



“Healing with a Smile” Program

The Sabrina and Camillo D'Alesio Foundation was established in memory of two exceptional siblings, Sabrina & Camillo D'Alesio, whose enthusiasm and love of life inspired their parents to believe all children are special and to make a difference in a child's life. Our goal is to enhance and make a significant contribution to the lives of underprivileged children as well as provide entertainment and therapy to sick children in hospitals.

The Sabrina and Camillo D'Alesio Foundation believe there is tremendous value in treating the mind, body and spirit when treating a child for a medical illness. During Camillo and Sabrina's hospital stay, their parents witnessed the hardships children and their families must endure from the time a doctor tells you that your child has a life threatening illness right through the treatment process. There are many extremely difficult days that children and their families must confront. These very special children with life-threatening illnesses deserve positive and healthy distractions during their lengthy stay and courageous fight at the hospital. Complementary therapies provide this distraction and help stimulate the body's natural healing power. These therapies help create a healthy mind to help combat the harshness of treatments such as chemotherapy. The purpose of complementary therapy is to "complement" conventional medicine by stimulating the body's natural healing power.

The Sabrina and Camillo D'Alesio Foundation are requesting your support to implement and sustain "Healing with a Smile" program. "Healing with a Smile" program will fund the following complementary therapies: art therapy, music therapy, pet therapy, clown therapy, massage therapy, and Snoezelen therapy.

The Healing with a Smile program has the following goals:

- 1) Complement conventional medicine in the healing process.
- 2) Create a positive experience for the child and the parent.
- 3) Create a positive distraction for psychological well being of the child.
- 4) Focus on the psycho social needs of children undergoing treatment



Benefits of the Therapies

Art Therapy

The Art Therapy Program uses art expression and therapeutic play, to offer children and adolescents an opportunity to gain a sense of control during their illness, medical treatment, and hospitalization and to express their feelings associated with these experiences. Art Therapy allows children to express feelings too difficult to discuss and helps clarify issues and concerns. The Art Therapy Program provides a safe environment that aids in developing healthy coping skills, in increasing self esteem and confidence, in stimulating imagination and creativity, and in promoting the development of physical, emotional, and learning skills. The program also helps some children deal with surgery and treatment distress, and adjust to physical changes brought about by their illness and its treatment. Art Therapy helps other children come to terms with feelings associated with impending death, such as anger, depression and isolation. Art making initiates contact with children and their family, establishes rapport with the children, and promotes trust. Art activity itself develops motor skills and physical co-ordination. Art Therapy increases communication skills and children and adolescents may communicate more closely with their family and with the health care team. Art Therapy may also assist the families in clarifying feelings and strengthening the relationship between the patient, the family, and the health care team. The paramount concern in using art expression as therapy is focusing on the psychosocial needs of children undergoing treatment, their siblings, and their family.

Creating art brings familiar and pleasurable materials into an unfamiliar and sometimes threatening environment. Any art intervention with a sick child or adolescent promotes healing as well as giving information. When children are not able to control either their medical condition or the interventions of others, art making gives them the experience of being able to take charge. They choose the paper, the image, the media, and the craft. Any active qualities of constructing, making, doing, cutting, arranging, molding, gluing, decorating, and so forth alleviates feelings of helplessness and lack of control. Art making requires that they become active participants in their health care. In making a picture about what has happened the child turns passivity into activity and masters an experience that would otherwise be too difficult to understand. Art activity allows children to gain a symbolic power over the trauma often through repeating the image.



Our foundation's logo was created by the art that Sabrina and Camillo created during their hospital stay. Sabrina created the smiling young girl and Camillo created the smiling happy face.



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Clown Therapy



Camillo smiling while being entertained by Dr Fifi and Dr. L'Air de Rien

- "The clowns bring laughter, give the children something to look forward to, relieve some of the boredom of hospital stays and help lighten the burden and relieve some of the tensions that can build up for the children and their families in hospital...The work the clowns do is not easy and they use their humour in a careful and sophisticated way to be both fun and a therapeutic tool."



- The benefits of clown doctoring show that regular visits from clown doctors have a positive impact on the recovery and rehabilitation of children in hospital. Laughter has been shown to be cathartic and uplifting, while the presence of clown doctors is found to be stimulating to children, raising their self-esteem and confidence.

- Clown doctors use creative methods of distraction, which can be of invaluable help to hospital staff, while they build relationships that support families and help children to cope with their experiences in hospital.



Massage Therapy

Massages help keep your mind and body functioning at an optimal level. More specifically, a massage can:

- Improve blood and lymph circulation
- Relieve muscle tension
- Improve and/or maintain flexibility
- Increase joint mobility and flexibility
- Encourage general relaxation
- Reduce the effects of stress
- Decrease anxiety
- Enhance immune system functioning
- Lessen pain

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Pet Therapy

Pet Therapy helps people feel better – emotionally and physically.

