

Self-Reflection Journal 5

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The majority of adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) live in the home of a caretaker who could be a parent or a family member. However, the shared environment does not suit such individuals due to a variety of responses and sensitivities associated with autism. As such, designing a house for independent living of a person living on the spectrum has a variety of challenges. All autistic individuals do not share the same characteristics. Each has varying levels of difficulty with repetitive behaviors, verbal and non- verbal communications, and social situations (Ahrentzen & Steele, 2016). As such, when designing a house for autistic individuals, factors such as lighting, transition spaces, movement, smells, visibility of the environment, acoustics, personal space, and flexibility must be taken into account.

Lighting is usually a problem, in this case, since it must not spark the individual's sensitivities. It should neither be too bright or too dim, too warm or too cold, or too harsh. Too much natural light is usually a problem since it offers no flexibility. As such, the design should ensure a perfect mix of natural and artificial light with the windows located high enough to avoid exposing a person on the spectrum from distractions (Brownlee, 2016). Predictability is also important in such a design. Each room should have a clear purpose, and there should be clear boundaries with smooth transitions between rooms. This is necessary since the individual can independently create and stick to routines without becoming anxious. Smells should be restricted from spreading throughout the house. This would require a closed- off kitchen. Noise is also a major issue to people on the spectrum and as such noise from the environment should be reduced as much as possible. Lastly, the design of the home should be flexible such that it can change according to the needs of the individual. This is because obsessions of autistic individuals can change thus requiring a change in design or layout.

References

Ahrentzen, S., & Steele, K. (2016). *How do you design a home for someone with autism?*

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