



Reflexology for children with cancer, their siblings and parents.



Once a year The Association of Cancer Children arranges a family weekend where children with cancer, their parents and siblings can take a break together with others in similar situations.

Children with cancer often receive as part of their treatment very strong medication and radiation treatment which weaken their immune system. The children therefore have a bigger risk in getting serious infections, and to reduce this risk, children with cancer often live very isolated. The Association of Cancer Children work hard to arrange positive activities thereby giving the possibility to offer the children with cancer and their families' good experiences in their often isolated and limited daily lives.

This year on 7 - 9 September the Association's family weekend was held at the holiday and training centre Sankt Helene in Tisvildeleje, north of Copenhagen. Reflexologist and consultant, Leila Eriksen, who works closely with the Association, participated in the weekend and we, Elsebeth Weber Olsen and Myanne Shanna Johansen, were contacted by Leila and asked if we would support the arrangement and participate on the Saturday. We attended the lectures during the morning. Afterwards we gave reflexology treatments and the day ended with a party and entertainment.

We were asked to give reflexology treatments and we were curious as to how we would be received. We knew that there were approximately 220 participants but we did not know how many would be interested in trying a treatment.

When we arrived at 8am Saturday morning, breakfast was being served. There was a lively buzz in the room from the children and adults. We presented ourselves and joined the crowd and had pleasant conversations with those around us. By looking around it was very clear that there were some children present who were sick. But there was also a very strong feeling of life, animation, solidarity and other big words which we cannot think of at the present moment. You need to experience it to understand it!

We were presented to the participants and a list was put up where a 15 minute trial treatment could be booked. In a very short time the list was full. 60 treatments were booked and these were divided between three Reflexologists', Leila, Elsebeth and Myanne.



After breakfast there were lectures for those interested. Leila Eriksen had attended the reflexology congress and research meeting in Barcelona, Spain in June, to find out how reflexology treatment for children with cancer was going in Spain. Leila introduced reflexology

in an easily understandable way and there was a lot of interest. Some of the participants already knew something about reflexology, others were sceptical but open minded.

We who work as therapists on a daily basis know what a big difference reflexology can make, and we were filled with the belief that these children with cancer could benefit from our treatments, so we were all three eager to start. It was exciting for us to see that there was so much interest.

We were given a lovely large and light room. The evening before Leila and an assistant prepared the room for us with treatment couches and remedies. Brochures were put out. Books, drawing paper and felt pens were put out for the children to use while they waited for their treatment.

Our couches were ready to be used and there was softly playing music. There was a good atmosphere. We could feel the butterflies in our stomachs.... the first customer lay on the couch... and then the next... and the next. Sick children, healthy children, siblings, parents. Others came and sat on the sofas in the room. People came past and enjoyed the special atmosphere which built up in the room... intimacy.... familiarity..... peace..... quite...breath out and just feel and enjoy - for some of the parents this was the first time they could do this in many, many months. Most of the children enjoyed the experience and some came back later to try for another turn.

Leila, who attended the whole weekend arrangement, told us afterwards that on Saturday evening the treatment room was turned into the children's reflexology clinic. Healthy and sick children had used the room and given each other and some of the adults foot and hand reflexology and massage. A fantastic and indescribable experience!!

While writing this we feel we are back in the treatment room and the experience is overwhelming. What reflexology and being close to its essence gave that day was indescribable.

If we had to go into more detail our description would be very long. It was just an absolutely fantastic day! We are eager to follow the Association's work and not least, Leila's involvement in it. We also hope to have another opportunity to participate in other similar arrangements.

Reflexology can make a difference!



Myanne Shanna Johansen & Elsebeth Weber Olsen
in collaboration with
Leila Eriksen, CareCam

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Related article:

- The Association of Cancer Children, Denmark by/Leila Eriksen - www.carecam.dk
- When the treatment fails - *A Danish mother tells about her experience with her son's 1½-year hospitalisation, when he at age 16 was diagnosed with leukaemia* - www.carecam.dk

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