

Caring for the individuals who live and attend school at The Center includes deep consideration of the air they breathe, the food they eat, the surroundings they see, and the sounds they hear. **With Intention** highlights why we do the things we do and why we implement them into our daily work.





WITH INTENTION

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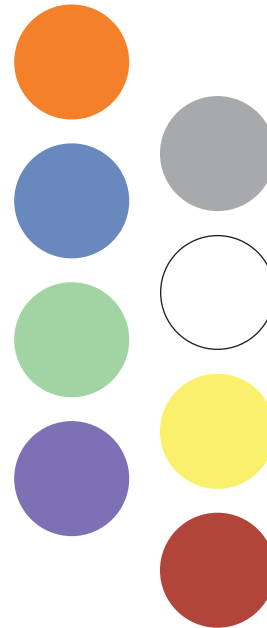
Color with Intention

Certain colors are often considered calming due to their psychological impact on our emotions and the associations they evoke. These colors tend to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and create a soothing environment. Here are some calming colors used by TCFD and why they have this effect:

- 1. Orange:** Orange is associated with warmth, energy and vibrancy - full of life thus the primary color of The Center for Discovery and found throughout The Center's physical plant.
- 2. Blue:** Blue is often associated with calmness and tranquility. It has a calming effect on the mind and body because it is commonly linked to nature, such as the sky and the ocean. Lighter shades of blue can be particularly calming, evoking feelings of serenity and peace.
- 3. Light/Soft Green:** Like blue, green is also associated with nature, specifically with lush landscapes and vegetation. It symbolizes growth, renewal, and harmony. Green has a calming effect and is often used in healthcare environments to help individuals relax.
- 4. Lavender:** Lavender, a pale shade of purple, has been linked to feelings of relaxation and calmness. It is often used in aromatherapy to promote relaxation and better sleep.
- 5. Gray:** While gray can sometimes be associated with dreariness, softer shades of gray and blue/grays can create a calming and sophisticated atmosphere. It serves as a neutral backdrop that can be combined with other calming colors for a tranquil setting.
- 6. White:** White is clean, pure, and simple, creating a sense of openness and space. It can promote calmness, but it's essential to avoid using pure white in excessive amounts, as it may become stark and cold.
- 7. Soft Yellow:** Pale yellow can have a calming effect, as it brings to mind feelings of warmth and sunshine. It's a color that can create a cozy and inviting atmosphere.

- 8. Brick Red:** Southwestern brick red can have a soothing effect and is associated with the summer and fall seasons. It's a color that blends in when used on the outside of buildings.

The calming effect of these colors is not necessarily universal, as individual preferences and cultural associations can play a role. However, in general, these colors tend to create a more relaxed and serene environment, making them good choices for spaces where people seek to unwind and de-stress. When using calming colors, it's essential to consider the specific shade and combination with other colors to achieve the desired effect.



Light with Intention

Natural light is calming for several reasons, and its positive impact on our well-being is supported by scientific research. Here are some reasons why natural light tends to have a calming effect:

1. Biological Connection: Human beings have evolved to be connected to the natural environment, and exposure to natural light is an essential part of this connection. Being exposed to natural light during the day helps regulate our circadian rhythms, which are responsible for our sleep-wake cycles. When our circadian rhythms are in sync, we feel more balanced and relaxed.

2. Vitamin D Production: Sunlight is a natural source of vitamin D, which plays a crucial role in maintaining our physical and mental health. Adequate vitamin D levels have been associated with improved mood and reduced stress and anxiety.

3. Serotonin Production: Exposure to natural light stimulates the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that contributes to feelings of happiness and well-being. Increased serotonin levels can lead to a more relaxed and positive state of mind.

4. Visual Comfort: Natural light is softer and more diffused than artificial light, which can sometimes be harsh and create glare. The gentle and even illumination of natural light is easier on our eyes and can reduce eye strain and headaches.

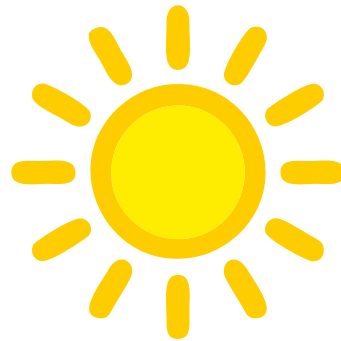
5. Connection to Nature: Being exposed to natural light, especially when we can see outdoor elements like trees, plants, and the sky, fosters a sense of connection to nature. This connection has been shown to reduce stress and promote feelings of peace and tranquility.

6. Enhanced Environment: Natural light has the ability to enhance the aesthetics of a space. Rooms illuminated by natural light can feel more open, spacious, and inviting, creating a soothing and calming atmosphere.

