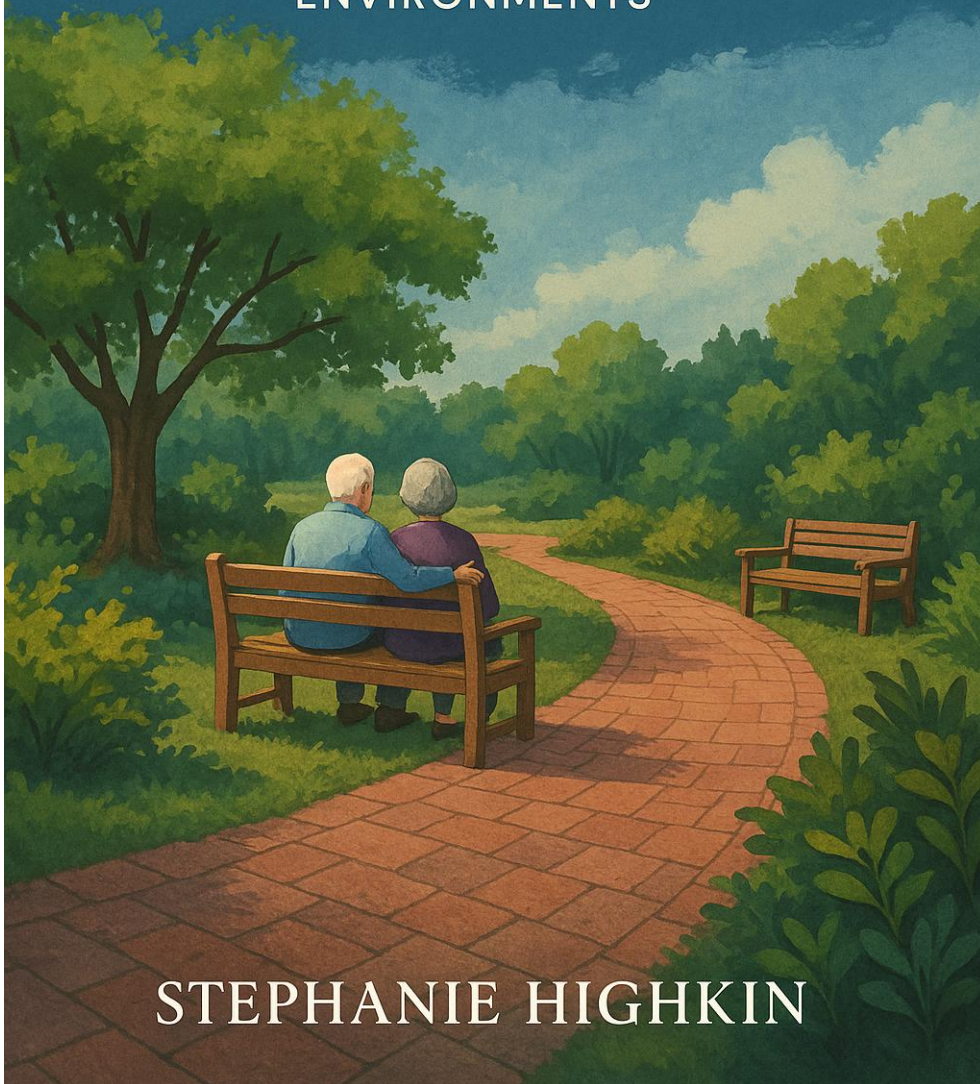


Free Dementia Design Guide

Creating Spaces That Support Memory, Dignity & Connection

SPACES THAT REMEMBER

CREATING DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY
ENVIRONMENTS



STEPHANIE HIGHKIN

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Why This Matters

Environment shapes experience-especially for those living with dementia. This guide highlights simple yet powerful design changes that foster safety, autonomy, and emotional well-being in home and care settings.

Core Principles of Dementia-Friendly Design

1. Clarity is Comfort

- Use contrasting colors between floors, walls, and furniture
- Avoid shiny surfaces that may cause confusion or visual misinterpretation

2. Familiarity Calms

- Incorporate personal items, old photos, and memory-triggering decor
- Choose vintage-style furnishings or fabrics from earlier decades

3. Consistency is Key

- Keep layouts intuitive and predictable
- Use visual cues like labels or photos for orientation

4. Nature Nurtures

- Add access to natural light and outdoor spaces
- Use plants, flowers, and nature-inspired textures indoors

5. Sensory Engagement Matters

- Provide soft blankets, calming scents (lavender, rosemary), and gentle lighting
- Create spaces with quiet zones for rest and stimulation areas for activity

Dementia-Friendly Environment Checklist

Entrances & Exits:

- [] Clear signage with images or words
- [] Safe, secure locks with discreet exit doors

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- ☐ No mirrors near exits

Living Spaces:

- ☐ Warm, natural lighting
- ☐ Contrasting colors between furniture and flooring
- ☐ Soft surfaces, reduced glare
- ☐ Familiar artwork or objects displayed
- ☐ Quiet zone available for retreat

Bathrooms:

- ☐ Toilet seat and floor have strong contrast
- ☐ Non-slip flooring
- ☐ Grab bars installed
- ☐ Mirror at appropriate height or covered if distressing

Dining Areas:

- ☐ Red or brightly colored plates
- ☐ No patterns on tablecloths
- ☐ Chairs with armrests and stable legs
- ☐ Calming place settings and lighting

Outdoor Access:

- ☐ Safe, enclosed garden or patio
- ☐ Comfortable benches and shaded areas
- ☐ Easy-to-navigate walking paths
- ☐ Herb garden or sensory plants

Hallways & Navigation:

- ☐ Clear, consistent signage
- ☐ Well-lit paths

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- [] Visual markers (photos or memory boxes)
- [] Avoid clutter and visual noise

Bonus Tips

- Offer soothing background music
- Place a favorite chair in natural sunlight
- Use gentle aromas: lavender for calming, citrus for uplifting
- Involve the person in decorating their own space whenever possible