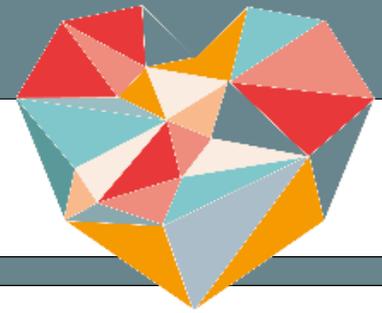


Library environment for people living with dementia



The environment can have a great impact on the general well-being and quality of life of people with dementia. Dementia affects everyday life in many ways, and people with dementia may experience difficulties with other things than memory, e.g. also sight, concentration, and overview. Environments that are adapted to the challenges that people living with dementia face, can support and help so that the dementia disease does not make it impossible to participate in everyday life in the community. With the right measures, people with dementia can deal with the challenges they face on their way, so that the barriers do not become a reason for them to give up interests and activities that give them value and quality of life.

In the following, the challenges and barriers that a person living with dementia can experience are described. In addition, various interior design measures are proposed, which can make the barriers smaller. The design measures are developed in connection with library interior designs in the municipality of Odense but can be adapted and used in other cultural institutions.

Memory

People living with dementia may have difficulty remembering longer explanations and location directions.

What can be done to address this?:

- Short and clear visual and verbal communication makes things easier to remember.
- Ensure that employees at the counter, receptions, etc. have time and space to create a calm environment in the meeting with people living with dementia.

Visual perception

People with dementia may have difficulty recognizing everyday things.

What can be done to address this?:

- Use recognizable and easy-to-read symbols / images.

People with dementia may have difficulty distinguishing colors that are close together. For example, it can be difficult to read signs and screens. They can also develop tunnel vision. This means that navigating in public places can be difficult.

What can be done to address this?:

- Use contrasting colors on signs and screens (e.g. avoid the contrast red / green).
- Use contrasting colors in connection with the objects and surroundings you orient yourself towards, e.g. exits or service areas.
- Use muted colors in connection with things from which you want to divert attention, e.g. the entrance to the staff room or a door to a staircase.
- Ensure uniformed lighting in the library areas - avoid dark corners. Possibly special spotlights can be placed on signs.

Visual perception

These challenges can also make it difficult to see a door or a light switch if they are the same color as the wall.

What can be done to address this?:

- Paint door frames or doors in a contrasting color so that they stand out clearly.
- Install light switches in a contrasting color - or paint with a contrasting color around it.

People with dementia may have difficulty distinguishing between different objects. E.g. patterns or small imprinted decorative figures can be perceived as real objects.

What can be done to address this?:

- Provide solid colored surfaces.
- Avoid excessive patterns and embellishments on e.g. walls and floors.
- Avoid contrasting colors on floors, as they can be perceived as unevenness.
- Have clocks with hands instead of digital numbers.

People with dementia may misinterpret visual impressions.

What can be done to address this?:

- Avoid black surfaces, such as carpets, as they can be perceived as holes in the surfaces.
- Avoid painted or shiny surfaces, as they may be perceived as slippery and lead to unsafe walking.
- Avoid things casting clear shadows e.g. due to the lighting, as the shadows can be perceived as persons.

Stairs generally pose a challenge for people with dementia:

What can be done to address this?:

- Solid color steps. E.g. linoleum can be so variegated that it causes uncertainty.
- A clear edge that shows where the individual step ends - which is both visible and noticeable (e.g. a list).
- Closed stairs are good - Open stairs can cause anxiety about whether the foot e.g. gets stuck between two steps.

Physical movement

People with dementia may have difficulty maintaining balance and moving around without falling.

What can be done to address this?:

- A handle or handrail to lean on can help in places where you stop or may have to stand still for a while.
- A seat at fixed points, e.g. in the elevator or in the hallway.

Orientation

People with dementia may have difficulty finding their way and orienting themselves.

What can be done to address this?:

- Clarity in the interior design
- Clear signs of entrance and exits.
- Clear signage for e.g. toilets, which are also located so that it can be seen from a distance or in larger areas
- Repeat the sign if needed. Signs can also be repeated with advantage if there are things along the way that may act as diversions.
- Use of unique text and / or symbols, so that by e.g. toilets are a picture of a toilet.

Concentration

People with dementia may have difficulty sorting out impressions, overseeing too many things at once, and staying focused. Too many stimuli can make a person with dementia uneasy.

What can be done to address this?:

- Avoid too many choices or too many things to consider at one time.
- Avoid disturbing or loud noises - background noise requires energy and attention and takes focus.
- Limit complicated systems.
- Ensure good acoustics - noise can create unrest and confusion.
- Arrange special corners with tranquility, where it is possible to take a rest when the impressions become too many.

