

## Ideas and solutions

We asked Jayde to share some examples of neuroinclusive design in the home from her experience as a consultant. These different design elements enhance living experiences, safety, and mental health.

Jayde:

So interestingly enough for accessibility we often talk about things like reinforcing ceilings, so you can install lifts in the bathroom or bedroom and help with transitions to and from wheelchairs, beds, and baths. But you know, with those reinforced ceilings, what if we thought about hanging a sensory swing, just as one example. Imagine having that cocoon, nest, moon, platform, or any other sensory swing. They're fantastic. They serve a lot of purposes from therapy and development to simply soothing someone who's feeling overwhelmed. I think that the swings are fantastic, and I have seen, you know people add them into their homes in beautiful ways.

Sensory rooms are another thing that I really love to see, especially when consultants really get to know the family and understand the particular stims or routines of the person or persons using the space so that one can put some really amazing things into a sensory room. And it completely depends on what works for that person, there's so many different ways to set that up. I can tell you that I'm a fully grown autistic adult, and some sensory rooms still immediately calm me the minute I walk into them. Something so elemental happens when the entire world is shut out. The light sounds, smells, textures are perfectly delicious and you feel like you can just breathe. And I often compare it to meditation, or sitting by the ocean listening to the waves lapping at the shore, or sitting by a crackling fire, right? These are things that adults are considered, as acceptable. But the thing that brings you that moment of zen often can be found in a well designed, sensory room, and I think we just need to look past kind of feeling weird about it, right?

And so I think designing for neurodiversity is a huge part of inclusive design for accessibility. But if we want to be general, we can talk about things like room specific lighting, additional task, lighting for as needed purposes, like cleaning, cooking, schoolwork, reading hobbies. But we can also choose paint colors. I love pastel shades for example. We must also ensure that there's high contrast between the walls, floors, and door frames, of course. And I love using art on the walls to add charming or interesting elements to a room. I think it's fantastic, it's pretty, but it's beneficial for mental health and wellbeing as well as for accessibility and wayfinding. So sometimes I'll find myself staring at a painting and getting lost in it, or a print where my mind is just sort of in that space.

And I think, with my particular set of disabilities as an example, I never use numbers for wayfinding. I'm lost within seconds if you tell me that just, and it's based on numbers, my mind won't hold those numbers for a second. But if you say look for the big blue piano store or the bright red door, then turn left, I will remember that until I'm 90 years old, and I will always use those landmarks for wayfinding. So I think that's a really lovely trick that I've seen a lot of, and one that I always encourage too, is painting the walls right across from the elevator doors, a different color on every floor. So picture whether it's an apartment building, an aging in place residence whatever. If it's more than 3 floors and it has an elevator, you know you paint the doors across, excuse me, the wall across from the elevator doors a different color, or have a different piece of art on every floor. So that when those elevator doors open, if I see a purple wall with a butterfly on it, or an orange wall

with a tiger, I would immediately know which floor is mine, and this is great for accessibility of all types. Great for wayfinding. If I have dyscalculia or dyslexia, I do have dyscalculia, I don't have to remember numbers or words. And what if English isn't my 1<sup>st</sup> language. So it's just a really quick example of how we can make spaces more inclusive and accessible without adding additional cost or frustration, but that it can be incredibly helpful for a lot of people.