HEALING SPACES

Creating an Optimal Healing Environment in Our Homes

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DISCLOSURES

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Who am I?

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Learning Objectives

- Describe several aspects of an Optimal Healing Environment
- Describe the difference between cure and healing according to Sakallaris
- Describe several aspects of one's own personal healing space

What is an Optimal Healing Environment?

“The Samueli Institute coined the term Optimal Healing Environment (OHE) in 2004 to describe a healthcare system that is designed to stimulate and support the inherent healing capacity of patients, families, and their care providers. An OHE consists of people in relationships, their health-creating behaviors, and the surrounding physical environment” (Sakallaris et al., 2015).

An *Optimal Healing Environment* consists of:

- **People in relationships**
- **Health-creating behaviors**
- **Surrounding physical environment**

(Sakallaris et al., 2015)

“Several assumptions are foundational to the OHE framework. First, healing and cure are distinct but complementary processes. Cure is defined as the elimination of disease or disease symptoms in contrast to healing that can occur when cure is not possible” (Sakallaris et al., 2015).

- Cure - elimination of disease or disease symptoms
- Healing - can occur when cure is not possible

  (Sakallaris et al., 2015)

Chronic disease requires an approach in which healing is as important as curing. Where the focus is not just on countering illness but also on supporting health—fully integrating preventative care and self-care with the treatment of disease, illness and injury. That approach is called integrative health.

- Dr. Wayne Jonas, former Director of the Office of Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health. (Jonas, n.d.)

“The role of the healing environment is to reverse stress or harm and create a supportive space for healing to occur. Healing environments are not just aesthetically pleasing or pleasant spaces but support the engagement of its occupants internally, interpersonally, and behaviorally.” (Sakallaris et al., 2015).

Let’s Learn About Healing Environments

The world renowned Foldi Clinic in Germany is in:

- Downtown Berlin
- The Black Forest

The Institute of Applied Dermatology in India is in:

- Downtown Delhi
- The seaside town of Kasaragod

Where does Sandy Kermode go for a 2 km walk?

NATURE

Nature is a key component of healing environments. The ability to integrate nature through gardens or views to gardens has been shown to reduce stress and improve the cohesion of mind, body, and spirit. (Sakallaris et al., 2015).

John Muir saw this in the 19th and 20th centuries, writing in *Our National Parks*

> Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home. Wilderness is a necessity.

The concept that Nature can heal is present in other cultures too. Forest Bathing or Shinrin-yoku is popular in Japan.

(Muir, 1901)

Medical professionals noted the effect of nature on their patients in the 19th Century, too.

Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, wrote in her diary:

“I mention from experience, as quite perceptible in promoting recovery, the being able to see out of a window, instead of looking against a dead wall; the bright color of flowers, the being able to read in bed by the light of a window close to the bed-head. It is generally said that the effect is upon the mind. Perhaps so, but it is not less so upon the body on that account” (Anderson, 2010)

Nature was also used to promote healing in patients with chronic or incurable diseases. We see this in the design of facilities for tuberculosis patients.

Has anyone ever visited a tuberculosis sanatorium? I used to live in Upstate NY and the nearby Adirondacks were famous for their sanatoriums. The key to convalescing was sitting outside on the porch and breathing in pure air.

In her essay “Humanizing the hospital: Design lessons from a Finnish sanatorium” Diana Anderson, MD, M.Arch, a board-certified healthcare architect with the American College of Healthcare Architects (ACHA) writes:

“In the past, only modest attention was given to providing surroundings that calmed patients and addressed their emotional needs”

“Many design elements are no longer viewed as optional, but are now seen as fundamental requirements for health care facilities, such as the incorporation of nature and access to natural light.” (Anderson, 2010).

How can we bring this into our own home?

Answering this question has been a worthy challenge for many of my clients and people I meet online. Their homes are under construction, they move often, relationships with neighbors and roommates are challenging, their space is not peaceful.

- **The Reality:** Cultural Factors can Make it Difficult to Create a Healing Space

  And

- **Efficacy vs effectiveness** – what works in controlled environment versus in real life

In his book **How Healing Works: Get Well and Stay Well Using Your Hidden Power to Heal**, Dr. Wayne Jonas observes:

"Seventy percent of chronic disease can be prevented or treated with a healthy lifestyle - by not smoking, consuming minimal alcohol, maintaining an improved diet, exercising and minimizing stress… less than 5% of people engage in these top-five health behaviors" (Jonas, 2018 p. 113).

