homes? The advocates for slow decorating say not. This concept is all about taking your time to find the right pieces, working on the assumption that a home is a constantly evolving entity, slowly and thoughtfully put together to create an authentic reflection of the lifestyle and tastes of its owner, within an enduring, salubrious space.

There are multiple benefits to slow decorating, and the concept has been warmly embraced by many of today's interior designers. ‘There's a modern notion that our homes should be ‘finished’ as soon as we move in,’ says designer Charlotte Boundy. ‘But, not long ago, it was far more common to decorate and adapt a new home over years – not weeks or months – allowing the space to evolve with you and helping you discover how it truly works for your life.’ It means that a designer who embraces slow decorating will not only bring this mindset to their day-to-day work, but will also carry it beyond the duration of the project itself. ‘I am always sourcing pieces, and it's not uncommon for me to reach out to a client a year or two later with something I have found that I feel would be a perfect addition to their home,’ Charlotte continues.

Whether you're tackling your interiors with a designer or independently, you'll find that slow decorating is an intrinsically natural and logical approach. Start by taking time to determine how you use a space before rushing in with big plans, as this will result in something that reflects and enhances your life in a way that a rushed decision may not. Part of the ‘not rushing’ concept also means not getting caught up in ephemeral trends so, once you've had time to get to know your space, approach decor decisions with intention and care. ‘It's about being considerate with the items you surround yourself with, ensuring they bring both beauty and purpose,’ explains Henriette von Stockhausen of VSP Interiors. ‘By investing in pieces you truly love, and that are chosen with thought, you'll create a timeless aesthetic that doesn't feel tied to fleeting trends.’

As a result, it's important not to race to buy items if you can't find the right ones, or to



be swept away with social media images that are fuelled by the power of algorithm trends. Take time to collect ideas and to hone your style organically, and don't confine yourself to buying new – reusing or repurposing items will foster the evolution of your home. Interiors stylist Hayley Rusling of Will & Bea is all for this approach: ‘Find ways to use what you already have,’ she advises. ‘Take time to repurpose things or move them around to refresh your home and create different arrangements and layouts. Slow decorating encourages incorporating antiques and buying used but quality items. These add warmth and character, and help to create spaces that instantly feel unique, lived in and comfortable.’

Other tenets of the slow decorating approach include prioritising quality over quantity – a few well-made, carefully chosen pieces are preferable to a slew of fast furniture and trinkets, not only for the integrity of your home, but also for the planet. An emphasis on quality doesn't necessarily equate to eye-watering price tags, either; while it's wonderful to treat yourself to a high-value piece that you truly love, there is a whole world of high-quality homewares to be found if you give yourself time to run the gamut of antiques shops, auction houses, online marketplaces and flea markets.

At its heart, slow decorating fosters a mindful approach to interior styling, and adopting the mantra that your home is an ever-evolving work in progress is a powerful tool in creating a space that's an authentic reflection of yourself, while removing the perpetual pressure that's constantly telling us to ‘get things done’. It's an approach that's well worth cultivating, agrees Henriette: ‘While it may take longer to achieve, slow decorating results in a more satisfying and personal space that reflects your unique story, and can help to promote a deeper sense of wellbeing.’

Paul Whibread; Paul Massey (2); oxygen/Getty Images; Anna Efeiora/Getty Images; Floorite/Getty Images; iain1003

BELOW Drape a linen tablecloth over a tired table, or give an old piece of furniture a lick of paint before buying new. Styling by Hayley Rusling of Will & Bea. **BELOW RIGHT** The perfect piece of furniture may take time to find, but it will be worth the wait, as seen in this Oxford drawing room by Charlotte Boundy.



ABOVE, FROM TOP A layered, dynamic approach can't be curated overnight, and it's important to create a timeless aesthetic, as in this New Forest bedroom; invest in well-made furniture that you truly love. Both bedrooms by VSP Interiors.

MORE INFORMATION

Charlotte Boundy charlotteboundy.com
 Earthborn earthbornpaints.co.uk
 Edward Bulmer Natural Paint edwardbulmerpaint.co.uk
 Materialise Interiors materialiseinteriors.com
 Moretti Interior Design morettiinteriordesign.com
 Nicola Holden Designs nicolaholdendesigns.co.uk
 Panter & Hall panterandhall.com
 VSP Interiors vspinteriors.com
 Will & Bea willandbea.co.uk