

# conscious COLOR

inspires well-being

by Constance Hart

**C**olor is a communicator. It has a language all its own that we utilize, and culturally participate with, on a daily basis. Yellow denotes joy. Red conveys love. Pink conveys softness. Color can inspire moods from the outside in.

Interior designers and decorators know this. To initiate color choices, color professionals often ask a client, “How do you want to feel in your space?” Certainly marketing professionals know this, as they

utilize color to influence our purchasing decisions. From magazine ads to billboards to television commercials, color is used as much as images and words to communicate wants, needs and feelings. (See “Effects of Colors on Mood,” page 55.)

Massage therapists can put this knowledge to use, too.

One compelling piece of evidence related to color influencing moods is the study that was conducted



SAMO TREBIZANTHINKSTOCK

at the U.S. Naval Correctional Facility in Seattle, Washington, in 1979. A cell was painted a bubblegum pink color to test its effect on aggressive and violent behavior. Baker-Miller Pink, named after the two commanders who agreed to the study, had profound results, as it repeatedly initiated a complete cessation of hostile, erratic behavior in as little as 15 minutes' exposure to the color. To this day, correctional institutes and even psychiatric hospitals are painting walls pink for this effect.

I'm confident you don't have the exact need for color that these institutions do, and I'm also not suggesting you run out to buy pink paint; I simply invite you to consider color as more than just a superficial decorating tool. (See "Uses for Color," page 56.)

Color can become your new ally in helping set the tone for the beneficial work you do. You can begin to look at your treatment room as a communicator of well-being.

## Effects

Art theory classes everywhere teach about the difference between warm and cool colors, as well as expanding and receding colors. The warm colors are versions of red, orange, gold and yellow, while the cool colors are versions of green, turquoise, blue and violet. While color has varying effects on people, most everyone agrees that warm colors have a more stimulating effect and cool colors are more calming. Neutral tones, such as beige and tan, are actually a blend of a warm color and a cool color, so they tend to have a balancing effect. The lighter tints of colors are expanding, which tend to make a space feel larger, while darker colors are receding, which can make a space feel smaller.

So often we see only neutral colors in spa environments, and treatment rooms are left plainly decorated. Unfortunately, this often produces bland, uninviting spaces. Approaching the addition of color in your space can feel daunting, but you truly don't need to be afraid of color if you choose consciously. Color does not have to overwhelm your space. You can use color sparingly and still create a subtle yet meaningful effect.

Of course, we don't all like the same exact colors and we each have our own personal favorites; yet, most of us do agree on some common moods and emotions that colors inspire.

## Effects of colors on mood

- Pink** ● soothing, loving, gentle
- Deep red** ● grounding, centering, stable
- Bright red** ● energizing, stimulating, active
- Orange** ● stimulating, moving, social
- Gold** ● centering, comforting, present
- Yellow** ● activating, stimulating, joyful
- Green** ● balancing, soothing, caring
- Turquoise** ● inspiring, opening, giving
- Pale blue** ● calming, relaxing, peaceful
- Deep blue** ● relaxing, balancing, insightful
- Deep violet** ● meditative, centering, wise
- Pale violet** ● freeing, elevating, light
- White** ● expanding, purifying, open
- Tan/beige** ● balancing, nonconfining, neutral

—Constance Hart

Look at the chart to the left, "Effects of Colors on Mood," to learn some generally recognized and agreed-upon associations between colors and moods. You may use this as your guide to get clear about what well-being moods you'd most like to provide for your clients.

## Intention

Forward-thinking integrative medicine doctors, and even physicists (including Albert Einstein in his time), believe that what we think about influences our reality. Bruce Lipton, Ph.D., teaches that we can even change our DNA with thoughts. If that's true, a small amount of focused intention, coupled with color, will go a long way in creating a mood in your treatment room that inspires well-being from the outside in.

Everyone's individual mood-needs are different and unique,

yet we can all typically agree that colors do influence our emotions one way or another.

Don't you feel differently when you're in a bright yellow room than you do in a pale blue one? Or if you step into a red car as opposed to a more subtly colored one? Have you heard of TV stars being ushered into the green room? Green rooms are the waiting rooms of TV studios and theaters. Many people believe they are painted green to calm the nerves.

Once you begin to consider color in this broader way, you'll be able to make a conscious choice that reflects your deeper intentions for your clients.

## Choices

See if you can marry these two keys:

- 1) Choose colors for yourself.
- 2) Choose colors for your clients.

