Creating Safe Spaces

Trauma informed design

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Building Hope:
Trauma informed design and Hope Street

The personality of space

If the environment or space in which your organization delivers services or in which you access services had a personality, what would it be?

Safety

PHYSICAL SAFETY

EMOTIONAL SAFETY

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Safety in the physical environment

Key questions for organisations:

1. How does the physical environment promote a sense of safety, calm, and de-escalation for clients and staff?

2. In what ways do staff members recognise and address aspects of the physical environment that may be re-traumatising, and work with people on addressing this?

3. How has the organisation provided space that both staff and people receiving services can use to practice self-care?

4. How has the organisation developed mechanisms to address gender-related and/or culturally specific safety concerns?

one small thing

To what extent does your organization/service achieve the following?
Score between 1-5.   5 = *My organization does this well*

1) My organisation gives thought to lighting, clear signage, blind spots.

2) My organisation pays attention to decoration that may be triggering eg: types of artwork, posters, colour palettes etc

3) Security systems are implemented in the most non-intrusive way.

4) My organisation gives priority and respect to people's personal space, privacy, and boundaries

5) My organisation attempts to increase space and reduce overcrowding so people don't feel trapped or cramped.

6) My organisation pays attention to smells that might be triggering.

7) My organisation pays attention to noises that might be triggering.

8) Staff are trained in de-escalation skills.

9) My organisation thinks carefully about locked, unlabelled doors or other things that might be threatening to a survivor of trauma.

10) My organisation gives careful thought around necessary procedures such as admission, restraint, exclusion.

Questions adapted from *A Treasure Box for Creating Trauma Informed Organisations* by Karen Treisman

one small thing
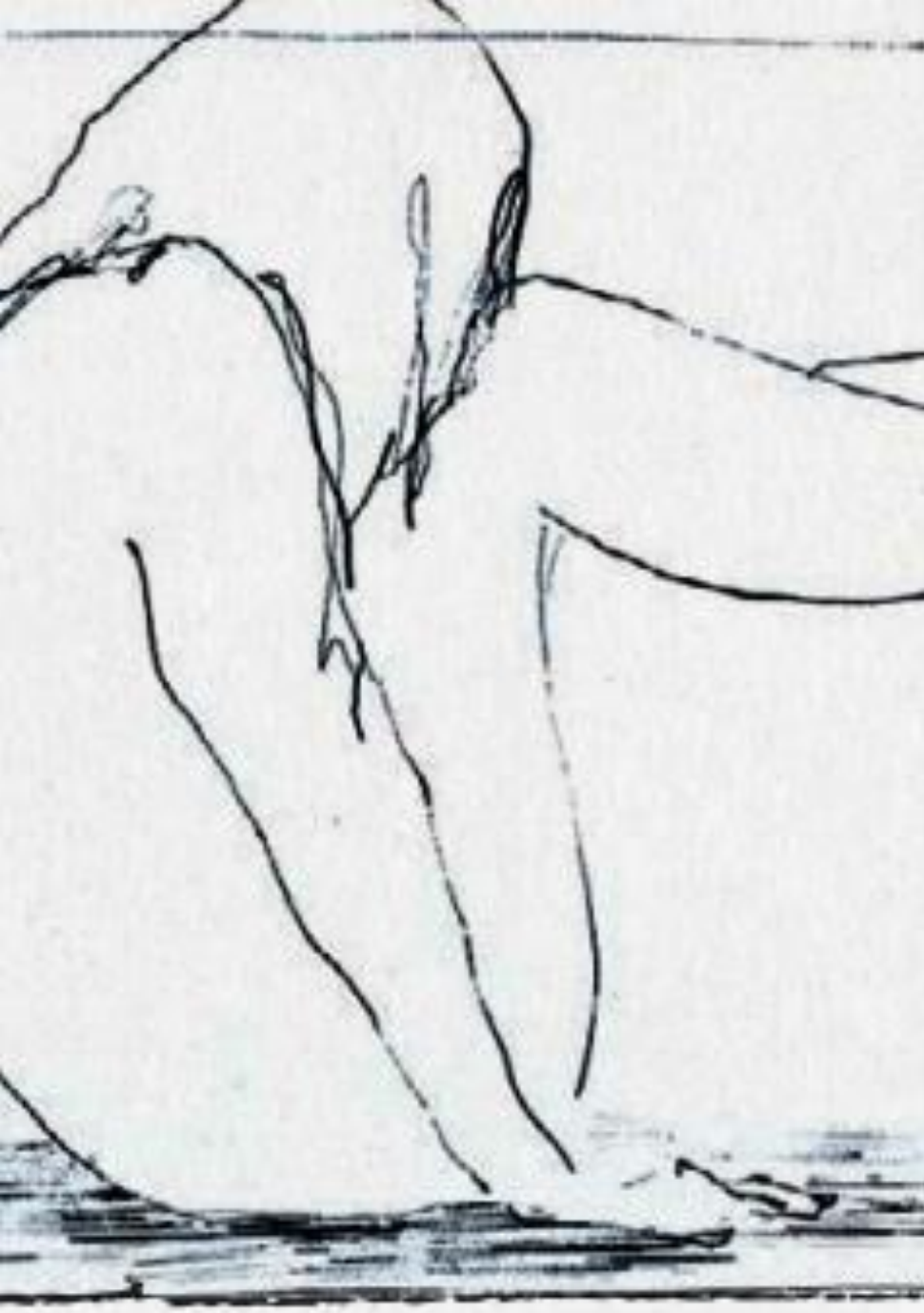
Physical safety in physical space

