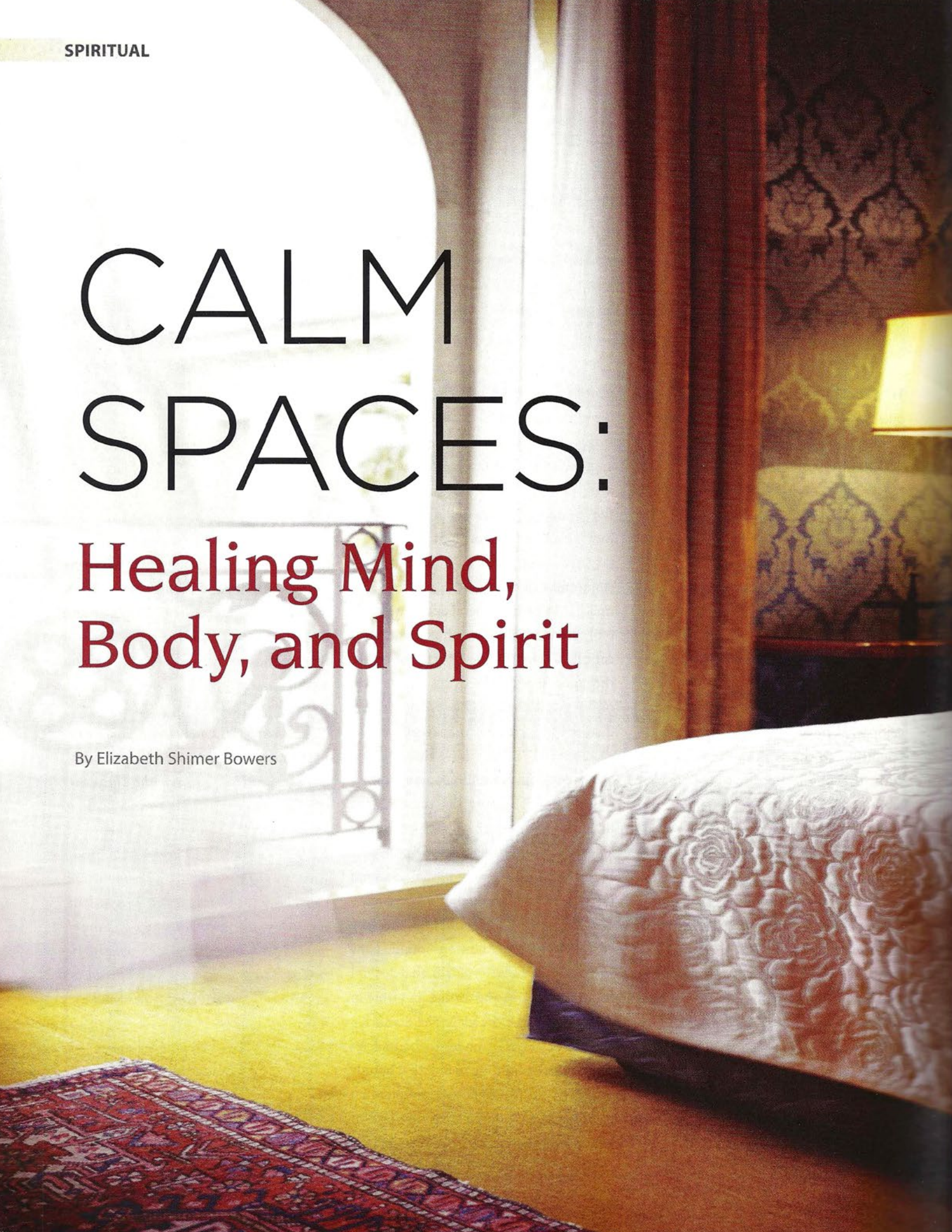


SPIRITUAL

CALM SPACES:

Healing Mind, Body, and Spirit

By Elizabeth Shimer Bowers



In the midst of the clinical hustle and bustle of tests and treatments, cancer patients and their loved ones need an escape. And while a trip to a tropical island may not be feasible, patients and their caregivers can create everyday surroundings that feel like a personal retreat.

"It's important for patients to nurture their mind, body, and spirit," says oncology nurse Sharon Overath, RN, OCN, who works at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Hurst-Euless-Bedford. "Escaping for a few moments can be as important as the next round of chemotherapy."

Whether it is a hospital room, an office space, or a bedroom, the more pleasant and tranquil the environment, the more positive the impact on physical and emotional health.

Using Good "Scents"

A nurturing, calm space will appeal to multiple senses—hearing, smell, and sight.

Overath, who is also a certified aromatherapist, knows well the power of the senses. As a baseline, she recommends designating a space that allows for adequate quiet time. For example, she says that at the hospital where she works, there is one hour of quiet time set aside each day, which provides patients important respite. "We have one hour

each day when there are no tests, and no one comes into a patient's room; this silence is important for helping a patient regroup," she says.

In addition to sufficient quiet time to encourage reflection, Overath says, patients can benefit from musical sounds. Obviously highly individual, these could include a patient's favorite music, wind chimes placed outside the window, recorded prayer or chanting, or any other sounds that enhance the environment. Even if it is just humming, melody and tone are conducive to healing and a happy mood.

And because smell can also play a powerful role in making a space conducive to rest and reflection, Overath recommends that patients seek to incorporate essences into their space that will help them open up and focus on positive things in their lives. Specific scents have been shown to elicit different emotional responses, and patients can benefit from incorporating those that can promote calm and general well-being.

