

SNOEZELEN®

Welcome to the fascinating, captivating, intriguing, and absolutely sense-sational SNOEZELEN! This highly acclaimed multisensory approach is truly influencing the world's view on how we care for special populations.

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What is SNOEZELEN?

The SNOEZELEN environment is safe and non-threatening. Children and adults with disabilities or other limiting conditions enjoy gentle stimulation of the primary senses. There is no need for intellectual reasoning. Participants experience self-control, autonomous discovery, and exploration-achievements that overcome inhibitions, enhance self-esteem, and reduce tension. Free from the expectations of others and away from the pressures of directed care, they recuperate and relax.

Research has shown that multisensory environments offer a wealth of benefits, often affording the participant and caregiver an opportunity to improve communications, enhance their understanding of each other, and build trust in their relationship. SNOEZELEN is a wonderful experience to enjoy and share-a place that replenishes the spirit.

The Philosophy & History of SNOEZELEN

SNOEZELEN Philosophy

Twenty years ago, the Snoezelen approach was a radical departure from traditional therapeutic activities. As noted by Jan Hulsegge and Ad Verheul in their landmark publication, Snoezelen: Another World, "We do not wish to give development and therapy a central focus within Snoezelen. It is fully open. We do not declare aims beforehand." Their idea of a non-directive approach was central to their original philosophy of Snoezelen. They reasoned that they could see their clients as they really were, free to make their own choices. If their clients entered the room 'blank,' every possibility would be open for them.

Free from the pressures to perform or achieve...liberated from control and routine...detached from medical diagnosis and known limitations, clients could react and respond to this new sensory world in their own special way. Louise Haggard and Roger Hutchinson described this philosophy further in their 1991 paper on Whittington Hall. The authors defined it as 'the enabling approach,' a sensitive, caring, non-directive approach in which an atmosphere of safety and security is created and free choice encouraged.

What's more, enablers are expected to share common positive emotional experiences with users while involved in activities together. There is no formal focus on therapeutic outcome. Rather, the focus is to assist users to gain the maximum pleasure from the activity in which they and the enabler are involved.

Today, we can review this philosophy in the light of two decades of expanding SNOEZELEN use in different facilities throughout the world. A recent review of research found positive outcomes in many carefully conducted studies. Considered alongside the vast amount of anecdotal information describing changes that have occurred in SNOEZELEN environments, or as a result of SNOEZELEN use, it appears that Hulsegge and Verheul were right in their expectation that clients would respond positively in a unique sensory environment.

Published reports document numerous accounts of clients who stopped self-abusive behavior, of people who have seen, spoken, or smiled for the first time in years-or ever, and of those who showed unusual peace, happiness, and contentment. These results have moved SNOEZELEN towards a more assured position in the hierarchy of educational and therapeutic approaches. SNOEZELEN is now regarded in philosophy and concept as a resource to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and other limiting conditions.

SNOEZELEN can be used to stimulate, relax, calm, or energize. It can be staged to provide a multi-sensory experience or single sensory focus, simply by adapting the lighting, atmosphere, sounds, and textures to the specific needs of the client at the time of use. Unique in its fascination and united by its caring philosophy, SNOEZELEN transcends population, professional, and geographic boundaries with its extraordinary flexibility, wide application, and positive outcomes.

SNOEZELEN History

The concept of Snoezelen was defined in the late 1970's by two Dutch therapists, Jan Hulsegge and Ad Verheul. While working at the De Hartenberg Institute in Holland, a center for people with intellectual disabilities, the two therapists learned of the positive responses a colleague was able to elicit from his severely challenged clients while exposed to a sensory environment he had assembled. Hulsegge and Verheul set up an experimental sensory tent at their annual summer fair to further test the idea.

Constructed simply as a roof on poles with plastic sheeting dividers, this first sensory tent was filled with simple effects such as a fan blowing shards of paper, ink mixed with water and projected onto a screen, musical instruments, tactile objects, scent bottles, soaps, and flavorful foods. It was a tremendous success, especially with low-functioning clients who demonstrated positive verbal and nonverbal feedback.

The following summer, Hulsegge and Verheul built another creation within the center. They also gave the concept a name: the word "Snoezelen", a contraction of the Dutch verbs "snuffelen" (to seek out or explore) and "doezelen" (to relax). News of the successful experiments at De Hartenberg quickly generated interest across Europe. Impressed by what they saw in Holland, many therapists began creating permanent and semi-permanent "Snoezelen" rooms at their centers.