7. Positive Associations: Many people associate natural light with positive experiences, such as leisurely activities outdoors, vacations, or pleasant childhood memories. These positive associations can contribute to the calming effect of natural light.

8. Regulation of Melatonin: Exposure to natural light during the day helps regulate the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep. Proper melatonin regulation improves sleep quality and contributes to a more relaxed state during waking hours.

Overall, natural light has a profound impact on our physical and mental well-being. Incorporating natural light into our daily routines and living spaces can help reduce stress, improve mood, and create a calming environment that supports our overall health.



Views with Intention

Seeing green plants and nature can have a calming effect on us due to several psychological and physiological reasons. Here are some of the key factors contributing to the calming influence of greenery:

1. Restorative Environment: Natural settings, including green landscapes and plants, are often considered "restorative environments." These environments offer a respite from the demands and stress of daily life. The gentle movement of leaves, the sound of rustling leaves or flowing water, and the sight of greenery can help reduce mental fatigue and promote relaxation.

2. Color Psychology: As mentioned earlier, green is a calming color associated with nature, growth, and renewal. It is believed to have a balancing effect on our emotions, promoting feelings of peace and harmony.

3. Stress Reduction: Spending time in nature and looking at green plants has been shown to lower cortisol levels, a hormone associated with stress. Being in natural environments can help reduce feelings of anxiety and tension, promoting a sense of calm.

4. Attention Restoration Theory: Nature and green spaces are believed to promote a type of attention that allows the brain to rest and recover. Unlike the directed attention required for many daily tasks, such as work or studying, being in nature allows for effortless attention and cognitive restoration.

5. Sense of Connection: Being around green plants and nature can foster a sense of connectedness to the larger world beyond ourselves. This feeling of connectedness can provide comfort and perspective, helping to put our worries and stresses into context.

6. Aesthetics and Symbolism: Many people find the beauty and aesthetics of green landscapes and plants to be visually pleasing. The symbolism of growth, renewal, and life associated with greenery can evoke positive feelings.

7. Biophilia Hypothesis: The biophilia hypothesis suggests that humans have an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other living organisms. This affinity for nature may be rooted in our evolutionary history as beings who once relied heavily on natural environments for survival. As a result, being around green plants and nature triggers positive emotional responses and a sense of well-being.

Overall, the calming effect of green plants and nature is multi-faceted, combining elements of biophilia, color psychology, stress reduction, and a sense of connection to create a peaceful and soothing experience. Incorporating greenery into our living spaces or spending time in natural environments can be an effective way to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and enhance overall well-being.



Fresh Air with Intention

Fresh air is vital for our health and well-being due to several reasons:

1. Oxygen Supply: Fresh air contains higher levels of oxygen, which is essential for the functioning of our body and brain. Oxygen is needed for cellular respiration, where cells convert glucose into energy. Sufficient oxygen intake helps maintain alertness, cognitive function, and overall vitality.

2. Improved Respiratory Health: Breathing in fresh air can help improve the health of our respiratory system. It reduces the exposure to indoor pollutants, allergens, and irritants that can accumulate in enclosed spaces and lead to respiratory issues and allergies.

3. Boosted Immune System: Fresh air often carries a lower concentration of pathogens compared to indoor air. Regular exposure to outdoor air can help strengthen our immune system, making us more resilient to infections and illnesses.

4. Enhanced Mood: Spending time outdoors and inhaling fresh air has been linked to improved mood and reduced feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. Nature walks and outdoor activities can have a positive impact on mental well-being.

5. Better Sleep: Breathing in fresh air can improve sleep quality. Exposure to natural air and lower indoor pollutant levels contribute to a more conducive sleep environment.

6. Improved Digestion: Fresh air can aid in digestion by promoting relaxation and reducing stress, which can sometimes interfere with proper digestion.

7. Increased Energy Levels: Fresh air can have an invigorating effect, increasing feelings of energy and vitality. Stepping outside for a breath of fresh air can help combat feelings of lethargy and fatigue.

8. Cognitive Function: Adequate oxygen supply through fresh air is crucial for optimal brain function. It enhances cognitive abilities such as memory, concentration, and creativity.

9. Toxin Elimination: Fresh air can help the body eliminate toxins and waste products more efficiently through the respiratory system.

10. Improved Indoor Air Quality: Ventilating indoor spaces with fresh air helps reduce indoor air pollution and the buildup of harmful chemicals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and carbon dioxide (CO₂).

11. Connection to Nature: Being outdoors and breathing fresh air fosters a sense of connection to the natural world, promoting a feeling of well-being and inner peace.

It's important to note that while fresh air is beneficial, the quality of outdoor air can be influenced by factors such as pollution, allergens, and environmental conditions. In urban areas with high pollution levels, it may be necessary to seek out green spaces and areas with cleaner air to fully enjoy the benefits of fresh air. Regularly spending time outdoors, opening windows for ventilation, and engaging in outdoor activities can help ensure a healthy dose of fresh air for a healthier and happier life.



