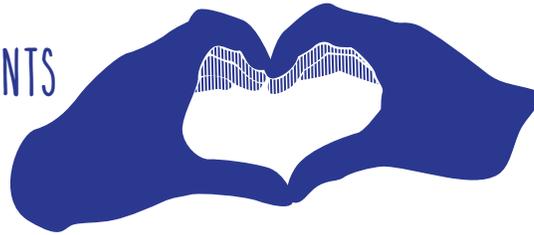


Designing for Special Needs...It Takes Two

CARING ENVIRONMENTS



SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

WHAT IS A CARING ENVIRONMENT?

Any environment that is specifically suited and adaptable for an individual to be most productive, rested, calm, and safe. These environments take into consideration temperature, lighting, mobility, assessibility, line of sight, air quality, privacy, and color.

EASY MODIFICATIONS TO YOUR HOME

Lighting control is such a critical component. It's usually one of the first elements that an architect gauges because it has a major impact on the feel of the space. Poor lighting can make your eyes work harder... and eyes get tired, too! Natural, indirect sunlight is always going to be a good place to start. Go ahead and throw open those heavy curtains and let it in! Depending on the room, you may need to diffuse the sunlight at certain times of the day with a transparent shade. Use what God gave you, and turn off those LEDs and incandescents as much as possible.

PRODUCTS I RECOMMEND:

Shades and curtains that are easy and safe for the individual with special needs to manipulate themselves. In order to build confidence in their environment, it's important that he/she can change the lighting based on their own comfort level. If the child is small, a secure rod and lightweight fabric curtain is much safer than a blind or shade with a long cord. Make sure you practice with them often.

The goal here is that you want to start early, giving a child options to adapt their environment to meet their needs. Don't be discouraged if it doesn't happen. God gives caregivers this amazing superhero power - empathy. We can put ourselves into their shoes as much as possible and do the best we can to create environments that produce calm, restful individuals.



Miriam Douglas is a local architect. Through her business EQ Studio Architecture, she works with families, school faculty, church staff, and other entities that nurture people with special needs to create caring environments. It's her passion to translate important design concepts from the healthcare world to the residential and educational world for the benefit of the special needs community.

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