

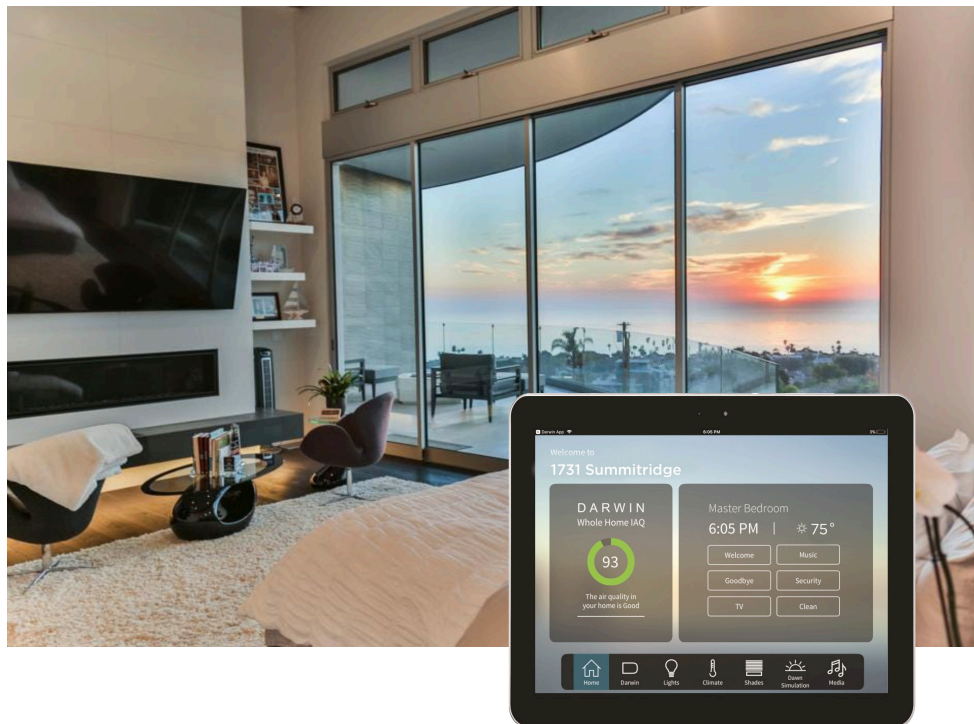
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EXPERTS SUGGEST STRATEGIES FOR CREATING HEALTHY BEDROOMS FOR ALL AGES

BY JAMIE GOLD



“Sleep is the foundation for good health. It improves mood, attention, health, learning and so many other aspects of life,” says Dr. Lynelle Schneeberg, a fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and author of *Become Your Child’s Sleep Coach*. “Poor sleep can lead to depression, weight gain, increased risky behaviors, and many other health issues,” she adds.

There are many reasons why we experience short and long-term sleep challenges at different ages, from infant to senior citizen, including environmental factors. You can’t control the time change that robbed you of an hour of sleep last weekend, but you can optimize your sleep potential with changes to your bedroom.

ADULT ROOMS

Schneeberg suggests, “For an adult’s bedroom, we want to establish a real sanctuary. It’s best if beds and bedrooms are not used as offices and it’s best if bedrooms are quiet, cool and dark.”

To achieve this, she notes that blackout curtains and sound machines can help. “Some people also swear by a good mattress topper and very supportive pillow,” the sleep specialist adds. Smart thermostats can help too, achieving cool temperatures when you’re sleeping and warming up to a comfortable level when you’re ready to rise. To ease into sleep, the doctor recom-



**CEO and Founder of HEDSouth,
Jan Vitrofsky.** PHOTO: HEDSOUTH

Vitrofsky is on the forefront of providing the most innovative and advanced tech devices for both new builds and renovations that focus on delivering healthy air, water and light.

mends a bedside table with a good reading light and a basket with resources to quiet the mind at bedtime.

Smart home technology can also play a positive role in improving sleep. Circadian lighting, which adjusts

through the day to optimize sleep conditions at bedtime is one example cited by Miami-based smart home technology integrator Jan Vitrofsky. "Air filtration, as we spend so many hours in our bedrooms," is another.

San Diego-based interior designer Amala Raj Swenson envisions bedrooms as helpful, healthy havens. "Some of my must-have features in a primary suite (if room allows) would be a coffee station with a small sink and under-counter fridge. The idea of being able to start your day getting ready in the bedroom without having to get out to the kitchen is so appealing!"

