



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults

Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences

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Creating Beautiful Spaces to Enhance Well-being and Healthy Aging

The WELL Building Standard and the Living Building Challenge are healthy building standards that recognize creating beautiful spaces enhance well-being. The WELL Building Standard has a key focus on creating beautiful and meaningful spaces that uplift our spirits and promote a sense of comfort and joy. The Living Building Challenge's "Beauty and Spirit" imperative specifically calls for the "construction of thoughtfully designed environments that positively impact the mood and comfort level of occupants". This can be achieved through the integration of artwork, cultural celebrations, and design elements that foster a sense of familiarity and connection to a place.

Another core tenet of these healthy building standards is the concept of "biophilia" - the idea that humans have an innate affinity towards the natural world. Studies show that exposure to natural elements, like plants, water features, and outdoor greenery, can speed up healing processes, boost positive emotions, and reduce stress levels. Designing for nature interaction indoors through natural features or views and having easy access to an outdoor landscape will provide opportunities to appreciate the beauty of nature. Imagine the serenity of gazing upon a lush garden or taking a stroll through a beautifully landscaped courtyard – these experiences serve as powerful mood boosters and sources of rejuvenation.

We can also incorporate nature into our spaces through natural patterns. These natural patterns may include flooring materials that employ natural patterns (i.e. leaves, wood grain, waves), natural materials (i.e. wood, stone) within furniture and finishes, artwork depicting natural scenes, potted plants and green walls, and furniture that mimic natural shapes.

The quality of lighting significantly impacts our well-being and appreciation of beauty. Natural daylighting accurately portrays colors and textures, allowing us to fully appreciate a space's aesthetics. The WELL Building Standard emphasizes circadian lighting design, providing appropriate light levels and color temperatures that align with our natural rhythms. Strategic use of accent lighting can highlight architectural features and design elements, creating depth and visual interest. By prioritizing thoughtful lighting design, we can showcase the inherent beauty of our spaces.

By embracing some of these guidelines, we can create environments that actively support our health and well-being. Whether it's a residential community, a healthcare facility, or a public space, beautiful, nature-inspired spaces have the potential to uplift our spirits, reduce stress, and promote

overall well-being. Through thoughtful design, we can harness the power of the built environment to support and enhance the human experience.

Contributed by: Elif Tural, PhD, WELL AP, Virginia Tech, School of Design

Environmental Wellness

As we navigate the journey of aging, the environments we inhabit play a crucial role in supporting our overall well-being. The mind plays a vital role in an individual's overall health and well-being, and thoughtfully designed, beautiful spaces can have a profound impact on our physical, mental, and emotional health. This includes providing access to features that:

- Promote relaxation
- Address mental or emotional trauma
- Increase awareness of physiological and environmental factors to inform positive behavioral changes

Fresh Berry Caprese Salad

This delicious salad is perfect for when strawberries and blueberries are in season.

Source: <https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/recipe/fresh-berry-caprese-salad/>

Ingredients:

- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- ½ cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1 cup fresh mozzarella, cubed
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 6 cups Spring mix salad
- 2 cup chopped vegetables (corn, mushrooms, onions, peppers, tomatoes)

Instructions:

1. Wash hands, equipment, produce, and surfaces.
2. Pour balsamic vinegar into a small saucepan. Bring to a gentle boil over low heat; cook for 15 minutes or until reduced to a thick glaze. Allow to cool.
3. Place strawberries, blueberries, mozzarella, almonds, and basil on top of spring mix salad. Drizzle with olive oil and balsamic glaze.

Exercise: Knee Extension

Works the thigh muscles

1. Sit up straight in a sturdy chair with your back supported by the chair.
2. Place a rolled towel under your thigh at the edge of the chair, with the balls of your feet on the floor.

3. Breathe out as you extend one leg straight in front of you without locking the knee. Be sure not to arch your back.
4. Flex your foot to point your toes toward the ceiling. Hold the position for one second, then breathe slowly and lower your leg back down.
5. Repeat 10 - 15 times on each leg.

Resources

WELL Building Standard: [https:// standard.wellcertified.com/well](https://standard.wellcertified.com/well)

International Living Future Institute: The Living Building Challenge, [https:// living-future.org/lbc/](https://living-future.org/lbc/)

Dinner Tonight: <https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/>

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