

# Battling the hospital blues

TIPS FOR CLIENTS

Justin Reesor spent three months in rehab at Holland Bloorview.

The 12-year-old came up with these innovative ways for kids to cope with being alone in hospital if their parents can't stay:

1. Bring a stuffed animal or blanket to hold that smells like home. "You'll have to prevent your mom from washing it," Justin says.
2. If you are in pain, take deep breaths and blow the pain away. Sometimes you can think of the pain as a colour, like black. Then you suck it up inside you and blow it out onto the wall.
3. Make a countdown calendar with the child-life specialist – then rip off a sheet each day as you get closer to discharge.
4. Schedule daily phone calls to your family at home. Pick a time – like just before dinner – when every member of the family is home. "It's hard if you get the answering machine," Justin notes.
5. Have your parents schedule visits from extended family or family friends who may be closer to the hospital.
6. Bring DVDs and videos of your favourite movies, cartoons and TV shows. "This will cheer you up," Justin says. Video games are also a must.
7. Talk to someone you feel comfortable with, like a friend, social worker, child-life specialist, therapist, nurse or your roommates' parents.
8. Write stories, sing songs, do impressions of your favourite TV characters.
9. Make a book with a child-life specialist. This is a book about you and what your rehab has been like. You can share with family and friends on your return.
10. Take part in therapeutic-recreation activities. To focus on the amazing progress you're making, have your child-life specialist help you make a chart of photos illustrating each step. "I call mine Justin's Marathon 2007."
11. Bring photos of your family and friends. You may want to purchase a giant frame before you come and do a collage that can sit on your desk here.

12. Decorate your hospital room with calendars, pictures you've drawn and people you like.

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