"I'm also a big fan of allocating a lounge space within the primary bedroom," the designer shares. "When I talk to couples about what they want most in the bedroom, many mention a space to just chill out that's not in bed. A lounge place would be perfect for unwinding after a long day with a book or do some morning meditation."

"I'm seeing a lot of spaces incorporate a fireplace," Swenson observes. "It's not a new concept, but I think new construction homes are trending to build with a fireplace feature to add more comfort in a bedroom."

The designer also stresses the importance of lighting. "More clients are requesting a light fixture above the bed or sconces alongside, instead of standard ceiling lighting. Mood lighting that's adjustable creates a much warmer and cozy space." These can also create an ideal setting for reading before bedtime to ease yourself from your active day to your quiet night.

SENIOR ROOMS

The same features can benefit a senior's room, Swenson notes. "It's nice to have access to fresh water, store medications, and start or end a day," she says. "For senior bedrooms, I would also want to incorporate some sort of lounge space focused around music. I think creating a very comfortable space will be very beneficial to everyone as we get older — and nothing beats music therapy."

Numerous health publications and services, including the Mayo Clinic, support her perspective, citing the reduction of stress, anxiety and depression music can bring to those with Alzheimer's and dementia.

Technology can also support seniors (and others with mobility challenges), as well as their caregivers. "Voice control will let these individuals turn off lights and close shades" on their own at bedtime, comments Vitrofsky. They can also, of course, be easily harnessed for waking up the next day.

"If there are medical issues or cognitive decline, some safety measures can be put into place," Schneeberg suggests. These might also be technology-based. Motion sensors to let a caregiver know if the person has left the bed or bedroom is one example. Grab bars are another.

CHILDREN'S ROOMS

"A National Sleep Foundation poll revealed that 80% of parents with preschool children would like to improve their child's sleep," Schneeberg observes. "Once the child is in kindergarten or elementary school, it's time to add a bedside table with a reading light that the child can turn off easily and independently. A parent can also add a 'Bedtime Basket,' with items that the child can use to self-soothe to sleep. These could be books, picture books, puzzles, drawing pads, small toys and so on. The child would use these items once the bedtime routine is over until he or she is drowsy enough to fall asleep (just like adults read themselves to sleep)."



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For infants and toddlers, “It’s nice to have a monitor and camera connected to your home system so you have 24/7 connectivity,” advises Vitrofsky. He also points out the importance of optimum indoor air quality for these sleepers with their developing lungs recommending, “air filters for the cleanest air possible.” These can be tied into a whole house smart home system or be individual units for that bedroom.

TEEN ROOMS

“Once we are ready to set up a teen’s bedroom, we’d want to have three zones: one for studying, one for relaxing and one that’s only for sleeping. It’s a great plan to leave devices to charge in the studying or relaxing zones and to encourage the teen to use only books or drawing pads to settle into sleep,” Schneeberg advises.

Given the increased importance of technology in homework and

distance learning, Vitrofsky recommends including enterprise grade wifi for schoolwork and connectivity.

“With all the tech, really good storage is important to keep cords organized and keep all things electrical easily charged,” notes Swenson. “I’ve seen laptop, phone, smart watch and headphone racks on the market these days that just keep desks looking so tidy.”

The designer points out the elements for the relaxing area Schneeberg recommends: “It’s important to create sitting space for when guests might be visiting. Bean bag chairs, a small sectional, or an extra pull out bed could all be a warm welcome for visitors,” she suggest.

Enhanced air filtration could certainly be beneficial in teen bedrooms too as they get back to socializing and group sports, as many parents can attest.

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KID ROOM CAUTIONS

“If children or teens sleepwalk, safety measures are a must,” Schneeberg cautions. These can be motion sensors or gates. “There are two things I recommend against in any child’s or teen’s bedroom,” the sleep doctor advises. These include devices like starlight projectors or music players that turn off later. Their rooms should look and sound exactly the same all night, she says. The second factor is anything that a child or teen can’t manage independently. “For example, some parents use weighted blankets that the child can’t replace if the blanket falls off of the bed or comes untucked, for example.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

“I love that people are seeing convenience as almost a necessity now,” Swenson declares. With functionality being the fourth of five facets of wellness design, this definitely contributes to a helpful, healthful space. “More people are taking a holistic approach to bedroom design. I’m interested to see how music therapy or aromatherapy evolves when it comes to special planning for bedrooms,” the designer adds. These amenities are already being manufactured for bathrooms. Can their companion bedrooms be far behind? ■



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