How do Colors and Color Contrasts Affect Mood, Safety and Function in Older Adults at Home?

By Janet Engel

Color is a powerful tool that has the potential to affect our emotions. For instance, a bright yellow living room may evoke feelings of excitement and creativity, while a cool blue bedroom may elicit feelings of relaxation and serenity.

Most people don't realize that the selection of colors in interior design can also affect home safety, especially for older adults.

Monochromatic designs are more difficult for the aging eye to discern as are pale colors, especially in the blue and green tones.

Vision changes are one of the first declines we experience with the onset of aging. Visual impairment can occur as early as 35-40 years of age.

Physically, the lenses of the eyes tend to stiffen and become denser, making it more difficult to see in low light situations or focus like they used to.

JANET ENGEL

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Colors and Contrasts

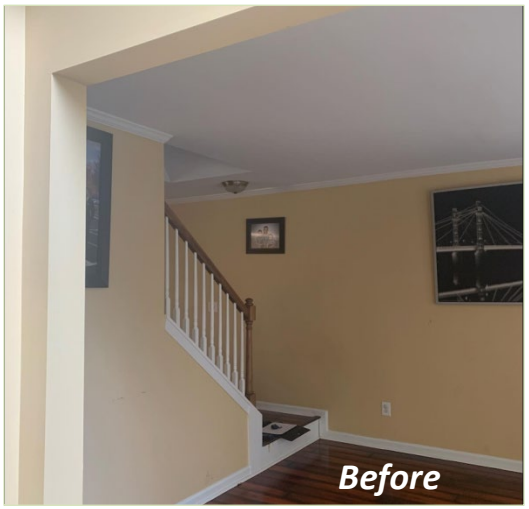
The muscles of the pupil react more slowly to changes in exposure, and the nerve cells of the eye deteriorate and decrease in number. A 60 year old person needs 3X more light to see well as compared to a person in their 20's.

Therefore, it is important to incorporate color contrast in your design, as this will affect how you function in your space and impact your fall risk.

The following designs incorporate color contrast and texture to effectively delineate where one surface ends and another begins. Moreover, they promote relaxation, facilitate safety, comfort, and well-being.

Furniture is easily discernible from the wall and floor coverings in this basement.

The feature wall separates the living room from the stairwell, while creating interest.



Colors and Contrasts

Lighting delivers the ultimate punch, allowing designs to come to life, maximizing their aesthetic appeal, while increasing home safety.

KITCHEN

The kitchen design beautifully balances light and dark hues. It also incorporates dark gray grout to break up the white tones between the cabinets, backsplash tile, and the countertop.

BATHROOM

The bathroom features color saturation in a warm hue, making it easily visible for the aging eye and is contrasted with a textured, white tile backdrop.

Work of Flavia Zegarra, interior designer and owner of Camino Designs

Camino design