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Body Conscious Design Principles

Most design approaches demand that bodies simply fit into what is provided without consideration for their anatomical, physiological, and sensory needs. In contrast, Body Conscious Design encourages designers to think first about what bodies need to function optimally and to design the environment accordingly. Body Conscious Design attends to the biomechanics of bodies and also the psychological and cultural feelings and beliefs that a person brings to understanding their body in relationship to their environments. Together, these somatic experiences of the body-mind-environment are the primary criteria for generating and evaluating design. This perspective requires somatic education for both designers and users, and it is part of the larger aspiration for whole person health and well-being.

Chairs were the first element of the built environment (*The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body, and Design*) that I analyzed as I developed my theory, method, practice, and advocacy of Body Conscious Design. Over the ensuing years, I have named the working principles that transmit the foundational teachings of this perspective. Designers, architects, and planners can look to these principles when they evaluate existing designs and create new ones, in all life's settings: private, work, social, and public.

1. Body Conscious Design encourages bodily movement and a variety of postures (at least five in any setting).
2. Body Conscious Design accommodates variety in human shapes, sizes, and abilities and hence embraces and insists on choices.
3. Body Conscious Design includes all of the senses.

When manifested these Body Conscious Design principles can be subtle or obvious. They may confront and even defy design and social conventions. They may generate new developments in research, technology and design or take influence from historical precedents. Body Conscious Design accepts and celebrates any new aesthetic consequences of truly accommodating bodies.