

Wellness

There are numerous ways this concept can be applied to window treatments.

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

What is wellness? When one thinks of the world, it usually generates words related to health and self-care. People associate wellness with simply their physical health, such as nutrition and exercise, but wellness goes way deeper than that. Wellness can be broken into eight dimensions, which include physical, emotional, social, intellectual, financial, occupational, spiritual and environmental wellness. “All of these different things really need to be in balance to have wellness,” said Caleb Anderson, interior designer for Drake Anderson and co-founder of Well-Designed, a space for those in the interior design and architecture industries to participate in events centered around wellness and learning activities.

Now, what does wellness mean for interior design? The concept of wellness, as well as sustainability, has made its way to the forefront of the industry. People are becoming more aware of their spaces, how to best utilize them and how they can create a sense of wellness for the people who use the space. The COVID-19 pandemic can be thanked for the acceleration of this movement. People who were stuck working and living in their homes became very aware of their surroundings and how the space aided or hindered their overall well-being. Striving for wellness is driving their design choices and purchases that reflect a healthier home.

People are looking for calm and health in their environment. “For design, in particular, it’s creating environments that bring people to that space,” Anderson said. This can be about fabrics, textures, colors, lighting, arrangement of the furniture, function of the space, etc. “It’s many pieces coming together,” he added.

For Anderson, it’s about asking more questions. “How do these things support wellness? How does it support health? How

does it support the environment? How does it support other people?” This added an extra, critical layer to the design process.

And when talking about wellness in the window treatment industry, Deb Barrett, designer and principle of Window Dressings, feels there are numerous opportunities for designers and manufacturers to expand into this space. “We’re kind of overlooking this opportunity,” she said. “This whole trend has really put window treatments in the forefront.”



Bedroom designed by Deb Barrett.

PHOTO: ERIC PIESECKI

Wellness at the window can mean lighting, purification and filtration with air quality, noise reduction, cleanability, sustainability, and comfort and function.

“Wellness is more than just spas, color palettes, GREENGUARD certification, etc.,” Barrett said. “It’s more than just the physical products.”

Window treatments can capture, manipulate, control and enhance the entire environment by playing with daylight, Anderson said. “Something that has shown to have such an impact on our well-being. It’s not just another design element in a room, it’s a really important one.”

Light Manipulation

Light manipulation can include letting light in as well as taking it away. This may include blackout or room-darkening blinds and shades in the bedroom to help aid with sleep or opening shades and curtains to let light in to warm up a room in the winter.

Lots of people want complete blackout in bedrooms with no light leakage. “But [they] also want an ethereal quality, like a sheer roman,” Anderson said. “Layers are definitely important.”

Mattress and bed linen companies have capitalized on the “sleep revolution.” But what is missing at times is window coverings. “We can enter into the wellness equation through that,” Barrett said. “We have all the products; we just don’t sell them that way. We don’t curate collections under wellness.”

Exposure to daylight is linked to a person's circadian rhythm, the natural sleep/wake process behind healthy sleep. Bright light is important for the body during the day and creating a dim, uninterrupted environment is essential for sleep. The choice one makes in their blinds and shades can greatly affect one's sleep.

One example is Lutron wood blinds, which feature Natural Light Optimization. Using Lutron's app, users can automatically tilt blinds to preset angles throughout the day to diffuse direct sunlight and maximize comfortable daylight in any space.

Noise Reduction and Acoustics

The type of curtain or window dressing one chooses can also have noise-reduction capabilities.

Barrett had a client ask for a portiere on her front door in a condo to reduce noise levels for her neighbors. Barrett said they tested some acoustic textiles and the night her client used one on her bedroom window, her husband told her it was the best night's sleep he'd ever had. "It's a game-changer," Barrett added.

"That is a highly overlooked opportunity: acoustics in window coverings," Barrett said. "Designers and consumers should look at shading materials that have a noise-reduction coefficient."

IKEA offers the GUNNLAUG sound-absorbing curtain, which claims to have 50% to 100% greater absorption of medium and high sound frequencies compared to other fabrics with similar quality and weight.

Another ready-made option is Sun Zero's Oslo blackout curtains. They offer excellent light-blocking, as well as an energy-efficient design that purports to reduce energy loss by up to 50% and reduce noise by up to 35%. The rod pocket style aids in light-blocking since no light comes through any grommets.

Comfort and Function

When comfort and function are discussed relating to window treatments, one often thinks of motorization and the ability to control light coming in and out by a remote, touch or even utilizing Alexa or other smart home compatibility company.

Motorization options are available on a wide range of window coverings: roller shades, cellular shades, honeycomb shades, draperies and motorized shutters.



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– Caleb Anderson

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Purification and Cleanability

IKEA has developed a textile that can break down pollution and purify the air inside a home. Currently only available as a curtain, GUNRID eliminates air pollution in the home. “This is crazy amazing,” Barrett said.

For external blinds, WAREMA added a self-cleaning technology. EcoClean finishes allow the sun’s rays to break down surface contaminants, which are then easily washed away by the rain.

Sun Decor offers antibacterial self-cleaning roller shades. The system bathes the cloth fabric in disinfecting ultraviolet light (UV-C 254nm wavelength) every time the “disinfect” button is pressed. The three passes take about three minutes to complete reducing contaminants by up to 99%.

Lichtenberg offers Clean Window, which merges anti-static technology with mindful design. One of its features is COFFEE-TEX fibers, which are spun from upcycled coffee grounds. The curtains are also designed to be allergen- and dust-repellent.

Environmental/Sustainability

Anderson said people are starting to become more aware of their environment and the harmful toxins that might surround them in their home furnishings, like how people started to really look at their diets and what ingredients were in the foods they were consuming. “We look at what we are putting into our bodies and I think that will carry over into material selection,” he added.

Many are becoming mindful of not using products that contain PVC and other indoor toxins. People are looking for healthy, natural materials.

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helpful to know there are companies out there that are making things that are beautiful that also meet this criteria.”

One company that is embracing this trend is Hartmann & Forbes. “Hartmann & Forbes weaves together really beautiful natural materials,” Anderson said.

Truly Innovative Products

There are companies who are producing conductive fabrics that can store energy like a battery. The shade material is the source for the motor as opposed to having a motor or being plugged in to a power source. “Because of that, then you have touch control,” Barrett said. “That’s a little bit sci-fi.”

There is also much room for growth with glass. The glass windows would transition based on sunlight, much like transition lenses for glasses. “What does that mean for the industry?” Barrett asked.

Tips to Join This Trend

Look at the products and offerings and curate your own wellness collection, whether it’s sustainable, GREENGUARD, room-darkening, antimicrobial. Build a sample kit and marketing strategy around what room-darkening means to you. Create your own guidelines and standards and sell them based off those guidelines.

Barrett suggests checking out other industries within the design community, such as the contract market. This is where performance fabrics came from, she added.

Wellness is driving the consumer. They want a seamless design together with a healthy environment. Window treatments can have a significant impact on wellness and should be pointed out. Incorporate these wellness advantages to give customers a fresh take on the importance of the products available. ▣



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