- Single most important issue for traumatised people is to find a sense of safety in their own bodies (van der Kolk, 2015)

- Women experience the impact of trauma in an embodied way – see themselves as 'spoilt', 'branded,' 'dirty', 'an ugly person,' 'a monster.'

- Embodied experience of space

Image by Kaisei Nanke

Making spaces feel physically safe

1) Security

2) Privacy

3) Predictability

Feedback from Hope Street consultations

- Keep CCTV to key areas

"Not big brother. Observation will feel like being spied on."

- No bars on windows. No mesh. No metal

- Separation of private and public space

"Sharing a bathroom isn't a great thing and can be a trigger for some people."
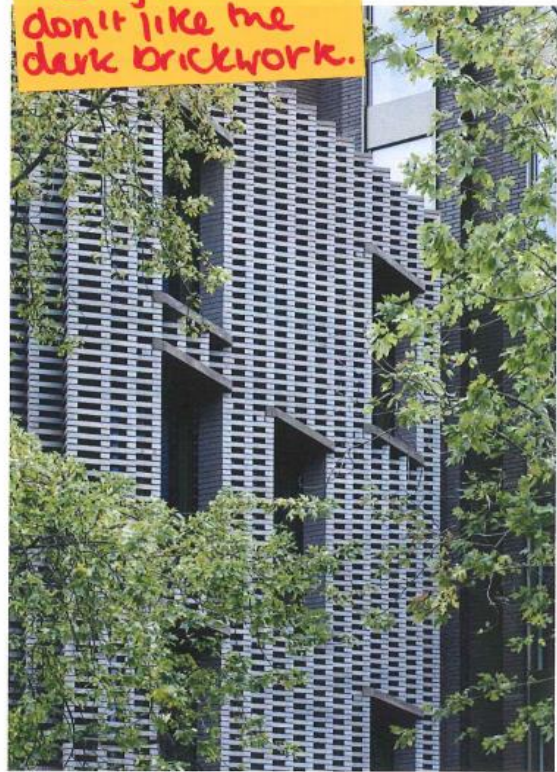
- Soundproofing/soft close doors

one small thing

IS THE RIGHT BALANCE OF PRIVACY AND VIEW?

The lights are too clinical. I like the idea of the letting the light in but don't like the dark brickwork.

I don't like any of them. Dont like metal or Dark gray. They look like offices or a prison

NO

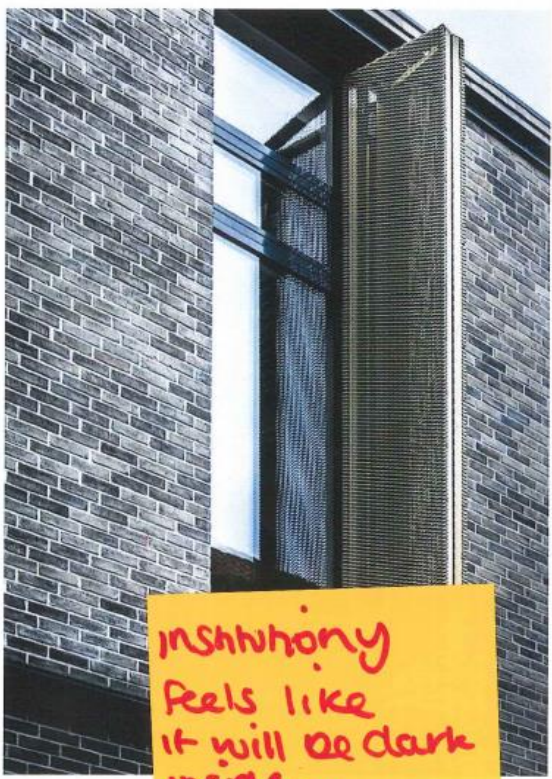institutiony feels like it will be dark inside.. Don't like the metal Grill.

