



Light Gold by Little Greene (£23.50 a litre)

# Pick the right paint shade to improve your mood

Colours that make you feel good are a good place to start.  
By Hugh Graham

Lockdown isn't only changing society, it may be changing the way we think about our home decor. "People might be sitting

in their living room for weeks on end, thinking, 'Something about this room is just not working,'"

"If I were to hazard a guess, I'd say it would be the colour and the colour combinations. People have been

choosing colours because of how they look on Instagram, but I think the mindset will change after this lockdown; it will be about wellbeing and how a room makes us feel."

Your choice of paint shades can transform your life, according to Karen Haller, an applied colour psychology consultant and the author of *The Little Book of Colour*. Haller trained in the Colour Affects system, a school of thought pioneered in the 1970s by the British psychologist Angela Wright, who showed how



Colour psychology consultant Karen Haller says that your choice of paint shades can transform your life

colours can shape behaviour and mood. It's a complex field. "Every single colour has positive and adverse traits," Haller says. "A blue that I find restful could annoy you. It is down to your personality type. There is no 'one size fits all'. Colours that make you feel good are a good place to start. If ever there were a time to disconnect from trends and connect back with who we are, the time is now."

### Yellow

Most colour psychologists warn

you to avoid yellow in the bedroom because it stimulates the nervous system. "It's not restful, and too much of it can lead to fear and anxiety," Wall says.

"It is wonderful in a hallway, though," Haller says. "It's very welcoming, and is a lovely way to be greeted when coming inside. For that reason, front doors could be painted yellow. It could be great for a breakfast area, as it's a lovely colour to start the day with, but not to wake up to. It all depends on the

tone and proportion. If you paint everything yellow, it's likely to irritate you and make you nervous. And colour combinations are important. If you combine yellow and black, that's a warning sign. That's a wasp; that's toxic. Combinations of colours can change the way we feel."

The paint brand founder Edward Bulmer prefers warmer tobacco colours, such as his Trumpington, which he says feels "enveloping", and could work well in a snug or hallway;



Little Greene suggests Light Gold or Mortlake Yellow for a hallway, or Mister David for a front door.

### Blue

Blue is “the colour of the mind”, according to the Colour Affects theory. It affects us mentally, whereas red triggers a physical reaction. Its website says: “Strong blues stimulate clear thought; lighter, soft blues will calm the mind and aid concentration.”

Haller says: “If you like blue, I’d be looking for a lighter end of blue for the bedroom. I might use a turquoise in the bathroom, as it has a lot of yellow in it, which wakes your mind up. If you wanted to do your study in blue, to focus and concentrate, you might think about dark blue: midnight or navy.”

Marianne Shillingford, the creative director of Dulux, likes Atmosphere, a soft blue, for the bedroom. “It’s uplifting, not overpowering, and it fills the room with light and tranquillity.” For those who find blue too cold, Edward Bulmer makes warmer, greener versions, including Sea Green (he still calls it a blue) and Aquatic.

### Green

When I describe my ideal family kitchen to Haller — safe, cosy, with friendly conversation and games — she suggests green, with wood. “It makes you feel connected and safe, as does wood,” she says. “When we used to see green, we knew there was life and water, and we felt safe.

But if you just have green and wood, you might end up stagnating. So for a playful element, I’d add some orange: plates or a tablecloth. Never use too much of any one colour — my favourite is orange, but I’d never paint a room with it.”

If you want to feel safe and tranquil in your living room, a sage or forest green might do the trick. Try Little Greene’s Sage, Valspar Keen on Green or Breathe Deeply, Edward Bulmer’s Invisible Green or Dulux Tranquil Dawn. “At a worrying time, we need peace and to reconnect with nature,” Shillingford says.

### Red

Red seems to go hand in hand with dining rooms, but contrary to popular perception it does not stimulate appetite, according to Haller. “That’s a myth. But we do have a core reaction to red: it raises the pulse rate, so a lively discussion might end up as a heated debate.”

There’s a reason red ends up in dining rooms, Shillingford says. “It’s sensual. I believe it does stimulate taste buds, as well as falling in love and good conversation. I don’t recommend the bright, sharp reds. They’re a bit scary and aggressive. For the dining room, you want to turn down the visual volume and get the mood music going. A deep red such as Dulux Dark Garnet works well.”

### Pink

Pink may be a light red, but the softer shades are not

stimulating, Haller says: “It’s physically soothing. Soft pinks are about nurturing. If there is a colour that you could be cuddled with or hugged, this is it; it makes us feel emotionally and physically safe. It might be appropriate for a baby’s room or for a soothing living room or bedroom. Being around too much pink, we can then have the traits of being quite needy, and men can find it emasculating, although a magenta pink is quite feisty.”

Try Dulux Pressed Petal or Little Greene Dorchester Pink.

### Purple

Purple might help us deal with what is happening in the world right now. “Purples connect us to our higher selves,” Haller says. “They’re introspective. Purple is good for looking inside, for quiet reflection. It is useful in a meditation room. It’s also a colour you might want in a bedroom for quiet contemplation; a very, very light purple, such as a lilac, heather or lavender.” Wall likes Little Greene Hortense or Benjamin Moore Classics Spring Iris for a calming bedroom or bathroom.

### Grey

Grey has been the story of interiors for more than a decade. It has one positive characteristic, according to Colour Affects theory: “psychological neutrality”. Heavy use of it, however, “usually indicates a lack of confidence and fear of exposure, dampness, depression and lack of energy”. ■