During this time, the selection of commercially available products for use in Snoezelen was limited and mostly adapted from other purposes. This changed when ROMPA International, a company based in the U.K., created a full range of products specifically designed to interact with clients and elicit sensory response. Since then, SNOEZELEN continues to grow in sophistication, using state-of-the art technology to provide wonderful, intriguing spaces with lights, sound, aroma, tactile surfaces, moving images, and other sensory experiences.

Another landmark SNOEZELEN environment was installed in 1987 at Whittington Hall, a large institution for adults with intellectual disabilities located in North Derbyshire, U.K. Joe Kewin, a senior manager, and his team had become keenly interested in the experiences of the Dutch. After an intensive fund-raising effort that secured a major U.S. \$200,000 grant from Rotary International, Kewin and his team worked with ROMPA to design a multi-faceted SNOEZELEN center at their facility. Whittington Hall became the premier SNOEZELEN installation in the U.K., offering six completely different sensory environments to their clients. Kewin and his team also pioneered the early research examining client response to the SNOEZELEN multisensory approach. The results of that early work were impressive, most specifically in clients who showed a marked reduction in self-abusive behaviors.

SNOEZELEN is now used widely in education and care settings for children with disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. Encouraging results have also been shown with the elderly suffering from dementia such as Alzheimer's, for people with mental illness, as well as for those in chronic pain, with challenging behaviors, acquired brain injury, and other conditions. In addition, SNOEZELEN is gaining momentum in the mainstream population as an antidote to stress.

Over the past fifteen years, SNOEZELEN has grown into a worldwide movement in over 30 countries with thousands of installations, a worldwide foundation, national and international conferences, and international research projects. SNOEZELEN has already built an impressive and credible history. However, we are still at the beginning of exploring applications for this extraordinary and successful concept and, of understanding the responses of people with disabilities and other limiting conditions to these stimulating and fascinating sensory environments.

SNOEZELEN in Sample Settings

SNOEZELEN is making a real, tangible difference in the quality of life of people with disabilities and other limiting conditions in schools, nursing homes, day programs, hospices, mental-health centers, and many other facilities. And, SNOEZELEN transcends age ranges and abilities to offer therapy professionals and caregivers the chance to discover how specially tailored, population-specific multisensory experiences can benefit individual clients. Whether used for therapeutic gain, motivation, encouragement, pain reduction, anger management, stress relief, or simply for recreational pleasure and relaxation, research validates that the absorbing environment created by SNOEZELEN can effect positive, real, and sometimes lasting change in mood, behavior, and relationships. Here are a few sample settings in which SNOEZELEN has proved to be a highly effective tool!

SNOEZELEN and Children with Special Needs

Throughout the world, more work has been done - and more good achieved - with special needs children than in any other area of SNOEZELEN practice. The body of experiential evidence of the benefits of SNOEZELEN for this client group is enormous and continues to grow.

In educational settings, SNOEZELEN rooms are being used as "neutral territory", where relationships can be established away from the stress of the classroom. At Addlington School in Reading, England, teaching staff find their sensory room an "invaluable resource...useful or a wide range of ages and abilities and a varied curriculum". A 1994 German study concluded, "SNOEZELEN causes an increase in motivation to succeed and an improvement in concentration and coordination."

SNOEZELEN and Developmental Disability

Multisensory stimulation has been one of the most common and successful approaches to learning disability for some time, especially since it was established that sensory work has an impact in the educational, as well as, the therapeutic arena. SNOEZELEN is the logical development of well-documented work carried out over many years, taking advantage of new technologies not previously available.

There is a growing recognition of the need of clients with learning disabilities for leisure. The benefits of the nondirective undemanding SNOEZELEN approach are now both widely accepted and borne out by research. SNOEZELEN is being used in practice as a means of nonverbal communication - as a setting for relaxation and self-healing - and to provide stimulation for those who would otherwise be almost impossible to reach.

SNOEZELEN and Mental Health

The relaxed, calming atmosphere of SNOEZELEN provides an ideal situation for the development of therapeutic relationships. As they experience the deep relaxation of SNOEZELEN, people suffering from tension, depression, or anxiety can open up to discuss feelings. This effect occurs while in the SNOEZELEN environment, but also continues for the rest of the day.