Tinted windows to assist with privacy.

Feels separate and private but also has large windows and trees.

Cosy and personable spaces that seem less clinical and more therapeutic.

Let in light without compromising privacy.

Emotional Safety

Choose one word to describe how you *feel* in the space you are in now.

What is it about the space that makes you feel that way?

one small thing

The community as a container.
Emotional safety in physical spaces

1) Sensory triggers

2) Messaging

3) Regulating/calming elements in the environment

Image by Rebeka Artim

Making spaces feel emotionally safe

Feedback from Hope Street consultations:

- Homely feel

- Cosy and private

- Carpeting, rugs, mirrors, curtains

- *No hospital colours* – pastels, blue and green

- No strip lighting

- Bring wildlife into the grounds – squirrels, birds, butterflies

- Pets – *"animals have no judgement, provide distractions from awkward situations, something to care for."*

one small thing

snug

WHAT ENVIRONMENT DO YOU FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE IN?

Couldn't do therapy in this room. →

Nice idea for cafe space? Couldn't spend all day in this space. Lovely for people to feel like they can contribute.

Home to me =
- Light, natural & lamps etc
- Varying textures
- Plants - NATURE

PRISON WALLS?!!

having somewhere for people to write or draw & share their things would be ideal for cafe / hub would give hope, things to look at. But not homely so hub / cafe area only

Too busy ↗

Too Dark ↓

← looks like Shopping Cent

open & spacious soft furnishings love the plants & lighting and the pale wood flooring.

Maybe a few pictures on wall?

Looks like dining are in prison

Men would like this.

Dark in dingy. Too masculine.

PLAY

Hub area:
Very positive about this space:

Liked the colours
Open fire a 'big plus'
Positive response to high ceilings and big windows

Feels cosy due to fireplace and furniture

Living room area:
Neutral colours
Shelf for plants
Varying textures
Soft furnishings – blankets, *make space feel like a home*.

L shaped sofa might be too intimate
Room feels a little cramped.

Kitchen area
Breakfast bar and dining table
Bright colours
None direct lighting
Rug
Feels inclusive

Need option to sit separately when needed

Psychological safety

Think about a space in which you spend a lot of time

How do you assert ownership of that space?

one small thing

Psychological safety in physical space

1) Ownership/personalization

2) Separate spaces to meet specific needs

3) Accommodate gender and cultural diversity and different physical abilities.

Image: Artist unknown

Making spaces feel psychologically safe

Feedback from Hope Street consultations:

- Enable people to make spaces their own/ability to customise the space

- Lockable storage – *"being able to unpack properly and feel 'at home'."*

- Have choice over some household items

- Create opportunities for activities that can be done as a group eg: film night, Sunday roasts

- Consistency of dedicated spaces

- Space to accommodate gender/cultural needs - Prayer room, gender-neutral toilet, separate cutlery, breast-feeding room

one small thing

Some liked the idea of being able to attend an activity like this and speak to other people.

Not everyday as it's too overwhelming and could create anxiety

Like the idea of pinning thoughts on the wall without having to speak.

Nice to do as an individual or as a group.

Beneficial for more anxious people, giving them time to reflect.

Feeling of being surrounded by nature in a happy, gentle way.

Transports you away from everyday life

Calming.

Places for the individual as well as the group.

Top tips for creating safe spaces

Incorporate the physical environment into any evaluation or review of service provision

Narrative walk-throughs

Service user consultations

one small thing

Principles of designing safety into physical environments

Safe environments for survivors of trauma:

- Engage the individual in the multi-sensory experience of the environment

- Reduce or remove harmful stimuli

- Reduce or remove environmental stressors

- Evoke home

- Provide and promote a connection with nature

- Allow for expression of personality and feelings

- Provide ways for the individual to exhibit their independence and self-reliance.

one small thing

Questions….reflections….

What works well in your organisation's physical environment?

What area would you most like to change?

Please post in the Q&A

one small thing