

Fostering Warmth

ELIZABETH SUSTICK, RN

Whenever we feel vulnerable and stressed, warmth can support us in our need to meet life's challenges of continual growth and transformation. Contemporary research demonstrates that strong warmth processes allow us to feel comfortable and capable in our body and in our environment; warmth nourishes our relationship with ourselves and with others.

Hot Water Bottles

There are many holistic approaches to support physical and emotional warmth. In anthroposophic nursing we often begin with the application of a hot water bottle. If you have not yet experienced the comfort of this simple technique, please try it. You will be delighted by the comfort it imparts! It will warm a bed, socks, hands, feet, tummies, chests, backs, and comfort when chilled or feeling unwell. Invest in a good quality hot water bottle, and make or purchase a good quality cover for it. Resources for these and other homecare items are available online at home-care-supplies.com.

PROCEDURE

- Fill the bottle only 1/3 to 1/2 full.
- Use hot water and add some boiling water if needed until the bottle feels warm to touch.
- Expel all the air; leave only water in the bottle. (lay the bottle on a flat surface until the water reaches the top)
- Tightly screw the cap and check that it doesn't leak.
- Always cover the bottle before applying to the body, or else cover the area to be treated with a protective layer.

Footbaths

Footbaths are another gentle approach to engendering warmth. Footbaths cultivate comfort and calming relaxation, nurturing the whole person and relieving symptoms related to imbalance. Contemporary research demonstrates that footbaths positively impact the autonomic nervous and immune systems.

PROCEDURE

- Choose or create a space that is purposefully quiet, uncluttered and simple.
- Choose a comfortable chair, and assemble a warm blanket, clean wool socks warmed on a hot water bottle, a kettle with warm water, soothing oil to apply to feet following the footbath, bath rug for floor, and towel to dry feet.
- Plain water can be used, or enhance the therapeutic experience with the addition of



“ WARMTH NOURISHES OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH OURSELVES
AND WITH OTHERS.



essential oil, bath oil, herbal tea, or pressed lemon.

- Water should be comfortably warm (98F/36.7C) and adjusted to individual need and to duration of treatment.
- Suggested duration: 20 minutes, but check water temperature after 10 minutes, and add more warm water if needed.
- Foot basin needs to be one that is dedicated for footbath use, wide and deep enough to submerge feet comfortably. (In more therapeutic interventions it is preferable to have a basin with depth to mid-calf, or even higher, to back of knees). Practically, a plastic bucket, dish basin, or plastic garden tray (convenient for its handles and ease of carrying) can be employed.
- Enliven the water: with a relaxed hand and quiet mind, gently move with water in round circling or lemniscates.
- Wrap yourself in blanket, even your head if you wish, and begin your footbath. If you experience any discomfort with the whole body wrap, use blanket from diaphragm down.
- Keep quiet during the footbath and unengaged with external stimulation.
- After 20 minutes, gently pat dry.
- Apply a body oil or cream with a light relaxed hand to nourish the tissue, and put on warmed socks.
- Afterward, rest quietly for as long as the duration of the actual footbath. Honor this rest time; it's a potent part of the whole experience of engendering warmth and peacefulness.

A few commonly used substances for footbaths in home care:

- **Lavender** is calming, relaxing, warming, and promotes sleep.
- **Rosemary** is stimulating to the circulation, bringing more wakefulness, and is warming.
- **Lemon** lifts the mood, counteracts fatigue, refreshes.

Many other options are available, but be sure they are good quality, from sources like the Hauschka, True Botanica, Uriel, or Weleda companies.

The giving and receiving of footbath therapy, mediated by the warmth process, is an encompassing therapeutic experience that supports and allows for balance.

May the use of footbaths and the hot water bottle (HWB) enhance your sense of well-being! 

anthroposophic nursing

Anthroposophic Nursing in North America: Anthroposophic nurses are professionals committed to empowering individuals to activate the restorative and balancing activity of their own innate healing forces. Anthroposophic nurses are carefully trained in techniques of external applications and rhythmical *einreibung* (gentle rhythmical application of healing substance). Our trainings are certified by the International Forum of Anthroposophic Nursing (IFAN) in cooperation with the Medical Section at the Goetheanum, Switzerland.

If you are interested in an approach to nursing that addresses the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of healing work, please send us an email at naanatraining@gmail.com. We would be delighted to talk with you. Visit our website at anthroposophicnursing.org.

Elizabeth Sustick, RN, is an Anthroposophic Nurse Specialist, board member of the North American Anthroposophic Nurses Association (NAANA), Association of Anthroposophic Medicine and Therapies (AAMTA) and the International Council of Anthroposophic Nurses Associations (ICANA).