



# Excellent Ways to Create a Peaceful and Calming Bedroom Space

**Autism Parenting**  
Magazine

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# Excellent Ways to Create a Peaceful and Calming Bedroom Space

Phones, television, computers, wires galore.

Sound effects, flashing lights.

Here they come, hit the floor!

Sensory Overload Is The Malady Of Modernity

There is no question that the over-stimulation of our senses is out of control and has become a huge cause of stress and anxiety.

Some of us can work around it and others can't possibly begin to filter it.

Everyone has been forced to be a multitasker, whether we can handle 'it' or not.

This sensory assault creates a vicious cycle of external affecting internal chaos.

Chaos → Visual Noise → Sensory Overload → Stress → Anxiety → Chaos

The manifestation of Internal Chaos can surface as hyperactivity, anger, depression, lack of sleep, physical pain and many other symptoms often overlooked or misinterpreted.

This article is relevant to all of us ~ children and adults.

We are all affected, we are all

On the Spectrum



# Excellent Ways to Create a Peaceful and Calming Bedroom Space



Carolyn Feder is a Licensed Interior Designer and the founder of Sensory Interior Design. For years she has successfully helped families with children on the spectrum create colorfully pleasing and relaxing spaces combining her experience in the interior design industry along with psychology and synesthesia. Feder believes a holistic approach can transform a 'hostile' space into a healthy environment. We asked Feder to share her advice regarding the best ways to create a peaceful and calming bedroom space while taking in consideration the needs of a child on the spectrum.

**Q. What do you think is the biggest mistake made when attempting to design a room for a child on the spectrum?**

The biggest mistake is thinking that designing a healthy bedroom for a sensory child has to be expensive. That's really not the case if it's done correctly from the start. Parents are overwhelmed with many decisions that revolve around the care of their child. Spending money without a plan and the proper guidance in an attempt to make things better can have undesired results as does thinking that the 'look' of a child's bedroom is secondary to more pressing needs.

Our design firm doesn't believe in following trends nor do we design children's rooms around fashion statements that are meant for adults. We handle every project with great thought and present our findings as a prescription towards the child's comfort and well-being. The space a child awakens to and drifts off to sleep at night should be calm, safe and always welcoming. A place of peace and sensory replenishment, never a place of discomfort or isolation.

**Q. Which colors are most conducive to relaxation for a child on the spectrum and why?**

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Colors affect our mood, how we process information, how we function and perform tasks. Reds, oranges, yellows and white are over stimulating and can be highly disturbing, whereas blues, greens, purples, browns and black are soothing and comforting. We educate parents, family members and caregivers to not only be aware of the colors that surround the children, but also what people wear around sensory kids of all ages.

I know of a case where a loving aunt visited her nephew on a regular basis. The family wondered why he'd be so happy to see her sometimes and other times he'd turn away from her and cover his eyes. Did I mention she enjoyed wearing white clothes and bright red lipstick? Many children on the spectrum have a difficult time falling asleep and staying asleep due to their high sensitivity to stimulation that others are able to filter out. Colors are as disruptive as sound, scent, texture, etc..

**Q. Do you find lighting is an important element in creating a comfortable space?**

Absolutely, **lighting** is high on my list and filtering light by various means is recommended. There are so many different options and architectural factors to consider when choosing window coverings that it's best to discuss them individually with each client.

Dimmer switches are great soothing mechanisms for any age and when it comes to light bulbs. My favorite type of light is natural sunlight and when that's not available, the closest to it are incandescent bulbs marked as Sol White, Daylight, Reveal or Full Spectrum as well as LED's. On the flip side, I have very strong and well-founded opinions about fluorescent bulbs, whether in tube form or the new spirals which contain dangerous levels of mercury. They distort natural colors, buzz and strobe at very high frequencies. As they lose power, the strobing lessens and they flash like a camera which can create tiny injuries to the brain that are conducive to headaches, migraines, seizures and more.

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Fluorescent bulbs should not be in circulation at all, but until then I will inform and prevent everyone I know from using them, especially anyone on the spectrum.

## Q. What is your opinion on electronics in a bedroom?

White noise machines and projected images on walls or ceilings are soothing, so our design firm is very supportive of them and encourage their use to help induce relaxation and eventual sleep. As opposed to computers, loud games and their many wires should be removed from bedrooms of all children and adults. Electronic devices are addictive, stimulating and disturbingly hypnotic.

## Q. What about bedding, do you have suggestions for parents to make things more comfortable for children at bedtime?

I recently spoke to someone who was concerned that her very active boys were not sleeping through the night. She was stunned that my first question was about the color of their room and bedding. The answer didn't come as a complete surprise.

The room was white with red sheets and plaid comforters. Even the finest cotton with the highest thread count couldn't possibly override the problem they had inadvertently created. Soft sheets and soft colors go hand in hand, comforters in solid colors with a themed pillow is more than sufficient for a child's room. Whether lights are off or on, colors and patterns emit vibrations which affect brain waves in a positive or negative fashion. My firm recommends placing one picture per wall, related in theme for a tranquil feeling instead of filling it with visual clutter. We prefer to have natural landscapes, abstracts with soft curves and spirals versus straight lines and angles.

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Weight-like texture may be calming to some and very upsetting to others. Therefore, weighted blankets have to be prescribed by a professional supervising sensory integration needs not to be confused with sensory environmental needs. Labeled covered storage with non-see-through containers are easy to maintain. They are best kept in closets or on shelves. Non-see-through containers with tops prevent spillover which also contributes towards creating a 'visually quiet' room.

