

Living as a Couple—Creating Intimacy by Finding Space Apart

Living with a partner in a cozy space can be an intimate adventure but can also amplify differences. What helps are spaces that both connect and separate to meet a variety of needs.



Living with a partner in a nest for two might sound like happiness in a nutshell, but being too close in cramped living quarters can become a source of chronic stress for couples. Having the right mindset can help—our perception of comfort is highly subjective. Good cohabitation practices, such as clear and respectful communication, willingness to compromise, tidiness, and accumulating as little clutter as possible, are beneficial to feeling comfortable

together no matter where you live. A well-designed space that reduces the perception of crowding will make shared living all the more pleasant.

Homes that help you inhabit a small space together while maintaining levels of privacy and individuality can help. Athens-based architecture practice SOUTH, for example, transformed an unused basement space in the Greek capital into a 40 m² (431 ft²) custom studio apartment. While basement apartments tend to evoke

images of cramped, windowless, damp spaces, this one, located in the Lycabettus Hill area, is quite the opposite. A sculptural partition wall meanders through the central space, creating distinctive functional zones and various levels of privacy while always maintaining an internal connection. Sensual curves, niches, and cut-outs lend the space a dynamic quality, while arches reach up toward the ceiling for a feeling of added height, directing attention to the two existing

skylights. Bright white walls underscore the openness of the space and are complemented by the raw materiality of custom furniture elements in neutral tones, made of unfinished plywood, cement, and glazed ceramic tiles. Functional pieces in black steel add contrast throughout the space. While the desire to deepen a relationship is a major reason for two people to live together, other factors

The reading nook in a Madrid living room serves as a second bedroom, as well as a space to entertain guests.