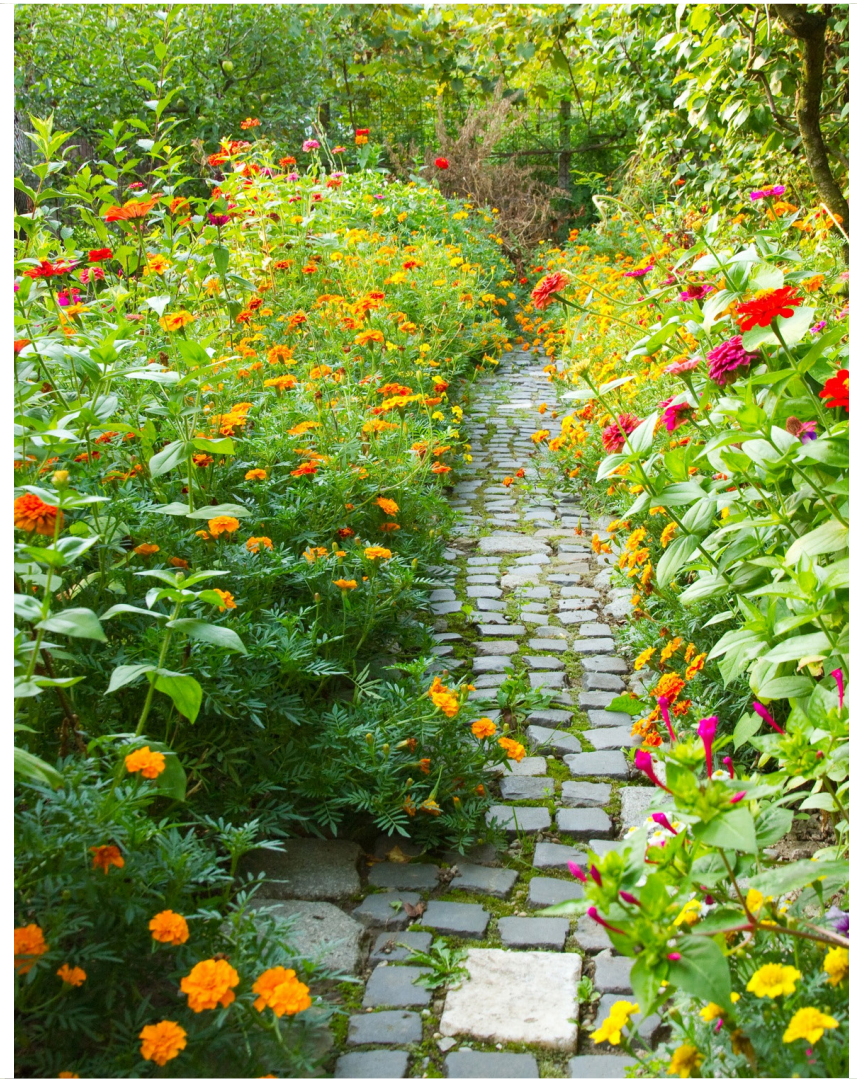
"Behavioral change is difficult for us, not because we are "weak," but because we are unaware of how our environments and experiences - the health care system, our culture, our past personal history, and the media - are influencing us" (Jonas, 2018 p. 119).

How do our homes either encourage or discourage self-care?

When you return home, visit your space like a newcomer.
Does your home engage you “internally, interpersonally, and behaviorally?”

Spend time in each room - what is the energy and “presence” in each space.
Identify the energy that radiates - what does your intuition tell you? Where are you most comfortable in your home?

What does a Healing Space Look Like?



“A healing space may first be considered or defined by its ambient qualities including light quality, sounds, air quality, and temperature. The physical environment can cause or mitigate stress. Healing spaces evoke feelings of serenity and calm and decrease the stress of a chaotic environment”

(Sakallaris et al., 2015).

I learned in my Spa and Wellness Management classes at UC Irvine to use the 5 senses in designing treatments and spa environments

- **Sight**
- **Sound**
- **Smell**
- **Taste**
- **Touch**

Let’s close our eyes and imagine a healing space
Healing space can be outside or inside - indoor plants or a garden

The role of a healing environment is to “reverse stress or harm and create a supportive space for healing” (Sakallaris et al., 2015)

- What do you see? What colors are present? What is the light like? Are there mementos or photos of loved ones? Are there any sacred objects? Is there anything funny or silly? Is there a pet or loved one nearby?
- What do you hear? Sounds of nature? Music? A fountain?
- What do you smell? Nature? A candle or diffuser?
- What can you taste?
- What can you touch? How does it feel? A blanket, a silk pillowcase? A memento? A furry loved one?

Let's listen to Maria Laney Laube Hoover's explanation of her healing space.

"The buoyant lightness and the warmth of the water...not too hot, not cool. No weight, no judgment! Just perfect!"

"We play music that makes me move to the beat in ways I don't even mentally consider! The blue lights in the water have to be on to remind me of the striking blue Hawaii waters I once enjoyed snorkeling in. Can't be red or green or white, only blue!"

“My husband works out with weights so we have the music blaring for both of us.”

“A window is beside the pool where I can watch the hawks floating over the ponderosa pines on the hill above my house and see the wind rustling the trees, or admire the luscious green weeds in the summer the flowing yellow flowers in the fall and, particularly, love to watch the snow come down in the winter!”

“Our dogs are either with us, nagging my husband to play with a toy in between sets or our pup races outside to chase the crows before coming in to bug him again!”

“Or we open the car door and she will chew her bone inside, patiently. Really, for those 2 hours, there is little thought of the world’s crises, allowing me to be only in the moment!”

CONCLUSION

We have learned:

An Optimal Healing Environment consists of:

- People in relationships
- Health-creating behaviors
- Surrounding physical environment

- A Cure is the elimination of disease or disease symptoms

AND

- Healing can occur when cure is not possible

We imagined our own healing space. A place that could “reverse stress or harm and create a supportive space for healing”

In his book ***How Healing Works: Get Well and Stay Well Using Your Hidden Power to Heal***, Dr. Wayne Jonas shared the story of a woman with a chronic illness who decided to take action and spend time in the mountains to convalesce from her illness:

“When she returned home, she found that taking care of herself emotionally, physically and spiritually was no longer an annoying chore, but a privilege - no, a necessity - for her life” (Jonas, 2018, p. 105)

Resources:

Anderson D. (2010). Humanizing the hospital: design lessons from a Finnish sanatorium. CMAJ : Canadian Medical Association journal = journal de l'Association medicale canadienne, 182(11), E535–E537. doi:10.1503/cmaj.090075 Retrieved from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2917967/pdf/182e535.pdf

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Sakallaris, B. R., MacAllister, L., Voss, M., Smith, K., & Jonas, W. B. (2015). Optimal healing environments. Global advances in health and medicine, 4(3), 40–45. doi:10.7453/gahmj.2015.043 Retrieved from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4424933/pdf/gahmj.2015.043.pdf

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THANK YOU