## Q. How do you recommend parents divide the space in a bedroom?

If the room isn't large enough to divide into stations, all attention needs to be placed on the room's primary function which is relaxation and sleep. If the room is large enough for stations, our categories are easy to remember **SPEL: Sleep, Play, Enjoy, Learn**.

We worked with someone in a home where the child wasn't sleeping because the bed was against a large window that had plastic vertical blinds that didn't work, were always partially opened and made noise when brushed against. The only full wall had a desk and a dresser that no one used; the bed got moved and the extra furniture will be donated. Beds should be furthest from windows and placed against a full wall, never against windows or doors. We encourage the Play, Enjoy and Learn stations be by a window if at all possible to receive all the nutrients that come from natural sunlight.

## Q. What type of flooring would you recommend and why?

This is an important category to test by getting a child's input for positive responses or negative reactions. Practicality and sound absorption are very important factors to consider for these special clients who deserve the most sensory friendly spaces possible. If they prefer slick, smooth surfaces, then natural wood is an excellent option.

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Avoid laminate floors that look like wood, they make a lot of noise. There are vast selections of vinyl planks that look very much like real wood, they are softer and warmer to walk and play on, easy to maintain and offer somewhat better sound absorption than laminate. Should the child prefer soft snuggly textures, carpet is better, barring allergies to certain fibers. Carpet tiles work well because they are easy to install and replace. Patterned selections or checkerboard effects are absolutely out of the question because they create tremendous anxiety. Why? Because children perceive the color changes as holes they can fall into. Porcelain tile offers zero sound absorption, though practical to care for, it's cold to the touch and very hard in case of falls.

**Q. If you were designing a room for a child with autism from scratch, what type of furniture would you recommend?**

My preference is always wood. If the natural grain shows through, I would select one that doesn't have a high gloss nor that it has red, yellow or orange undertones, preferably neutrals to grey or dark brown. If painted, espresso, charcoal or black are our top favorites.

**Q. Do you have any safety suggestions for parents when designing a room?**

Wood elements with rounded corners are safe and feel good to the touch. Select blinds and shades that can be ordered with safety cord features. Avoid glass, metal and be aware of sharp corners at low levels. Cover any unused electrical outlets and avoid having lamps with exposed cords plugged far from where they are being used. Electrical cords and area rugs are serious tripping hazards for everyone. A couple of little known sensory offenders are dryer sheets and air fresheners of all types, they are filled with hazardous chemicals.

**Q. If parents are on a tight budget, what would you recommend they focus on most when putting together a room?**

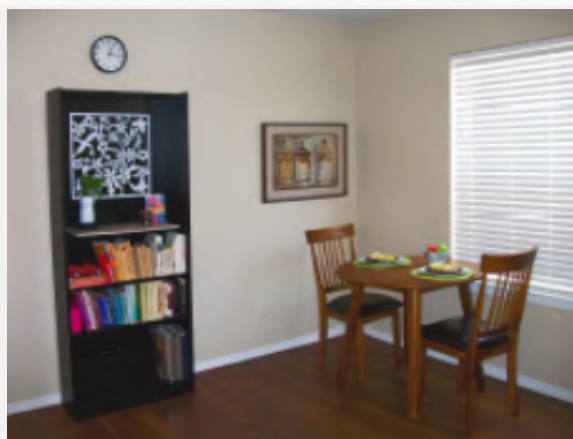
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Excess and clutter create anxiety, therefore, discarding and donating while organizing is the hardest and the most rewarding experience. Sensory Interior Design projects are all about removing and rearranging things not bringing more in. Our organizational systems have to be logical and comfortable for the end user, otherwise things don't get put away and the clutter will continue to accumulate. Many an occasion, I have redone what 'conventional' organizers devise for a client because the standard formula is incongruent with how the homeowner thinks.

## Space Organization = Sensory Balance.

Sensory Interior Design's consultations are affordable and key to making healthy decisions and practical purchases the first time around.

## SENSORY BALANCED BEDROOMS:



Multipurpose areas with various work stations are an excellent use of space. Our specialized assessments determine what's best as you wake and the last thing to experience at night.



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## Sensory ~ PLEASE DO!

- Do maximize natural light
- Do introduce fresh plants
- Do use natural schemes

## Sensory ~ PLEASE DON'T

- Don't install fluorescent lights
- Don't use artificial air fresheners
- Don't introduce acid bright colors

Enjoy spending time with Mother Nature, her gifts to us are priceless. Body rhythms relax and function at their optimum by responding to the sensory markers programmed within all of us. The benefits include lowering blood pressure and regulating brain waves. The sunshine, fresh air, flowing water, colors and textures are infinite sources of beautiful inspiration.

**Carolyn Feder** is a Texas Licensed Interior Designer, fluent in both English and Spanish. She can communicate effectively with clients and collaborators in both languages. In home consultations within Dallas are available as well as virtual long distance communication. Sensory Interior Design received Best of Houzz 2014 & 2015 and Carolyn is affiliated with the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners (TBAE) and Texas Association of Interior Design (TAID). Her services include: interior design, consulting, staging, organizing, remodeling, refurbishing and so much more.

### ***Sensory Interior Design***

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*This article is posted at <http://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/excellent-ways-to-create-a-peaceful-and-calming-bedroom-space/>*