Fun Along the Road to Recovery

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Lengthy sick bed confinements can mean hours of boredom. When the hours drag on tediously, the mind and emotions do things which doctors agree may hinder convalescence. Anyone caring for the sick knows that enforced idleness can make the patient restless, irritable, and unreasonable. And sometimes, even after the patient recovers, this attitude continues with lasting effect.

An Experiment Tried

Recently the Women’s Auxiliary for the Brookings Hospital and Convalescent Home realized a need to provide patients with ways to use enforced idle time happily and creatively. An auxiliary member headed a newly-formed recreation committee. She hand picked members and solicited assistance from the extension recreation specialist.

In early meetings, members pooled ideas about fun for the sick. The committee clarified its purpose and established a program. Here are some of the things it decided:

- The committee’s main job was to study, plan and evaluate a program; to pool ideas, and to select and train helpers for special tasks.
- To ask interested individuals and groups (such as 4-H, Home Demonstration Clubs, American Legion Auxiliary, etc.) to make “cheer-the-sick kits.”
- That plans and voluntary personnel be approved by the hospital superintendent and/or convalescent home.
- That contact personnel be carefully selected. All willing to help are not always qualified for...
contact work. And even contact people were not to visit with patients, it was agreed, since it could produce a tiring and disturbing effect. Most volunteers, however, could do significant tasks.

That all materials made and donated would be distributed through the committee.

The Fun-For-All Kit

The committee decided on 10, inexpensive ideas for a fun-for-all kit and each member made a manila folder kit containing the following items:

1. **Surprise Balls.** Materials include a hollow cardboard tube, crepe paper in inch and a half-wide strips, and 10 inexpensive surprises like a bell, key ring, small compass, charm bracelet, barette, etc. Wind crepe paper around the surprises, forming a round ball four inches in diameter. Tape end of last strip to the ball and paint or draw a face. Add a gay hat.

2. **Quickies.** These are short stories stapled to a sheet of construction paper.

3. **Cheerios.** Place cards set on the meal tray. They may contain a happy verse, thought, picture, button face or a cloth figure.

4. **Visitor's Record.** A folded card entitled “Guests Who Called.” The patient can record guests and gifts received, providing him a record for later thank you notes.

5. **Cartoon Cheerios.** A paper folder or pocket containing apt cartoons clipped from popular magazines.

6. **A Note Today.** A paper folder containing four envelopes and writing paper.

7. **Funny Mix-Up.** Two comic strips cut into individual pictures and mixed. Place in attractive folder.

8. **Pillow Fantasy.** A paper corsage, pin, bell, etc., which can be fastened to the patient's pillow.

9. **Crossword Puzzle.** A puzzle mounted on paper with answers pasted on the back.

10. **Daily Fun.** A decorated box containing attractively - wrapped gifts for each day of the week. Box label indicates age and sex of recipient. Indicated on each gift is the day and a greeting, verse or thought. Gift wrapping is saved, pressed and used for this. Here is a typical fun box for a girl, 8 to 11: Monday, note paper; Tuesday, paper dolls, pencil, notebook, puzzle; Wednesday, love birds (flower vase which pins to pillow); Thursday, barrel puzzle; Friday, key charm puzzle, and Saturday, bubble bath.

**Cheerio Parties**

To share the work, the committee decided each member should invite three neighbors in for a “cheerio” party. The workers would make four kits and discuss the committee program while strengthening neighborly ties. Each of the three new members would invite three others in for similar parties. Materials made would be classified and distributed by the original committee.
Services to the Sick

When a patient is first hospitalized or when he becomes well enough to show interest, the nurse places a mimeographed brochure on the food tray which tells about the services offered.

“We bring cheer,” it says, “through care of flowers, reading material, recreational activities, inspiring music, writing letters, shopping for you, and just visiting a little.”

Kits, books and magazines are nicely arranged on hospital tray carts and wheeled into various rooms. Each sick person is invited to choose items he wants from the “fun-for-all kit.” If a patient requests a reader (story teller for children) through a nurse, aide or doctor, a committee-designated volunteer responds. Volunteers also help with letter writing and shopping.

Twice a week flower committee members exchange flowers. Other volunteers arrange for rides in the country for convalescent home residents. The committee has also placed books, games and toys in the hospital waiting room. To date, these have been well used by visitors. The committee hopes to get a portable phonograph and selection of classical records for the use of individual patients.

