

Comfort and Comforting Environments

By Gayle Bluebird, RN



By Meghan Caughey

Comfort As ...

- Environmental Design: comfort rooms and other cozy spaces
- Communication
- Creature Comforts: food, security, safety, “all the comforts of home”
- Comforter: blanket wrap, coverlet, snuggle up in, tuck in, “a soft touch”

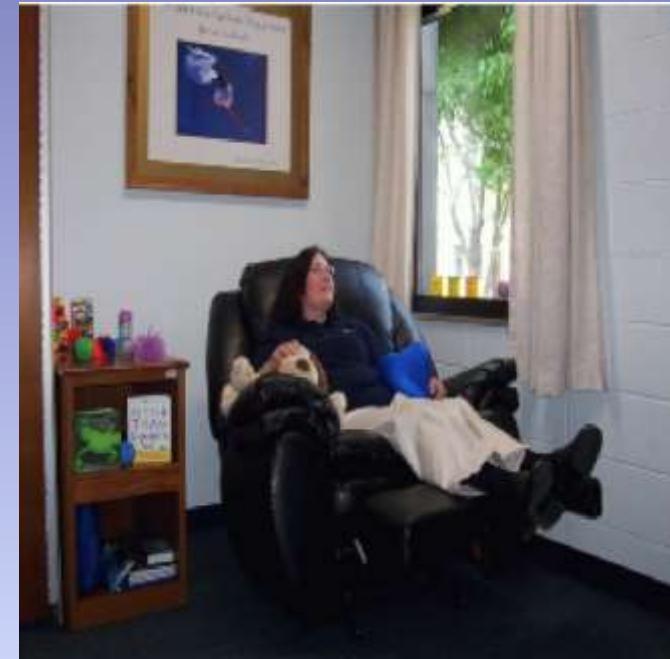
Communication

- Use “person first” language
- Focus on person’s strengths
- Use familiar words
- Avoid words like: milieu, psycho-education, manipulative
- Maintain good eye contact, tone of voice, relaxed dress
- Encouragement, reassurance, friendship, “pat on the back”
- Be honest!

Being Comfortable with People's Stories

- We all have histories to explore
- Listening to trauma stories with compassion
- Finding creative ways to express (Music, Dance, Poetry, Journaling, Films, Websites)
- Enhance libraries with consumer-written books and writings
- Hold “story-telling” workshops for staff and in-patients

Comfort Room



Springfield State Hospital, IL

Definition:

The Comfort Room, formerly called the “Quiet” or “Time-Out” room, is a room that provides sanctuary from stress. It can be a place where people can experience their feelings within acceptable boundaries.

Comfort Rooms With Other Names ...

- Tranquility room
- Calming Room
- Peace Room
- Zen Room
- Getaway Room
- Relaxation Room



Zen Room, Ft. Lauderdale Hospital, FL

... Or Named on a Theme

- For example:
- Palm Tree Room
- The Rain Forest



*Childrens' Room
Austin State Hospital, Texas*

Comfort Room



Nevada State Hospital

The Comfort Room is to be used by people voluntarily. Staff may suggest its use and may be present if the person desires it. People who wish to use the room may be asked to speak with a staff person first and sign in before entering.

Comfort Room



Elgin State Hospital, IL

The comfort room is not an alternative to seclusion and restraint. It is a prevention tool that may help to reduce the need for seclusion and restraint.

Comfort Room

The Comfort Room is a participatory project which involves people being served and includes implementation of other comfort strategies and environmental changes throughout the entire system. Ultimately it should produce a culture change of “comfort instead of coercion.”



*Western State Hospital
Tacoma, WA*

Furnishings for Comfort Rooms

- Reclining chair/ or Rocking chair
- Colorful curtains
- Theme mural on wall (images to be the choice of persons served)
- Wall borders and stencils
- Bean bag chairs
- Bubble or lava lamps
- Stuffed animals
- (Safety is always a factor when furnishing a room)



*Peace Room
Fulton MHC, IL*

Suggestions for Comfort Rooms

- Have a sign on door to reflect hours open
- Invite a patient to conduct orientation to new patients
- Have more and varied arts materials available
- Bulletin board in room for display of artwork or poetry
- Guest book journal for people to write comments in

Uses for Comfort Rooms

- Consider using the room for one-on-one counseling (Peer or with staff)
- Consider using the room for step-down after a seclusion episode
- Allow patients to develop guidelines for usage
- Have recovery videos available for watching
- Care of plants
- Exercise programs

Comfort Room Uses (Cont.)

- Assessments
- Sleep room for patients with difficulty sleeping
- Special projects
- Filling out personal safety plan
- Consider the possibility of more than one person using the room at a time
- Creativity
- Posting poetry and art work
- As a reward

Comfort Boxes

A Comfort Box or Cart is placed in each Comfort Room containing selected items to be used by persons served while there.