Walking with Intention

Walking can reduce stress and promote relaxation due to several physiological and psychological factors:

1. Release of Endorphins: Physical activity, such as walking, stimulates the release of endorphins, which are natural mood-enhancing chemicals in the brain. Endorphins help reduce stress and promote feelings of well-being and happiness.

2. Cortisol Regulation: Walking and other forms of exercise help regulate cortisol levels, the stress hormone. Regular physical activity can lead to a decrease in overall cortisol production, helping to manage stress more effectively.

3. Improved Blood Circulation: Walking increases blood circulation, delivering more oxygen and nutrients to the brain and body. This enhanced blood flow can have a calming effect on the nervous system and reduce tension.

4. Mindfulness and Meditation: Walking can be a form of mindfulness, where individuals focus on the present moment and their surroundings. This meditative aspect of walking can help distract from stressful thoughts and promote a sense of relaxation.

5. Connection with Nature: Walking outdoors, especially in natural settings like parks or trails, provides an opportunity to connect with nature. Nature has been shown to have a restorative effect on the mind, reducing stress and enhancing well-being.

6. Social Interaction: Walking with friends, family, or in group settings can provide social support and a sense of community, which can help reduce stress and feelings of isolation.

7. Distraction from Stressors: Engaging in physical activity like walking can divert attention away from sources of stress, allowing individuals to take a mental break and return to their challenges with a fresh perspective.

8. Better Sleep: Regular walking and exercise can improve sleep quality, reducing the impact of stress-related sleep disturbances and promoting overall relaxation.

9. Positive Reinforcement: Setting and achieving walking goals can provide a sense of accomplishment and boost self-esteem, counteracting the negative effects of stress.

10. Reduction of Muscle Tension: Walking involves the movement of various muscle groups, and physical activity can help release muscle tension that often accompanies stress.

It's important to note that the effects of walking on stress reduction may vary from person to person, and the intensity and duration of the activity can also play a role. Regular, consistent walking as part of an active lifestyle is more likely to have a significant impact on stress reduction. If you are dealing with chronic or overwhelming stress, it's always a good idea to seek support from a healthcare professional or counselor.



Food with Intention

The phrase "food is medicine" highlights the powerful impact that our diet and nutritional choices have on our overall health and well-being. Here are several reasons why food can be considered medicine:

- 1. Nutrient Supply:** Food provides essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats, and carbohydrates that are necessary for the proper functioning of our body. These nutrients play critical roles in maintaining various physiological processes and supporting the immune system.
- 2. Disease Prevention:** A balanced and nutritious diet can help prevent various chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer, and obesity. Nutrient-rich foods can support overall health and reduce the risk of developing certain medical conditions.
- 3. Inflammation Reduction:** Some foods possess anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce inflammation in the body. Chronic inflammation is associated with various health issues, and consuming anti-inflammatory foods can have a positive impact on overall health.
- 4. Gut Health:** The gut microbiome plays a significant role in digestion, immunity, and overall health. A healthy diet rich in fiber, prebiotics, and probiotics supports a diverse and balanced gut microbiome, contributing to better health outcomes.
- 5. Energy and Performance:** Food provides the energy needed to carry out daily activities and maintain optimal physical and cognitive performance. A well-balanced diet including a variety of foods with a food group can enhance productivity, focus, and mental clarity.
- 6. Mental Health:** Certain nutrients in food can have a positive impact on mental health. For example, omega-3 fatty acids found in fish are associated with improved mood and cognitive function, while certain fruits and vegetables rich in antioxidants can benefit brain health.
- 7. Weight Management:** A balanced diet, combined with regular physical activity, is essential for maintaining a healthy weight. Proper weight management reduces the risk of obesity-related health issues.

8. Recovery and Healing: After an illness or injury, the body needs specific nutrients to support the healing process and recover efficiently. A nutrient-rich diet can aid in the recovery and repair of tissues.

9. Supporting Immunity: Proper nutrition is vital for a strong immune system. Foods rich in vitamins C, D, and zinc, among others, can enhance the body's defense against infections and illnesses.

10. Lifestyle Medicine: In some cases, adopting specific dietary changes can be an essential component of managing certain health conditions. For example, a low-sodium diet is often prescribed for individuals with hypertension.

It's essential to remember that food should not replace professional medical advice or treatment when dealing with serious health conditions. However, making informed and healthy food choices can have a profound impact on our overall health and help prevent or manage certain medical conditions. A well-balanced diet, combined with an active lifestyle, is a key component of a holistic approach to health and well-being.