SNOEZELEN and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

SNOEZELEN is also used to provide a "safe place" where children traumatized by violence, sexual abuse, or the effects of war can begin to communicate, regain confidence, and rebuild trusting relationships. Additional research has shown the capacity of SNOEZELEN to induce deep relaxation and improve sleep patterns in critically ill children.

SNOEZELEN and Autism

SNOEZELEN has been found to be equally effective in working with people with autism or autistic characteristics. Research carried out in Brussels compared the behavior of nine adult clients with profound autism in both classroom and SNOEZELEN settings. Though individual results varied, the group results showed a fifty percent reduction in distress and stereotypical behavior, and seventy-five percent less aggression and self-injury in the SNOEZELEN environment.

SNOEZELEN and Pain Control

Recently, caregivers have been turning to SNOEZELEN to provide relief from acute and chronic pain, and to help women relax, remain calm and focused during labor. Early observations indicate that the SNOEZELEN environment offers distraction from pain, a "rehumanizing" effect due to deep relaxation, and all the benefits of leisure which might not otherwise be available to pain sufferers.

SNOEZELLEN, Stroke, and Traumatic Brain Injury

The University Hospital of Ghent, Belgium found that the unique flexibility of SNOEZELLEN produces excellent results. Here, therapists work one-on-one with young adults who have suffered severe brain damage through injury or stroke. The same SNOEZELLEN equipment that stimulates passive individuals can also soothe those prone to agitation. SNOEZELLEN allows the hospital to offer its patients a complete therapy package, addressing both gross-motor competencies and emotional needs, with the goal of moving each person toward the highest possible functional level. Practitioners throughout Europe have been using this multilevel approach with documented, positive results.

SNOEZELLEN and Aging

The second largest area of SNOEZELLEN research looks at its utility for individuals with dementia. Some fine-tuning is required to achieve measurable results and a more sophisticated specification of the type and stage of dementia is needed. However, overall current findings paint a picture of consistent improvement across a wide spectrum of categories with a broad range of clients. Recent research projects in Great Britain and the Netherlands have replicated results, including improvement in affective state, cognition, communication, and functional behavior. Staff also give positive reports of SNOEZELLEN and its effectiveness.

SNOEZELLEN in North America

In 1991, there was little awareness in North America of the European concept of SNOEZELLEN. Many North American professionals have since related their search for something new that would help them in their care, treatment and understanding of their clients. But while they sought a different approach beyond the traditional, clinical methodologies, the idea of creating multi-sensory environments was still an ocean away.

FlagHouse management encountered SNOEZELLEN during visits to Europe in 1991. It was a cathartic experience for some. In Britain, Barbara McCormack, now FlagHouse Vice President, discovered that her two year old severely challenged, blind, daughter actually had some vision in a SNOEZELLEN setting. In further visits, FlagHouse staff witnessed the extraordinary potential of SNOEZELLEN to have a positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities. As a company already involved in the world of disability with the Special Populations catalog, SNOEZELLEN was a natural extension. Later that year, FlagHouse signed an exclusive distribution agreement for North America with ROMPA International, the owners of the SNOEZELLEN trademark.

The first FlagHouse launch of SNOEZELLEN in the Fall of 1992, was a small 24 page catalog describing the SNOEZELLEN concept and offering new, unusual and exciting products. The response was immediate and phenomenal. The first two SNOEZELLEN multi-sensory environments were installed at Lifespire (formerly ACRMD) in New York City, an organization serving the needs of adults with intellectual and physical disabilities, and Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre (formerly Bloorview Children's Hospital), a children's long term care hospital and rehabilitation center in Toronto, Canada. The SNOEZELLEN movement in North America had begun!

The news of SNOEZELLEN spread rapidly with new installations hosting hundreds of visitors each year, media coverage and professional networking. As a result, SNOEZELLEN use has grown exponentially each passing year. Today there are over 700 installations in North America and SNOEZELLEN can be found in almost every state of the United States, every province and territory in Canada, and in Mexico. The user base has grown and diversified alongside. In North America, SNOEZELLEN can now be found in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, group homes, day programs, mental health facilities, hospices, centers for people with substance abuse, early childhood programs, autism programs, anger management programs and many more.

The culmination of almost a decade's effort by FlagHouse, and by the many clients and professionals who have traveled the SNOEZELLEN journey with us, was in 1999 at the 3rd SNOEZELLEN World Congress in Toronto, Canada, and the North American SNOEZELLEN Conference in 2000. These exceptional events brought together the worldwide SNOEZELLEN community to North America to share information and experiences, present research and discover new approaches.