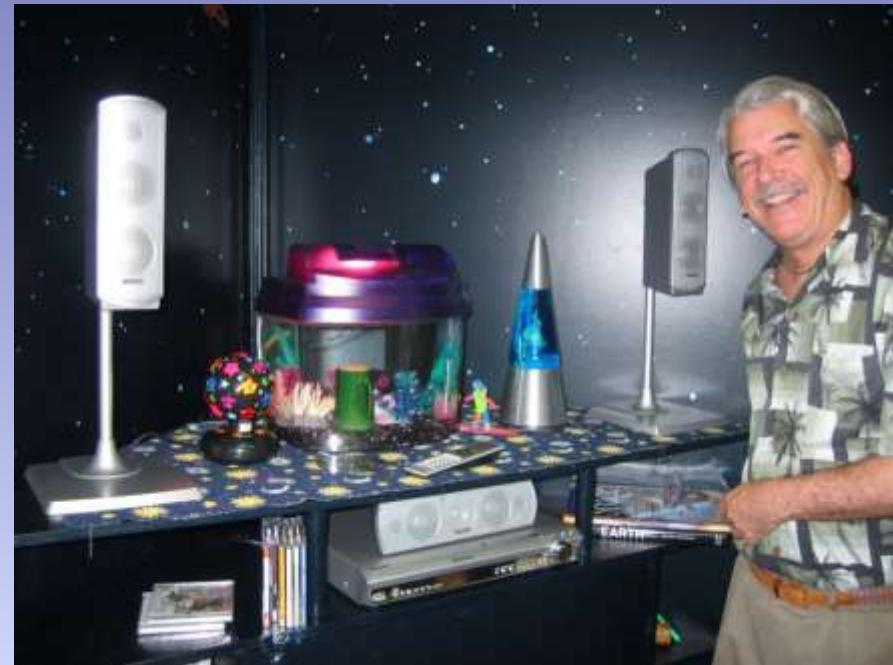
Items in Cart may include:

- Reading materials
- Comic books
- Squeeze toys
- Art materials / Coloring books
- Stuffed Animals
- Writing materials
- Hand-held games
- Other items as suggested by client



*Example of a Comfort Room Cabinet
Montana State Hospital*

What Are Sensory Rooms?



Queens Hospital, Honolulu, Hawaii

Sensory rooms first started in Europe in the Netherlands in 1975. They were called Snoezelen Rooms. Now, they are multi-sensory rooms for sensory modulation. They involve the use of equipment and materials designed to promote self-organization.

Differences Between Comfort Rooms and Sensory Rooms

Sensory rooms:

- Rely on professional training
- Contain specific tools for sensory modulation
- May include screening and assessments
- Specific to 7 senses
- Require supervision
- Led by occupational therapists
- Some rooms are designed with dual purposes



Bluebird using weighted blanket

Differences (Cont.)

Comfort rooms:

- Can be used as self-help model
- Materials and activities in room selected by clients
- Peer specialist supervision desirable
- Designed, disciplined and self-regulated by persons who use them
- Records keeping not important
- Closer to arts model than sensory model
- May also include sensory items

Music in Comfort Rooms

- Most popular activity is music
- Headphones for listening to music
- Quiet meditative music tapes may be preferred
- Children may want to have louder music
- Piped-in music is preferable



S. Florida State Hospital

Comforting Spaces



- Windows with access to sunlight
- Quiet spaces in comfortable day rooms
- Celebratory spaces, artifacts and symbols of patient identity
- Decorated bulletin boards with information, schedules, etc.
- Conversation pieces, sense of humor

Decorated Bulletin Boards and Use of Office Space



Inspirational Affirmations on Picture Displays

Only those who risk going too far
can possibly find out
how far one can go!



~ T.S. Eliot

Christine Elvidge, Springfield State Hospital, IL

Patient Artwork in Lobbies and Hallways



Varied use of colors and color combinations



Arkansas State Hospital, Adolescent Unit, Little Rock, AR

An Alternative Crisis Center



Crisis Unit – Living Room, Meta Services, Inc., Phoenix, AZ

Peer Specialists as Comforters

- Empathy and support based on common experiences
- Allows for intensive one-on-one counseling
- Specialized work with challenging individuals
- Peers are less afraid of unusual behaviors
- Understanding of individual's perspectives
- More relaxed with touching
- Used as “de-briefers”

Comforting Touch

- Cultural differences
- Signs of “touch” hunger
- Appropriate touching
- Inappropriate touching
- Variations on appropriate touching
- Importance of tone of voice, eye contact

Other Comfort Strategies

- “Pillows of Unrest” project
- Talent shows (with microphone!!)
- Fashion shows
- Nail Painting
- Display of client artwork
(use individuals’ names)
- Classes on Yoga and Tai Chi
- Pet therapy



Other Comfort Strategies (Cont.)

- Massage Therapy - Use Massage School students for chair massage
- Power walks competition
- Humor items
- Karaoke
- Poetry readings
- Bingo
- Photography
- Field trips
- NOW, ADD YOUR OWN !

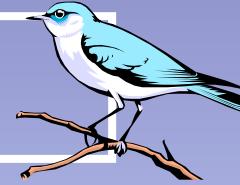
In Closing ...



“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.”

-Maya Angelou

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