For yourself, consider how *you* would like to feel on a daily basis in your workspace. If you currently have artwork in your room, you may actually find some insightful clues to the color mood you're already trying to

convey. Also contemplate your unique personality and your unique massage style. Invite your treatment room's color(s) to reflect that.

For your clients, consider your overall goal and desire for them. Is that goal relaxation? Comfort? To be uplifted? To feel cared for?

## Specialization

Consider your clientele. Are you predominantly serving one type of client? What are their collective needs?

Are you serving athletes? People who are very active physically?

*Consider balancing greens and peaceful blues.*

Do you address emotions? Are you listening to a lot of emotional stories while you work? Are you working on busy moms? Caregivers?

*Perhaps soft, soothing pinks and centering golds will be your conscious choice.*

Are you and your clients talkative? Are your sessions more upbeat and social?

*Maybe an energizing color has a place in your personal treatment room.*

## Uses for color

- Wall paint
  - Door to session room
  - Carpeting
  - Water glasses or teacups
  - Clipboard for intake sheet
  - Sheets
  - Fabric accent at the end of a table or across a dresser
  - Throw pillows
  - Lighting filters or bulbs
  - Flower vases
  - Accent rugs
  - Doormats
  - Wall art
  - Frames
  - Lampshades
  - Tissue boxes
  - Plant features/flowers
  - Accent wall or door frame
  - Therapist's clothing
- Constance Hart

What are your work hours? Are you predominantly working after 5 p.m. and on weekends? If so, does your clientele change based on your hours?

*Consider a neutral background with more customizable accents as a match.*

Are your clients overthinkers? Are they 9-to-5ers and super-busy at work? What type of well-being needs might they have?

*Experiment with mind-relaxing deep blues and violets.*

Do you work in a destination-driven resort setting? If your clients come to you because of the specific scenery outside, there's no reason not to bring that influence into your treatment room. You can gain a lot of inspirational colors by paying attention to those clues. People who come to Sedona, Arizona, *want* to be enveloped by the influence of the warm tones of the red rocks. Conversely, those traveling to Florida for the white, sandy beaches and blue-green waters will appreciate more of those color influences in your room.

It's certainly to your advantage to offer your treatment room as its own destination spot.

## Inspiration

If nature inspires you, bring the pleasing colors and color combinations from nature inside to influence your color-themed treatment room. Draw from nature scenes that influence you and shift your mood, and you can easily align with a conscious intention on behalf of your client's well-being experience.

Ocean scenes, forest scenes, mountains, countryside wildflowers, sunrises, sunsets, the moon and the stars—all evoke colors and moods that can help guide you.

If you look at your practice through inquisitive eyes, you can easily choose colors that will inspire well-being for all who lie on your table. Review the "Effects of Colors on Mood"

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list for some hints and guidance. Since there are several choices that will provide a similar result, I suggest finding a color or color combination that will serve *both* you and your clients.

## Intention

Knowing you have consciously chosen your colors to delicately set a well-being tone can renew your pride in the work that you do. Being in your space will then continually reactivate and realign you with your mission, purpose and values.

Spend a moment at the start of each day in your treatment room relishing whatever colors you've chosen and reactivate the reasons *why* in your mind and heart center. Take a deep breath. Breathe in the joy of knowing that you've done something useful, helpful and supportive for your clients.

Even though one client may prefer green and another may prefer blue, your conscious color decision, made from a place of clear intention, will serve to continually support your clients' overall experience of well-being.

From a busy television executive to a harried traffic cop, an arthritic landscaper or retired writer, each benefits from a little conscious color use. I know, because they've

all been in my treatment room with its rich blue carpet, neutral wall paint, deep red furniture, ivory throw pillows and colored sheets.

## Customize

As you get to know your regular clients over time, you'll be in a better position to customize the changeable parts of your treatment room—such as sheets or face cradle covers—to give each client a unique, color-enhanced experience.

Inspiring your clients' well-being can be just a hue away. I invite you to enjoy your creativity and color exploration.

Color Therapy Expert Constance Hart is the founder and developer of Conscious Colors®, Color Aroma™ essential oils and mists, and the Color Spa™ signature spa treatment (consciouscolors.com). She provides practitioner/spa training/certification in Color Aroma Therapy, professional Color Therapy consultations, and live and online workshops. 



Read "Color Therapy and the Chakra Centers," by Constance Hart, at [massagemag.com/colorbenefits](http://massagemag.com/colorbenefits).

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