Favorable reaction to this beginning effort has already been noted. The committee plans to expand this experiment in the hospital and convalescent home to include handicapped, sick and shut-ins in private homes of Brookings.

The Patient at Home

The many illnesses not requiring hospitalization usually means added responsibility to some member of the family and upsets the home routine for everyone. This holds true also for recent hospital patients at home. It’s difficult to outline a sure-fire, helpful system. But little thoughtful things can help make a complaining patient contented, and help ease possible tensions for others. Sickness in the home, in fact, can present an opportunity for all the family to discover the “advantage within the disadvantage,” as Booker T. Washington described it.

A Pleasant Sick Room

Where the patient should rest depends on many factors. The room should be brightly painted or papered in cheerful colors, easily ventilated, and easily closed off for quiet apartness and rest. It should be easily accessible so those attending can manage other household duties with fewer steps.

Furniture arrangement in the sick room is important. Chairs should be placed so the patient can see visitors without twisting his head or looking into bright background light. Bedside tables or a headboard area for reading matter, radio and personal items should be within easy reach of the patient.

Musical chimes or a bell provides a sense of security and means of communication for the patient. It can mean convenience for the attendant also.
Paper waste bags pinned to the mattress can be valuable for bedridden patients. The bags can be easily changed and destroyed.

A screen offers many services, also. It can provide privacy, shut off unwanted light and be shifted to vary the looks of the room. It can also serve as a bulletin board for pictures, get-well cards, schedules and other information.

An adequate reading light, and a table or floor lamp for soft, indirect lighting are usually essential.

How about a private mail box so the patient can “go” for his own mail by simply reaching for it? He could mail letters there, too. A child’s mail could “arrive” at different times to space out the pleasure. Family members could add to this pleasure by “mailing” occasional notes.

Comfort in bed is important for lying down and sitting up alike. A make-shift device can mean patient comfort for eating, reading, television viewing and receiving visitors. Place a kitchen chair upside down on the springs and beneath the mattress for a good support. A blanket and sheet support can be made from one or two pillows at the end of the bed. A box behind the pillow provides a foot brace and prevents sliding and extra leg tension. Two straight chairs backed up on either side of the bed and a table leaf can provide a convenient bed table. A coat hanger can make into a book holder (bend bottom to support book and twist hook so it can be hung over a tilted bed tray or table).

Personal appearance of the mending patient soon becomes important. A girl’s or woman’s spirit improves with a hair brushing, addition of a bow or ribbon, a dash of color and touch of perfume, and a corsage of flower pinned to the pillow. A man’s outlook can change too, with a shave and hair combing. The attendant likewise should appear well-groomed at all times.

**Callers and Visitors**

When the patient is able to receive callers, the attendant should tactfully control things as to time and subject. Many well meaning callers can sometimes make the patient uneasy with a tense or nervous style of talking. Talks of visitor’s illnesses should be taboo. Past relationships of patient and visitor may make a delay or short visit advisable. Most people not used to the visitor’s roll tend to talk too much and stay too long. Often times a pre-arranged signal can tell the attendant when the patient tires, thus avoiding possible discomforting situations. Calls regarding business matters and civic duties should be kept to a minimum. The attendant should drop in occasionally during the visit.

Care should be taken to avoid telephone conversations within the patient’s hearing about his illness or other possible upsetting topics.

**Serving the Food**

The number of dishes an invalid may eat is often limited. This affects the manner of serving. Not until we are sick ourselves can we ap-
precipitate the value of appetizing food prepared and served attractively. A tray favor or flower, an unusual doily or cloth, and the prettiest dishes can show that someone cares. It helps make mealtime a time of anticipation, despite a subpar appetite. Occasionally a member of the family can dine with the patient, helping to raise his spirit.

When Recovery Is Longer

When the convalescent period is short, the sickness itself usually provides enough attention and service; anticipation of getting well can help prevent discontent and boredom. But the patient confined for long periods needs activities and diversions as a help mate. These activities should be planned to fit the patient's age, intelligence, interest and needs. A low cost picture book and colors, paints and brush, stamp album, scrapbook, phonograph record, knickknack or materials that cost nothing at all might introduce a new, exciting world. Many an author, musician, craftsman, artist or hobbyist traces his start to a sickroom-developed talent. Before planning activities, seek the doctor's advice. Watch for signs of fatigue or waning interest during activity periods. Danger can exist in overdoing.

