

# 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 persons who have 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
- Involves assessments  
Specific to 7 senses
- Requires supervision
- Led by occupational therapists
- Some rooms are designed with dual purposes



*Bluebird using weighted blanket*

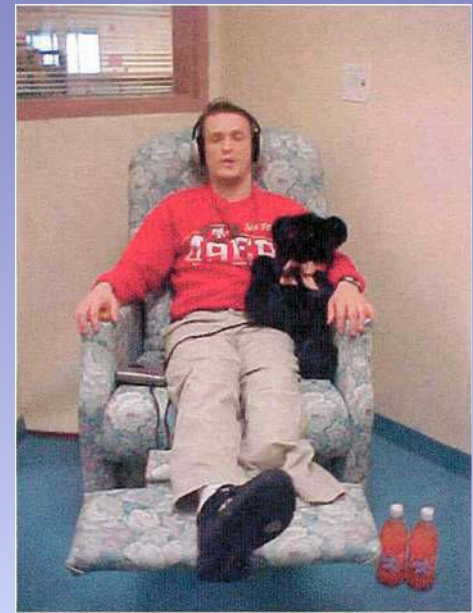
# Differences (Cont.)

## Comfort rooms:

- Can be used as peer support model
- Materials and activities in room selected by persons who use it
- Peer support supervision desirable
- Designed, disciplined and self-regulated
- Record keeping not important
- Closer to arts model than sensory model
- May 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



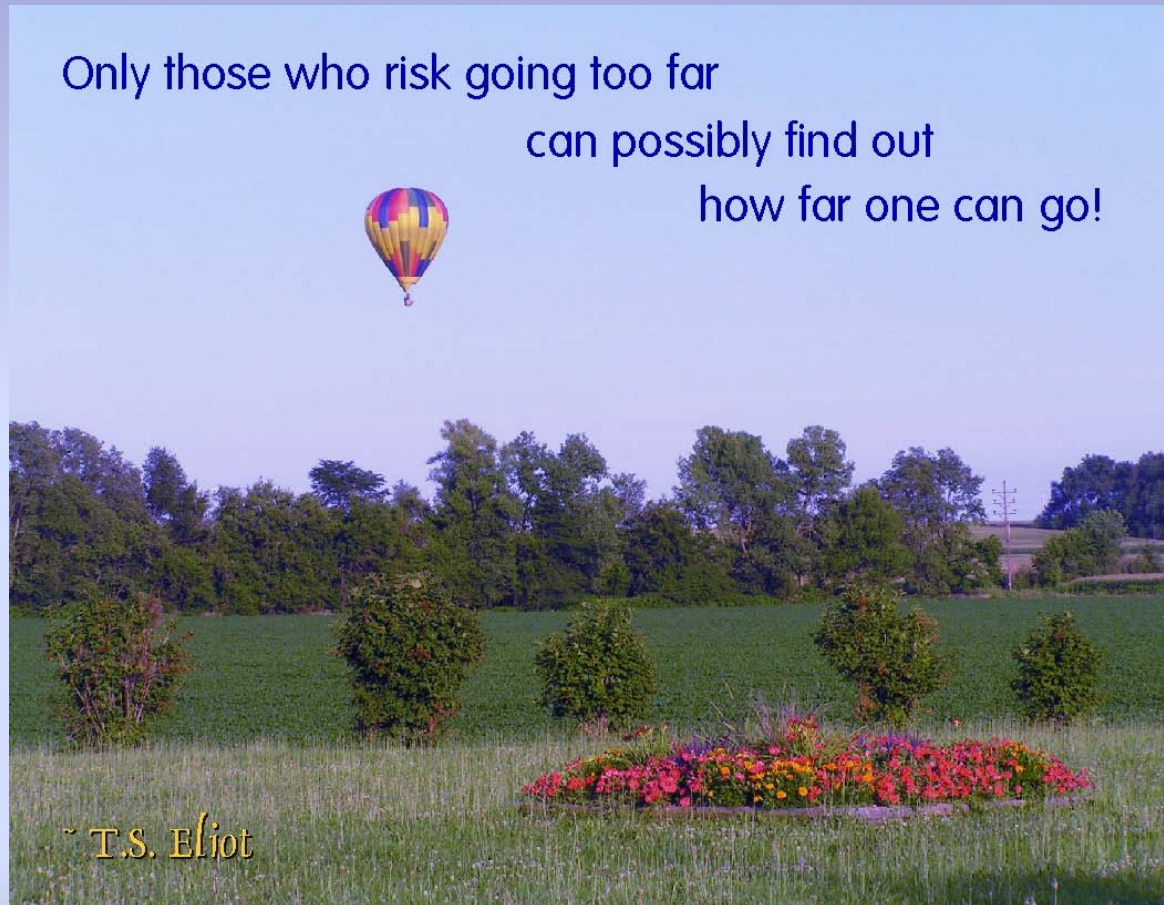
- Windows with access to sunlight
- Quiet spaces in comfortable day rooms
- Celebratory spaces, artifacts and symbols of client identity
- Decorated bulletin boards with information, schedules, etc.
- Conversation pieces, sense of humor

# Decorated Bulletin Boards and Use of Office Space





# Inspirational Affirmations on Picture Displays



*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 support
- Specialized work with challenging individuals
- Tolerance for unusual behaviors
- Understanding of individual's perspectives
- More relaxed with touching

# 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 massages
- Power walks competition
- Humorous items
- Karaoke
- Poetry readings
- Bingo
- Photography
- Field trips to local DICs, etc.
- NOW, ADD YOUR OWN !

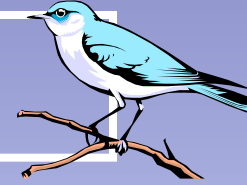
# In Closing ...



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

*-Maya Angelou*

# Bluebird Consultants



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