Attitude with Intention

Positive attitude can significantly reduce stress due to several psychological and physiological factors:

1. Cognitive Reframing: A positive attitude helps individuals reframe stressful situations in a more optimistic light. Instead of viewing challenges as overwhelming or insurmountable, a positive mindset enables people to see them as opportunities for growth and learning. This cognitive reframing reduces the perceived threat of stressors, leading to a less intense stress response.

2. Emotional Regulation: Positivity fosters emotional resilience, allowing individuals to better regulate their emotions in the face of stress. Positive emotions can counterbalance negative ones, preventing stress from becoming overwhelming and enabling individuals to bounce back more quickly from challenging situations.

3. Enhanced Coping Mechanisms: A positive attitude encourages the use of adaptive coping strategies when dealing with stress. Those with a positive outlook are more likely to engage in problem-solving, seek social support, and use healthy stress management techniques, all of which contribute to better stress management.

4. Physiological Effects: Positive emotions trigger the release of neurotransmitters and hormones that counteract the stress response. For example, endorphins, dopamine, and oxytocin are associated with positive emotions and can help reduce stress hormones like cortisol.

5. Boosted Immune System: Chronic stress can weaken the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to illnesses. In contrast, a positive attitude and reduced stress levels can enhance immune function, promoting overall well-being.

6. Social Support: Positive individuals tend to attract and maintain more significant social support networks. Having a strong support system is linked to better stress management and improved resilience in challenging times.

7. Self-Efficacy: A positive attitude can lead to a stronger belief in one's abilities to cope with stressors effectively. This increased sense of self-efficacy contributes to reduced stress and a greater sense of control over one's life.

8. Improved Sleep: Stress and negative emotions can interfere with sleep quality. A positive mindset can promote better sleep patterns and more restful sleep, allowing individuals to better recharge and recover from stressors.

9. Mindfulness and Relaxation: Positive attitudes often align with mindfulness practices and relaxation techniques. Engaging in activities like meditation, yoga, or deep breathing can help reduce stress and promote a positive outlook.

10. Enhanced Problem-Solving Skills: A positive attitude fosters a more open and creative mindset. This allows individuals to approach problems with a proactive and constructive attitude, reducing the impact of stress associated with unresolved issues.

It's important to note that maintaining a positive attitude does not mean ignoring or denying the existence of stressors. Rather, it involves adopting a more optimistic and constructive perspective, which can lead to better stress management and overall well-being. Cultivating a positive attitude requires practice and self-awareness, but the benefits in terms of stress reduction and improved mental health are well worth the effort.



Benches with Intention

Resting benches or quiet spaces designed specifically for kids with autism can provide several benefits to support their sensory and emotional needs:

1. Sensory Regulation: Children with autism often experience sensory processing difficulties, where they may be oversensitive or undersensitive to sensory stimuli. Resting benches offer a quiet and controlled environment where sensory input can be regulated, allowing the child to self-regulate and find comfort.

2. Sensory Overload Management: In busy or overwhelming environments, such as school or public places, children with autism may become overstimulated and experience sensory overload. Having access to a designated resting bench provides a safe space for them to retreat and decompress when needed.

3. Calming and Self-Soothing: The quiet and secluded nature of resting benches can promote a calming effect on children with autism. It allows them to engage in self-soothing activities or relaxation techniques to manage stress and anxiety.

4. Transition Support: Transitions between activities or environments can be challenging for children with autism. Having a designated resting bench can serve as a transitional space, helping them ease into new settings more comfortably.

5. Social Overwhelm Reduction: In social settings, children with autism may find it challenging to navigate social interactions and cope with peer interactions. Resting benches provide a private space where they can take a break from social demands, reducing feelings of overwhelm and stress.

6. Predictability and Routine: Children with autism often thrive in environments with structure and predictability. Resting benches can be part of a routine or coping strategy, providing a consistent resource that the child can rely on when needed.

7. Regulating Emotional States: Children with autism may experience strong emotions and have difficulty expressing or managing them. Resting benches offer a safe space for emotional regulation, allowing the child to process their feelings in a controlled environment.

8. Preventing Meltdowns: A well-designed resting bench can be a proactive approach to preventing sensory meltdowns. By offering a dedicated space for self-regulation, children with autism may be able to avoid sensory overload and subsequent meltdowns.

9. Visual Support: Resting benches can include visual cues or communication aids that help children with autism express their needs and emotions, enhancing their ability to communicate and seek support.

10. Inclusive and Accepting Environment: Having resting benches specifically designed for children with autism promotes inclusivity and understanding in public spaces, schools, and community settings. It fosters an environment that acknowledges and accommodates the diverse needs of all individuals.

It's important to note that resting benches are just one aspect of a comprehensive approach to supporting children with autism. Tailoring the environment and interventions to meet the specific needs of each child is crucial for providing meaningful support and ensuring their well-being in various settings.