Space here limits the listing of all activities for the sick which should be considered. However, a wealth of materials and ideas are available at little cost and effort. Your library or favorite magazine or book store offers numerous "how-to-do-it" materials. Dime stores and hobby shops display a wide variety of games, puzzles and craft kits. Television demonstrations can be stimulating to the patient in his long road to recovery. One can never estimate the worth of recreation for the patient until one sees it work. It deserves consideration, investment, trying and sharing with the sick.

Watching Time

Feeding Station for Birds. Even a small platform outside the window will attract birds if bird seed, crumbs, peanut butter or a suet pudding is placed upon it. Remember: they need fine gravel during winter. When the patient gets interested and strong enough, he may want to build his own platform and follow recipes that attract certain birds. A book on birds and their habits may encourage this.

Fish Aquarium. A gallon jar and some dime store fish may grow into a hobby of fish collecting.

Indoor Garden. A few seeds in dirt-filled eggshells or a bean planted at the side of a jar so growth can be observed may lead to a window box gardening hobby. Only two inches of rich dirt in a shallow crate will make a seed bed for flowers or small vegetables. Placed in a sunny window, the "garden" will soon keep the patient busy. Seeds, however, will eventually have to be transplanted, cultivated and weeded. Many books offer information on this avocation.
Other Activities. Parakeets, window watching (when school is out), a colored slide show of travels or even movies could stimulate the recovering patient.

Listening Time

Story Hour. Story telling is fast becoming a lost art. Yet, what child isn’t entranced by a real story teller? If family members can’t do it, many records are available. And don’t forget regular reading periods from books—they will be remembered as one of the bright spots during illness.

Musical Therapy. Music is one of the important ways a child identifies himself with the world about him. A sixth grade girl puts it this way: “If you love something, you sing about it. I also like the way it sounds. It’s like a picture except you hear the beauty instead of seeing it.” Music definitely helped production in wartime defense plants. Today, classical and semi-classical “mood” record sales are high. So are children’s records. Studies are being made to measure the effect of different kinds of music as a treatment aid for the sick.

Beautiful tone, as captured on many records, has magic in it for a sick person and especially for children. However, a good recording can lose its touch on a mediocre phonograph. It is important to consider this.

Records inviting participation by children are available. Others are indirect, motivating him to listen more intently for music in sounds of his environment. Other records will make a child want to play percussion instruments. A sick child might be surprised that the “William Tell Overture” is longer than what he hears on “The Lone Ranger.” The story of Dukas’ “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” can be made more interesting as music on record. Music appreciation could easily lead to interests in making whistles, shepherd’s pipes, tom-toms, etc., or even to song composition.

For adults and children alike, there are several long-play record clubs which provide excellent recordings and booklets about composers, compositions and other interesting musical facts.
What to Collect

Baseball player cards  Dolls  Salt and pepper shakers
Book matches  First editions  Scrapbooks
Buttons  Flowers in wax  Shells
Cigar bands  Glassware  Stamps
Coffee spoons  Insects  Stones
Coins  Postmarks

Games to Play

Adi board  Chinese friends  Monopoly
Anagrams  Cribbage  Parshesi
Cards  Cubes  Puzzles
Checkers  Dominoes  Riddles
Chess  Five in a row  Scrabble
Chinese checkers  Korean yoot

Some Things to Make

Airplane models  Fly tying  Sculpture
Basketry  Bead and buckskin  Shellcraft
Block printing  Homemade games  Silk screening
Book binding  Jewelry  Spatter painting
Candle making  Kaleidoscope  Stenciling
Ceramics  Knitting  Stone polishing
Christmas ornaments  Leather  Textile painting
Coat hanger craft  Mask making  Tin can craft
Crotcheting  Match craft  Toys
Dek-all  Mobiles  Wax flowers
Doll making  Papercraft  Weaving
Drawing  Pheasant craft  Wood burning
Driftwood  Pipe cleaner figure  Wood, soap, soft stone,
Embroidery  Plastics  chip carving
Etching  Puppets  Wood painting
Finger painting  Rug weaving  Wood working

Other Suggested Activities

Astronomy  Indoor photography  Pen pals
Cloud study  Knot tying  Sign language
Code  Magic  Finger string weaving