



“There’s a Giggle in Your Heart!”

STETHOSCOPES make wonderful props. I have a stethoscope with a tiny toy tea cup on the end and big red sponge balls at the ear ends. Inside my vest I have planted many funny and silly sounds.⁸ After asking permission to enter a room, I ask permission to check a patient's heart. Very often I will check a staff member's or a family member's first. This gives the patient a chance to see what is going on. Kids love to hear their parents heart snore or chirp.

I usually find a giggle in a patient's heart. Then I give them a smiley face sticker on their wrist band (being carefull not to cover any vital information). “This is to warn the doctors that there is a giggle in your heart,” or “This is to remind you that inside every one of us is a silly being.”

I could ride the elevators for hours checking hearts.

Another stethoscope is the rubber end of a small bathroom plunger which is fun to pull out on, say, the more “serious cases.”

Michael Christensen, “Mr. Stubs” of New York’s Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit uses a funnel type stethoscope to blow bubbles.

Bubbles! See a small child from 10 feet away, approach blowing bubbles and they will usually let you “in.” A child getting an IV inserted or removed often (not always) will get so caught up in the bubbles that they will shift their focus from the “pain.” I bubble the kids’ beds whenever I can, upon admitting and before I do any “routines.”

Why stop with children, adults love them too! In meditation one morning I visualized myself lying in a hospital bed being showered with bubbles. It was magical. So now after asking permission to enter a patient’s room, I say in my silly voice “We have a new procedure here at Kaiser.” They usually give me an amused cautious look. “Don’t worry it doesn’t hurt,” I respond. As I fill the area with bubbles, I give a silly nonsense speech. “We find that bubbles change the molecular structure of the air allowing more giggles to pass between atomic structure of the particular . . .”

Some precautions are necessary. I visited the maintenance department and we tested the highly polished floor in the hospital for “slipperiness.” I found out how many bubbles were too many. We had a great time doing this experiment! So I know when to wipe them up. As always, the clown must have an outer eye fixed on the patients' environment, i.e., be aware of tubes/oxygen masks, food and drink.

I have acquired a collection of bubble toys and guns. Some of the bubble guns will stay turned on and give off a continuous flow of bubbles. I have a toy dog who runs on batteries and blows bubbles as he walks. Sometimes I send him ahead of me into the hospital lobby.

Laine Barton, of New York’s Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit, gave us this home made bubble mixture at “MooseU” Pricilla and Dale “Mooseburger’s” Summer Clown School - August 1994 in Minneapolis):

Bubble Mix: 1 part glycerin, 1 part Dawn, 8-10 parts distilled water

These bubbles will bounce on your sleeve (with practice), stay for an amazingly long time, to the delight of all, on Mommy and Daddy’s head. You can also purchase at a magic store a bubble bottle with a plastic sphere which you can “palm” and then make it appear as if you are catching a bubble. Plastic shops also carry these 1 inch diameter spheres.

In good weather I blow bubbles as I approach the hospital, then there are bubbles in the street, parking-lot, and down the corridor. Everyone knows “The clown is here!”
-- Shobi Dobi