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## **Creating a Healing Environment**

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Illness often takes us unaware. Seldom are our houses clean and tidy; seldom have we had sufficient sleep the few days before we get ill; and seldom do we have the time for dealing with this at the time it occurs. It can be a challenge to find the time, patience and energy to keep our family life going while still finding the courage and will to care in the right way for our loved one who has become ill; nevertheless, we must find the way to create an environment conducive to healing, one in which we can express our love and concern for our family by caring for a member who is sick.

Following this recommended reading list, you will find a few helpful hints and tips which will start you out right the next time illness comes your way.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

- Prepare a clean, dust free room. Surfaces (desk, dresser, etc.) should be free of clutter.
- If possible, arrange bed so that light enters from the side. Prevent direct sun or glare on sensitive eyes, especially in cases of fever and headache. Curtains or blinds may be drawn.
- Keep fresh flowers (minimal fragrance preferred) visible. Remove wilted blooms daily.
- Keep lukewarm or room temperature fresh fluids (teas, fruit juice or lemon mixed with water) within easy reach. Sipper style cups are handy even for older children. No ice, please – The body has to expel energy in order to warm fluids entering it which can interfere with a healing process. A thermos of tea at the bedside with a favorite cup or glass will work well and allows you to monitor amounts of fluids (important especially in cases of fever.)
- Place a table at bedside, and within easy reach. Keep it uncluttered, aesthetically attractive, perhaps a covered tray with drink(s), remedies, etc.
- Keep a communication device available (bell or tapping stick); adds to security—reduces fears of being left alone. Better yet, check frequently and rhythmically so that this device will not be needed. Anticipate needs.
- The need for soothing images precludes the use of television, headphones, and all manner of electronically reproduced sound and visual images. Note: TV images and sounds can especially detrimental to the healing process.

- Be creative in offering alternative activities to alleviate some of the boredom which inevitably comes. Provide activities such as a simple peek-a-boo with a favorite wool gnome, fairy tales (struggle and transformation themes), a simple cooperative board game, colored pencils for older children or block crayon drawing for younger ones and story telling and reading books (for all ages). This type of activity can be mildly stimulating and distract a child or adult from his discomfort and boredom. It can also be a way to encourage and support expression of feelings related to illness. Use blank paper for drawing as opposed to a coloring book. Knitting and crocheting at appropriate ages is helpful.

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- Maintain room temperature at about 68-72°F. A higher temp may be necessary for comfort with some illness and with the elderly.
- Fresh air is essential. Perhaps crack a window (no drafts directed on the patient please) or air the room daily while the patient is out of the room. Fresh pillowcases at least, perhaps fresh sheets.
- Empty trash receptacles frequently. Remove dishes directly after meals.
- Sharpen your powers of observation. This will help you awaken your intuitive faculties for making decisions regarding care. Ask questions: What can I do to help? What does this (ill) person need?
- You are the caregiver. This means to give care (support, encouragement and love) to the one entrusted to your care. Little things mean a lot, and are often what enables one to feel cared for—fluffing the pillow, bringing an extra cup of tea, providing an extra five minutes to rub the hands or feet. Remember that many of your family and friends are also caregivers. Don't hesitate to ask them for help. A casserole for dinner or taking a younger sibling to the playground for a short time can seem like a breath of fresh air.
- Take care of yourself. Take a short walk around the house in the fresh air; pick a few flowers for the house; a quiet herbal bath during nap time or just a nap. Remember: it is a blessing to be given the opportunity to accompany someone on the path of destiny that is experienced in illness.
- A healing environment doesn't happen on its own. It needs *you* to be there. Remember, taking care of someone often provides an environment in which more than the patient is healed.

***When considering the environment, think of the 4 elements – This will help guide you: Earth, Water, Air and Fire.***