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SOUND REASONING (reference Grand Designs Australia, V.9 ISS.4 2020)

Sound is everywhere. A child's joyful laughter, the roar of a motorbike, the pitter patter of rain on a tin roof, the gentle hum of conversation, the sharp thud of a slamming door. Even silence is sound. So what is the soundscape in your home?

It's not something we often think about, but the sounds in our homes form a *soundscape*. This is a combination of sounds that interplay with each other in an immersive environment, creating a powerful tool that helps humans relate to their surroundings.

Sound is expressed or measured in decibels (dB). A whisper is around 30dB, a loud clap of thunder measures around 120dB, average speech sounds are around 50dB.

dB levels and certain types of sounds can directly impact health and wellbeing. They can combine to form a dangerous duo, raising the stress response, decreased mood and contributing to poor sleep. The flip side is also true with welcomed sounds that soothe the stress response and nourish the body, calming breathing rate and improving mood.

When planning and designing a home, material as well as design and layout of interior and exterior spaces all affect the soundscape in your home environment and surrounds. So it's possible to take proactive steps to encourage those feel-good sounds and block or muffle the undesirable ones.

To reduce unwanted noise in the home, barriers and sound-absorbent materials can be used. Most people forget sounds come through doors

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and internal doors are rarely insulated. Solid doors are better than hollow ones, but an insulated door is an even better option. Open-plan living in contemporary homes also presents another challenge. Partition open-plan spaces to create screened areas so that people can be in separate spaces if they need privacy.

Materials such as *hemcrete* can be used for soundproofing or sound control. Some products can be used in conjunction with a wide range of acoustic insulation or backing materials. For example, *Deco Australia's* range of timber-look aluminium building products offers slimline design and versatile insulation, allowing for multiple acoustic options.

Wallpaper also plays a part in sound muffling. Three-dimensional quality wallpaper is a good choice – it doesn't need to look like a commercial space and can look beautiful – form and function can work well together. A runner down a long hallway with timber floors can absorb sound, tell a story about the space, as well as add warmth, comfort and colour.

Gardens can be used to block unwanted sounds, but they're also a source of sound, of nature – bird song, relaxing running water. It can be the sound of condensed silence that you'd hear if you were out in the wilderness.