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CREATING THE LITTLE HOUSE OF CALM

Finding a sense of sanctuary could be just behind your front door, writes

Robyn Willis

Stress is a natural part of life. Without it, it's likely very little would get done and there would be no impetus to push ourselves harder and faster.

But as daily stresses reach unmanageable levels, it's worth considering ways of reducing them wherever possible.

While annual holidays are great, increasingly, people are looking to their homes to provide solace and sanctuary from the outside world.

QUIET CORNERS

Designer Larissa Raywood from The Design Hunter used to live in New York before moving to Sydney and understands only too well the need for a corner of the world to retreat to, however small.

"Creating a sanctuary at home is so important, especially in a city like Sydney," she says. "It's all about getting away from that daily track and making your home almost like a hotel to escape the daily roughness of city life so you can unwind."

Her company's design service is increasingly hearing requests for parents' retreats — somewhere free from noise, technology and other distractions where adults can recharge their batteries and have a mini holiday from the world.

"How much do we enjoy going to hotels and having that lovely sense of luxury?" Larissa says. "If the kids want to come in, that's okay, but it's a different feeling to sitting in front of the TV."

TECHNOLOGY TURN OFF

Indeed, the absence of technology is a strong theme in the pursuit of sanctuary at home.

Wellness coach Jessica Sepel says switching off is an easy first step towards turning your home into an oasis of calm.

"We are constantly surrounded by technology but sometimes our emails and messages can start to take over our lives," she says. "Changing that can be as simple as turning off our phones at dinner time. →

→ "It doesn't take much to start."

She suggests removing technology from rooms like the bedroom for a peaceful space.

"This is a space for rest and rejuvenation and it's important for me to make this environment as calm as possible."

Jessica says just setting aside 10 to 15 minutes a day for quiet contemplation — or even meditation — can be enough to recharge.

Larissa says this could be as simple as having somewhere to enjoy a nice cup of tea.

"I have a client at the moment who wants a bench seat that she can pop out during the day for the kids but it needs to be quite deep too so that in the afternoon she can sit there, enjoy a cup of tea and stare out the window," she says.

Keeping the place tidy will help too.

"De-cluttering is sO important," says Larissa. "It's about cancelling out distractions."

SENSORY PERCEPTION

Engaging all the senses is a key part of creating calm. Feng shui practitioner, Elizabeth Wiggins says for her, it starts with a water feature at the front door.

"It makes you feel good when you see it and hear it," she says. Her front path is also a sensory experience. "It's lined with gardenia bushes because I love the smell," she says.

Textural elements like chunky throws and soft cushions feel great at this time of year. Sometimes a retreat should be just that.

"It is extremely important to have your own space and time to yourself," she says.

"We all need a little escapism."

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More The Design Hunter, thedesignhunter.com.au;
Jessica Sepel, jessicasepel.com; Feng Shui Living, fengshuiliving.com.au



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Natural colours like those found in this rug from Designer Rugs set a calming mood. A comfortable seat like the Hans Wegner Teddy Bear chair and ottoman provide an idyllic reading spot.



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The deep built-in bench in this space designed by The Design Hunter invites relaxation with the addition of scatter cushions.