

Lesson 6

Harmonising Your Home to Reduce Anxiety

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." — Martin Luther King

Introduction

Anxiety can be brought on by 'sense flooding,' or a constant bombardment of environmental factors, however, we can make adaptations to help calm the nerves. Dimming lights, opening a window, and wearing headphones or ear defenders can make us feel much less anxious, and more safe, secure, and calm.

To be proud of the home we live in, it's good to de-clutter and feel the benefits to our mental and physical health, including, a peaceful mind, a rested body, and even stronger relationships.

How nice would it be to be able to place our hands on the things we're looking for, knowing exactly where they are? Think of the time saved when living in an organised home and the money saved from not needing to buy replacement goods.

To stop visual reminders of everything we need to do in our home, decluttering and organising can be just the ticket– and all that extra space we find can be used for creative and wellbeing activities such as painting or yoga.

Naturally, some clutter is inevitable and it's healthy to be accepting of some things out of place some of the time. It's real life afterall.

The science

Studies show that environmental factors can lead to anxiety, including, temperature and lighting at work. Noise pollution interferes with our sense of calm, phones ringing, the constant noise of staff chattering and shutting cupboards and doors noisily, and photocopiers printing can all be blamed.

Noise pollution also happens in the home. Our nerves can be put on edge by the constant background noise of the television. It might be surprising to hear that in addition to it being detrimental to your mental health, research on noise has found that it contributes to underlying physical health conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke.

Decluttering, organising, and 'turning down' the volume at home can help you access a calmer self and allow you to relax, reset, and recharge for the next day.

Why this helps

Decluttering helps reduce the visual reminders of what you need to do at home, helping to leave space for the mind to relax.

Organising your things in the home can lead to a peaceful mind, a rested body, and time to make plans to enjoy your free time.

Quietenning the home provides you with a blissful sanctuary in which you can unwind and recharge for the next day.

Exercise

Your home is your sanctuary; your personal space, where you can be yourself, close the curtains on the world for a little while and be surrounded by things that make you happy and comfortable. You have the poetic license to decorate it however you want, whether you choose to have soft faux fur throws on your couches, cool, crisp linen for the bed, orange walls, or soft velvety cushions that can engulf you whilst we read. This safe haven can look and feel however you want it to, and changes don't need to be of such magnitude that it puts you off doing it in the first place. Small subtle changes can be conducive to your wellbeing and ultimately reduce your anxiety, helping you unwind from a tough day, relax and reset so you can enjoy your free time and be more productive the day after.

Here are some tips on making your home your calm place.

1. Start with one room at a time, only moving onto the next when the first is completed. If considering a room is too much, rather than risk leaving it altogether, take baby steps, de-cluttering a drawer a day or cupboard in that room.
2. Have a clear out – putting in piles - donate, throw away, keep, and store. If you've not worn something for two years, it's likely that you either don't like it or need it, so contemplate binning it.
3. Make a place for everything you decide to keep and store it where you know you have good access to it and use it.
4. Organise the things you've kept – kids' toys in baskets or tubs; baskets for beauty/bathing products on bathroom windowsill so it can be easily moved and the area cleaned without fuss. Ensure you have files to organise your important paperwork, such as mortgage statements and medical appointments, making it easy for you to file away immediately and find when you need them.
5. Be sure to follow the 30 second rule. If something's going to take you up to approximately 30 seconds, do it immediately, which might include hanging your coat up or other clothes, reading through your post, and plumping up the cushions.
6. Schedule your home improvements; make yourself accountable to someone to maximise your motivation; listen to your favourite podcast or music whilst you work;

reward yourself for doing a good job, treating yourself; and record your progress, taking before and after photos.

7. Keep your eyes peeled for clutter in those places where piles tend to accumulate, such as kitchen surfaces, bookshelves, hallway table, and make a point of clearing these each day to prevent them getting becoming a large piece of work again.

8. Remember how you feel when you've bought something new, whether it's a new chair, carpet, or kitchen? Your sense of pride and love for it? Imagine your newly vamped, organised home, after putting some of these tips into practice, giving you the same warm and proud feeling for it. It's your home so make it work for you.

In the video, we demonstrate how just a few items can transform a cold part of a room into a welcoming, warm and zen-like space.

Video

Make your home as relaxing as can be:

1. You might consider lighting an aromatherapy candle, which you can move from one room to another, taking the soft glow and soothing fragrances around with you.
2. Create a spa in your home—find a space, which can be as small as a corner in a room, where nothing is happening, and decorate with a meditation cushion, sumptuous, fluffy blanket, hot water bottle/neck wrap, headphones and music.
3. Try an essential oils diffuser to spread scents that are well known for their relaxing qualities. Lavender oil, jasmine and bergamot are particular favourites. Diffusers release fine mist of scented vapour into the room, boosting our wellbeing. They also often include various lights that we can control and choose which colour suits the mood of the day.
4. Buy a houseplant, as looking after something can give us a sense of peace and improve our mood. Top tip: consider succulents, as they don't take much care or attention, so there's no need to worry about having lots of time to water and feed it.
5. Paint the walls to match a more relaxing colour scheme. Soft blues are calming and pleasant to the eye...
6. Keep electrical devices in the bedroom to a minimum. Try not to watch TV or play computer or other digital games in bed.

What have you learnt?

Decluttering your home, organising your clothes and items, quieting the noise, and designing a tranquil space to relax is good for your mental wellbeing.

Harmonising your home by making subtle changes can improve both your physical health and mental wellbeing, and you'll have trouble waiting to invite your friends over to see your zen zone.

What next?

If letting go of anxious thoughts is something you're struggling with at the moment, our next lesson looks at a particular strategy, designed by psychologists, to help refocus your mind on the present.