For example, Overath says, "Lavender is a universal scent; most people like it and find it relaxing." She also recommends sandalwood for patients who want something spicy and intriguing, or rosemary, which is great for memory. "I also love frankincense," she adds. "It is called 'the opener' because it helps people open up

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HEALING AND HARMONY



Designer Debra Duneier offers the following feng shui-inspired tips to create a space that will inspire healing and harmony:

- **Pamper yourself with things you love.** Scented candles, soothing music, incense—items that touch your five senses will constantly remind you of all the wonderful things life has to offer. In doing this you will feel supported and calm.
- **Put your bed in the power position.** For good *qi*, or energy in the room, you should place your bed with a solid wall behind it, in full view of the door. You should be able to see the door but not be in line with it. Across from the bed, place an appealing visual. It can be a painting of a beach scene or a photograph of a street in Venice—whatever represents your vision of an ideal future.
- **Let light shine.** Natural light is a mood elevator, so if you must be indoors, maximize the sun. If possible, use solar shades so you can control both the heat and the amount of light. If natural light isn't feasible, use full-spectrum light bulbs, which will duplicate sunlight as closely as possible.
- **Create a water flow.** In feng shui water fountains bring abundance in one's life in terms of wealth, friendship, and health. And the pushing up of that water represents life. Some people also find the sound of moving water soothing.
- **Surround yourself with living things.** Green plants, pets, or fish in a bowl or tank are all fantastic for healing.

and talk and diffuses unresolved issues.”

Incorporating scents into your space is easy: simply place a cotton ball in a cup soaked in your chosen essential oil. “You can also get an inexpensive diffuser for about \$30 that disperses scented mist,” says Overath. “Or you can use an oil diffuser: put a few drops of true essential oil into unscented oil, then place the mixture in a small cup on top of a tea candle; that will diffuse the scent into a room.”

Visualizing Good Health

Equally important to what you hear and smell in an environment is what you see.

A first step in creating a space that is visually pleasing and allows you to relax and reflect is to step back and really observe your chosen space objectively. “To start, assess a room as if you were a decorator,” says Nashville-based interior decorator Deborah Burnett. “Stand in the doorway of the space you claim as your sanctuary and use a camera to take a series of panoramic pictures of the room. Then print the photos out, place them in order from left to right, and examine them,” she says. “Look at the room with fresh eyes, and you will notice things you never saw before—dangling cords, messy

shelves, and shoes under chairs. These are things your body will unconsciously recognize as uncomfortable. After you take care of the disarray, you can begin perfecting the space where you plan to heal.”

A time-tested way to help balance and calm the energies in a space is with the ancient Chinese art and science of feng shui. Developed more than 3,000 years ago, feng shui demonstrates how to balance the energies in a given space to ensure the good health and fortune of those who inhabit it. New York City interior designer Debra Duneier uses a

HEALING FROM THE GROUND UP

Cancer centers around the country are transforming a once-cold, impersonal hospital atmosphere into a tranquil environment that heals the spirit as well as the body. Some cancer centers have gotten a face-lift; others are being built from the ground up using cutting-edge architecture or have incorporated healing gardens. Here are a few examples:



The Children's Hospital and Health Center, San Diego

unique combination of feng shui, environmental psychology, and green principles—a system she calls “EcoChi”—to help create healing spaces.

One of the most important visual elements in a space, Duneier says, is color: “Colors affect healing and the overall state of mind.” The most soothing colors duplicate those in nature. “Soft blues, greens, and beige tones create the image of a pale blue sky or a new plant in the spring; they are earthy and grounding. And soft pinks, peaches, and lavenders have a relaxing effect as well.”

Other key considerations in creating a visually pleasing and positive space include light, furniture placement, natural elements (such as water and plants), and favorite objects that elicit a positive emotional response. (For tips see “Healing and Harmony.”)

“Overall, it is important to remember how the *qi*, or energy in your body, vibrates like a transmitter and attracts the same kind of energy that surrounds it,” Duneier says. By creating a calm space, you can foster a more calm, centered spirit. **CFThrive**

- Each of the five regional Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA) facilities has been built and decorated with patients' emotional and physical well-being in mind. The overall goal, says Mike White, senior vice president of major construction at CTCA, is to create a home away from home for patients and their families. “Many of our patients have had a hopeless journey, in search of a place where they are welcomed with comfort, hope, and the care they so desperately need,” White says. “For them we cannot be just another facility. Our home must nurture the spirit. The form and the function of the physical buildings must support recovery of the body, vitality of the mind, and tranquility of the spirit.”

To that end, CTCA strives to ensure that everything—from the outside appearance of the buildings to treatment areas, corridors, and patient rooms—mimics a homelike atmosphere. Care is taken to incorporate colors, shapes, lighting, textures, materials, and signage that promote warmth and healing. Specific core requirements of each hospital's design are mandated to achieve this goal, including solid wood trim, uplifting art, combined direct and indirect light and non-institutional lighting fixtures, carpets that soften the look of corridors, and the use of natural elements like interior gardens, reflecting pools, and aquariums.

- The John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey features a 155,000-square-foot comprehensive cancer facility that includes a 30-by-60-foot Living Wall with a 30-foot waterfall; a flock of 200 hand-blown Murano glass birds that soar through the lobby; and color palettes for the walls, floors, and furniture that soothe and welcome.
- Mass General/North Shore Cancer Center in Danvers, Massachusetts, provides a healing garden with paved paths, benches, a water fountain, and a trellis with climbing flowers and willow trees.
- The Children's Hospital and Health Center in San Diego, California, features a whimsical healing garden with a 20-foot-tall by 40-foot-long steel-frame dinosaur named Sam, who is covered with small white lights that transform him into a huge comforting night light when the sun goes down.