Emotionally

Animals help lift a child's mood. They give children something to focus on outside of themselves.

People who are sick, lonely, feeling down and even depressed will often respond to an animal offering genuine affection and unconditional love. Responses might include smiles, eye contact, physical touch (reaching out, petting and stroking), and communication.

Severely sick or depressed individuals may also show increased awareness, attention span and interest in the world around them.



Physically

Touching and interacting with animals can help lower a person's blood pressure and provide stress relief. People with pets also have longer life spans and suffer from less depression.



Music Therapy

Music Therapy is an established healthcare profession that uses music to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals of all ages. Music therapy improves the quality of life for persons who are well and meets the needs of children and adults with disabilities or illnesses.

Music therapy interventions can be designed to:

- Promote wellness
- Manage stress
- Alleviate pain
- Express feelings
- Enhance memory
- Improve communication
- Promote physical rehabilitation



Camillo participating and enjoying his session with the music therapist



Snoezelen Therapy

Snoezelen, derived from the Dutch words "to doze" and "to sniff", is a nonthreatening environment designed to give children with learning and developmental disabilities a multi-sensory experience. Sound, smell, lighting, vibration, and touch combine for the enjoyment of those who use the cart, away from the pressures of direct therapy and care. A Snoezelen cart provides an opportunity for these children to relax and play in their own way.

Therapeutic activities stimulate, soothe senses

Friday, May 14, 2004 - Sheri Fiegehen

It's a proven fact sensory stimulation has a direct effect on the brain. Taken step further, pleasant sights, scents, sounds, tastes and touches make us feel good – they have a therapeutic benefit.

The Snoezelen concept, developed in Holland in the 1960s, involves sensory-stimulating activities. The term originates from Dutch words meaning "to sniff" and "to doze." Snoezelen rooms are designed to gently stimulate the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell, through the use of special lighting, tactile surfaces, soothing music, and sometimes aromas.

Over the years, the Snoezelen concept has come to be regarded as a valuable tool in improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and other conditions.

At Leisureworld St. George, a portable Snoezelen cart has just been introduced to residents. The cart is taken from room to room, to residents who could most benefit from its therapeutic elements.

As Jennifer explains, the cart has a number of sensory-stimulating elements, such as a colour projection machine and a fragrance infuser.

Colours are projected on the wall, which catch the resident's eye. "They may be in a palliative state, or can't communicate as well. But they do react to the colours," notes Jennifer.

As for the fragrance infuser, the resident inhales different scents, such as cinnamon, lavender and pine. Also, music is played – calming music, such as nature sounds, adds Jennifer.

"The Snoezelen cart is designed to divert their attention and get the resident to a level of positive stimulation which creates an atmosphere of peace and tranquility," says Jeff. "The cart has proved to have worked wonders on some of the residents."

Snoezelen consists of pleasurable sensory experiences generated in an atmosphere of trust and relaxation. In a specifically developed sensory room or area, experiences can be arranged to stimulate the primary senses without the need for intellectual activity.

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Snoezelen was developed in the Netherlands with the intention of providing people, who have sensory and learning disabilities, with appropriate relaxation and leisure facilities. It originates from the belief that we all need stimulation. Thus, Lighthouse strongly believes that the special needs children that it serves can benefit greatly from Snoezelen.

Benefits are important. Communication and understanding between participants can be improved as the pressure to achieve is removed and trust develops. Children, who have perceptual difficulties, appear to gain pleasure from the visual, auditory and tactile experiences. The gentle stimulation has a soothing effect that helps relieve agitation.

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Dr.'s Message

Caring for a child with a serious and/or a chronic illness necessitates excellent medical care. Psychological, emotional and educational support, however, are also indispensable in order to manage the present and preserve the future of these sick children. We must enable them to overcome their ordeals and fight for their cures by offering each child the possibility of furthering his or her education in the hospital. Educational programs should also include individual psychological support as well as recreational and play activities in the hospital. In Quebec our medical system provides children with quality medical care but sorely lacks resources to assure their daily well being in the hospital. Thanks to foundations, we can offset this obvious shortfall in our health system and offer a little happiness every day to these children and their families. With the assistance offered by these associations, we are in a position to offer services adapted to the needs of children and their families (financial assistance, emotional support, socio-recreational activities...etc). It is impossible to separate one's emotional and physical well being. A healthy mind in a healthy body is a necessity for the present and a passport to the future.

Nada Jabado, MD PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics
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No parent wants his or her child to experience pain. But when that child is in the hospital, sometimes pain is inevitable. Our goal is to make a child's stay in the hospital more pleasant given their circumstances. Together we can empower seriously ill children and make a difference in their lives.