

Spaces That Work

Is your work space cold and uninviting, causing cubicle fever? Or is it so cozy you want to curl up and nap as soon as you walk through the door? Amber Reid finds out how to make the ambience just right for you to get your work done.

When you think of your work space, what words come to mind? Modest, personal, welcoming or, perhaps, stale? Let's hope it is not the stereotypical office image, with humming fluorescent lights and tinged white walls. Sadly, far too many work spaces fit this description: bleak, impersonal and utterly uninspiring. Although, the other end of the spectrum can be just as defeating to get the job done. Beverley Wilson* of Calgary, AB, experienced a

flare. "It was supposed to be a surprise," says Wilson. "She said I would love it."

Monday morning Wilson didn't just walk into her office, but another place in time. It had been completely redone in a Victorian theme, complete with red and green wallpaper, cookie tins and china tea sets. "It was like working on a Miss Marples theatre set," Wilson exclaims. Her tiny, windowless workspace was diminished with busy details and decorative breakables. Just

space is one that is functional, aesthetically pleasing and healthy. Regardless of whether you have a home office, a cubicle or the corner office with a company, you can still create an environment that is ergonomically good for you and where the indoor air quality is optimal." Nyke shares how you can make a great healthy space, by focusing on space functionality, aesthetics, and indoor air quality.

"A great work space is one that is functional, aesthetically pleasing and healthy"

- Barbara Nyke, accredited interior decorator and eco-designer.

work space catastrophe, where office embellishments became a major hindrance.

While working at the University of Calgary as an administrative assistant, she shared a meagre office with a co-worker. They were given free range to decorate as they pleased, and decorate her co-worker did. One weekend her colleague trimmed the office with her own unique

imagine racing to the copy machine, while tiptoeing around the fine china. "It was suffocating," says Wilson. So, how do you create a work space you enjoy, but also serves you in meeting deadlines?

Barbara Nyke, accredited interior decorator and eco-designer, as well as the owner of NIKKA DESIGN in Toronto, Ont., explains that "a great work

Functional

Foremost, your office is a place to work. To help optimize comfort and productivity, Nyke recommends adjusting three office attributes, where you sit, storage and filing systems, and lighting:

Chair - "Select the best work chair you can afford," Nyke states, and, preferably, one that "supports your lower back (the lumbar region) and provides you with the ability to sit straight while you work." According to the Canadian Centre for

Occupational Health (CCOHS) and Safety, select a chair with:

- a backrest that is shaped to support the lower back and does not give way
- a stable base (five legs)
- arm rests, where practical
- a seat height that does not compress the underside of the thighs
- a front edge curved downward
- non-slip, breathable fabric on the seat.

And, be sure to use a footrest, when feet cannot rest on the floor.

Storage and filing systems

Unable to find papers quickly and feeling frazzled? Often, the culprit is insufficient storage and filing systems. To create efficient storage space, Nyke suggests:

- Placing storage systems adjacent to your seated work area for quick access, as well as additional shelving space for reference materials.

