

Your “Away Room”



A Quiet Place of Remove

Visionary architect and mindfulness practitioner Sarah Susanka popularized the concept of an **Away Room** in [The Not So Big House series of books](#). Susanka suggests that home designers and/or homeowners create a room to escape to that is near the common areas of the home, but that offers some privacy from the noise and socializing of the other spaces.

Christopher Alexander, et al, though, wrote about this concept in-depth in the brilliant tome, [A Pattern Language](#). In **A Pattern Language**, the authors state that people living close together also need to have opportunities to be alone, and thus suggests that each household member have a space of one's own. At least an alcove with some kind of a sense of enclosure and privacy.

This is especially true for HSPs, highly sensitive people.

Here is the description of this important pattern, taken directly from **A Pattern Language**:

Pattern #141

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

The problem:

No one can be close to others, without also having frequent opportunities to be alone.

The solution:

Give each member of the family a room of his own, especially adults. A minimum “room of one's own” is an alcove with desk, shelves, and curtain. The maximum is a cottage – like a TEENAGER'S COTTAGE (Pattern #154), or an OLD AGE COTTAGE (Pattern #155). In all cases, especially for adults, place these rooms at the far ends of the intimacy gradient -- far from the common rooms.

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Designing an Away Room

For a larger home, it could be possible to create a room for each household member, but the common Western ideal of each child having their own bedroom and each adult having a separate space as well is not necessarily the solution for all homes and families.

For adults, if a separate den is not a possibility in the home design, sometimes a tucked away corner, a window seat or a multipurpose hobby room can be the answer.

Children love small nooks and spaces. A child cave or nook can easily be created within a shared bedroom, under a set of stairs or in many odd spaces in the home. For the most part, children will want privacy, but at the same time will want to be within proximity of other family members.

When designing a space to retreat to, the first thing to ask is how will the space be used. As always in home design, form should follow function. If the purpose of the space is reading then you'll want room enough for a comfortable seating spot, proper lighting, a small table and perhaps a set of shelves. For yoga or meditation, the space will look decidedly different than the away room of a knitter, musician or woodworker. Design a space that really works for you.