The Ideal Counselling Room

3D visualization of an ideal counselling space.

Privacy: A soundproof, quiet, private space, with adjustable, covered windows, near waiting room/bathroom facilities.

Aesthetics: Calm blue/green based colour schemes with personalized comfortable spaces. Indoor plants and non-abstract artworks of nature/animals/people.

Room Design: Suitable room size, moveable seating, soft to bright adjustable lighting sources, with ease of access to resources for therapist and clients. Separate office, desk space.

Comfort: Suitable, adjustable room temperature, fresh air, comfortable, flexible seating options, natural light, pleasant but not overpowering aroma.

Selected References

Who We Are

About Us

Sophie Helen Lea (MACA) is the Director of Counselling at Woodleigh School, a clinical supervisor and lecturer, having worked at various counselling and educational settings in both Australia and overseas in the last 20 years. Her interest in researching the impact of room design in therapeutic environments developed from observing client reactions to counselling spaces.

sophie.lea@monash.edu

Dr. Tristan Snell (MAPS) is a lecturer of counselling and psychology at Monash University. He conducts research and has published in the area of environmental psychology. His interest in this area stems from previous research on the impact of the physical environment on mental health and learning.

tristan.snell@monash.edu

Our Study

Aim

To review the relevant empirical research on the physical features of health and counselling room environments and how these features relate to client outcomes.

Research Questions

1. Does the counselling room environment impact on client outcomes?
2. What aspects of counselling room environments influence positive client outcomes?

Method

Systematic review of qualitative and quantitative peer-reviewed research over the last 30 years across psychology related databases.

Our Findings

• Design, layout, space, temperature, seating and lighting all impact on client self-disclosure and feelings of safety, stress, inclusion and relaxation.

• Indoor plants contribute to the wellbeing of postoperative patients with reduction in pain, blood pressure, tiredness and anxiety.

• A suggested 127cm between the client and therapist chair creates suitable intimacy for productive communication and self-disclosure.

• Personalised room design, including soft furnishings, artworks, plants and harmonious colour schemes increases clients experiences of comfort, care and confidence in the therapist.