FlagHouse is dedicated to further customer training, an expanded trainer certification program, an extension of client services and most exciting, a vast new array of exceptional products. There are now two fully equipped mobile SNOEZELLEN trailers on the road, the first sensory evaluation and therapy center in North America will shortly open in Toronto, supported by a significant SNOEZELLEN presence, and we begin work on the creation of a brand new Sensory Center in Florida.

No doubt, SNOEZELEN occupies a fast-moving and very exciting area of our business. But our SNOEZELEN focus remains, as always, to help and support our customers to enhance the quality of life of the clients they serve.

How to Bring SNOEZELEN to Your Facility

Let FlagHouse help make your SNOEZELEN dream a reality!

FlagHouse is pleased to offer a full range of services to help bring SNOEZELEN to your facility. And we're dedicated to providing full support to our SNOEZELEN customers. From our expanding team of Certified Trainers, and our highly trained SNOEZELEN Installers, to our knowledgeable Authorized SNOEZELEN Representatives, FlagHouse is here to help you every step of the way!

Information Package

Complete our web form to request a customized, comprehensive SNOEZELEN information package.
[visit <http://www.Flaghouse.com/default.asp?id=15>]

SNOEZELEN SPACE PLANNING

Let us help you to create your SNOEZELEN environment!

Improve the quality of life for those you serve. The SNOEZELEN concept centers on offering people with disabilities, dementia, autism, and other challenging conditions the opportunity to enjoy and control a variety of sensory experiences. These populations rarely, if ever, experience the world as the majority of us do. Limitations of movement, vision, hearing, cognitive ability, constrained space, behavioral difficulties, perception issues, pain, and other problems create obstacles to their enjoyment of life. SNOEZELEN provides opportunities for bridging these barriers.

How to Begin

There are numerous factors that must be considered carefully when planning a SNOEZELEN environment such as:

- The diverse needs of everyone who will have access to the space.
- The level of access, safety, comfort, and interactivity.

And of course, which items from the extensive SNOEZELEN product offering will best meet your population's multisensory needs.

Together, we can create a wonderful, personalized space at your own pace, adding in all the right pieces at the right time.

Room Design

We have a portfolio of ready-to-use designs to fit rooms of every size-and every budget! Or, we can help you design a custom space that's unique to your facility. Our free consultation and design services can help you create a spectacular SNOEZELEN environment.

Electrical Plans

Safety is a major consideration when designing a SNOEZELEN environment. We are available to discuss electrical requirements, use of radio-controlled outlets, and options for minimizing trailing cables and exposed plugs.

Installation Support

Our staff of highly trained SNOEZELEN technicians is available to supervise your installation. They'll ensure that every item is installed correctly and safely, and will train your staff on first-level maintenance.

Training

Proper training is crucial to the success of your SNOEZELEN installation. Our Certified Trainers offer customized training onsite in your facility, as well as general training sessions throughout North America. Contact FlagHouse for details!

Maintenance

Good maintenance practices are vital to the ongoing success of your SNOEZELEN installation. Call us to learn how you can schedule a maintenance visit from one of our highly trained technicians.

Repairs

All SNOEZELEN items carry a 1-YEAR WARRANTY. For post-warranty repairs, call for a free quote and repair-time estimate on "return to depot" or on-site repair services.

Let Us Help You

Our highly trained and knowledgeable SNOEZELEN representatives are available to assist you with the design and planning of your SNOEZELEN installation. We offer a full range of FREE room design and consultation services. Contact FlagHouse, and make your SNOEZELEN facility a dream come true!

SNOEZELEN Product Highlights

FlagHouse offers a full line of SNOEZELEN products to help make this concept a reality for your clients.

All SNOEZELEN products are available online at <http://www.FlagHouse.com/default.asp?id=21>

Click on the Catalog Category dropdown menu and select from the following categories:

- SNOEZELEN Aroma Diffusers & Books
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- SNOEZELEN Books & Videos
- SNOEZELEN Positioning & Seating
- SNOEZELEN Bubble Tubes
- SNOEZELEN Projectors
- SNOEZELEN Cushions
- SNOEZELEN Proprioceptive Input
- SNOEZELEN Effect Cassettes
- SNOEZELEN Soft Play
- SNOEZELEN Effect Wheels
- SNOEZELEN Switches
- SNOEZELEN Fiber Optics
- SNOEZELEN Tactile Panels
- SNOEZELEN Interactive

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