



Designing to Assist

By Karen Hauck, Certified Aging in Place Specialist with Chippewa Valley Aging in Place, LLC.

When designing rooms in our homes, we usually base our ideas off images in online ads and home magazines. Those pictures are carefully crafted with perfect décor, colors and lighting to make you interested in what's being advertised. In reality, what you see in those picture-perfect designs doesn't have the true functionality of day-to-day life. The seating is never in a decent spot to watch television, and there isn't enough light to be able to read a book. When this happens, we move the sofa or the lights so that we can do things the way we want. Intelligent home interior design starts with our needs and how we live, then adds the colors and style that match your personality.

An example of an intelligent home interior design would be in the living room. Assess how the room is used. Is it to watch television, read, work on hobbies, meet with friends and family or to have meals? Once we figure out how we use a room we can make the items in the room work for our needs. Here are just a few items that can make our lives easier to enjoy as we age:

- Lift chairs
- Coffee table with a top that moves up and towards a person
- Automatic lighting
- Voice activated switches
- Large remotes
- Easy to use windows and window treatments
- Stander assist table with handle
- Larger television
- Furniture placed to help with movement and allowance for added space if a walker or wheelchair is needed

Each of these can add to comfort, ease, and safety in our homes while keeping with personal style.

Adding in a few of the items listed above is just the start to an intelligent home interior design. The main goal is to make our surroundings work for us. A lift chair can help so we don't have to strain or become unbalanced trying to get in or out of a chair. Having a lift top or articulating coffee or side table can make it easy to work on projects, write, or eat a snack by bringing everything to the perfect height for you. When you are done, it slides back down into a standard coffee table height. Lighting systems that are automated or voice activated can help so you are not stretching or having to feel around in the dark for a switch. A large, color-coded remote for a television makes it easy to find and see the buttons. Make sure that window treatments are easy to use. There are many different styles and ways to have them automated to work for what you need. In place of a lift chair, sometimes having a stander assist coffee table next to a sitting surface can be all that is needed to help a person rise out of a chair or couch. Making sure that furniture is the right size for the room and for you while having clear pathways can make the functionality of the whole house more efficient and easier to use.

There are many new innovations that can be used in a home to help us in our daily living. Sometimes it is just using what we already own positioned in a different way. To find out more about how to design your home to work for you, contact a Certified Aging in Place Specialist and receive customized recommendations.

