

# Altered States of the Arts

*Promoting Recovery through the Arts*

# Pillows of Unrest



An Arts Project for Peer Specialists,  
Peer Providers and Others Working  
in Peer Settings



## **Forward**

The “Pillows of Unrest” project had its origins at a Consumer Arts Center in Catskill, New York. The idea was that of Frank Marquit and Ralph Ivery who directed the program at the National Artists for Mental Health (NAMH). The exercise originally began as a travelling exhibit to be moved around the country and displayed at public buildings and gatherings. The purpose of the project was to provide information and to help remove discrimination against those with a history of mental illness.

Since then, NAMH has ceased to exist due to lack of support. Frank Marquit and Ralph Ivery, both accomplished artists have relocated to New York City where they are continuing to work with consumers/survivors in various arts programs. Since the closing of NAMH, the “Pillows of Unrest” project was discontinued.

In 2008, Altered States of the Arts Co-coordinators Ed Pazicky and Gayle Bluebird felt that the project should be revived. Since then, it has been implemented at Consumer Wellness Centers, Hospitals and Drop-In Centers across the world.

In October 2009, a “Pillows of Unrest” workshop was held at the “Transforming Lives Through the Arts” held at the 2009 Alternatives Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. Many Peer Specialists and Consumer Providers were in attendance and took the idea back to their home locations after the Conference, and are now using it as a recovery tool. Since then, it has been done at numerous drop-in, wellness centers and hospitals around the world. Our most recent submissions were from Taiwan and an inquiry from Uganda. Sharon Wise conducted a workshop at the National NAMI Conference in Washington, D.C. in 2010 and at Alternatives 2010 where it was one of the most popular workshops.

This is a consumer project for all those who have issues to display in the form of pillowcase art. Inquiries regarding public display or inclusion in the Altered States web site may be addressed to:

***“ed@alteredstatesofhearts.com”***

***or***

***“gaylebluebird@aol.com”***

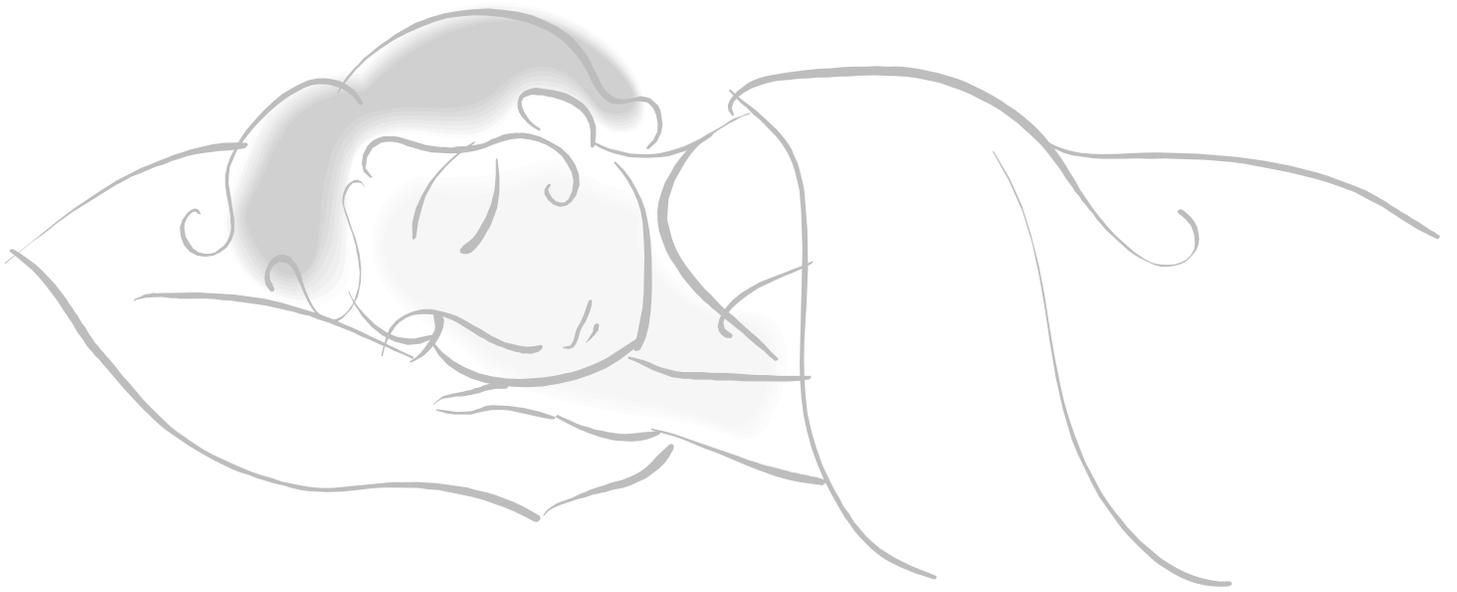
## **Acknowledgements**

Altered States of the Arts would like to thank Gayle Bluebird for her tireless work in our behalf, carrying the message of “Pillows of Unrest” in her visits to State Hospitals, Consumer Wellness Centers and to Mental Health Professionals throughout the country.

We would also like to acknowledge our appreciation to Sharon Wise an artist from Washington, DC who conducted the workshop at the 2009 and 2010 Alternatives Conference where Peer Specialists, Consumer Providers and others affiliated with wellness centers completed over one-hundred pillowcases and carried the ideas back to their home locations. She endorsed the project at the 2010 National NAMI Conference in Washington, D.C. to great acclaim.

We thank Ed Pazicky for writing this guidebook and maintaining the Altered States web site where an ongoing display of pillowcases will be shown as photographs from new projects as they are received, along with consumer artists showcases of art, writings and poetry.

We are especially grateful to Frank Marquit and Ralph Ivery formerly of NAMH in Catskill, New York for originating this idea and we want them to know that we are carrying on their dream of helping to eliminate the discrimination surrounding mental illness.



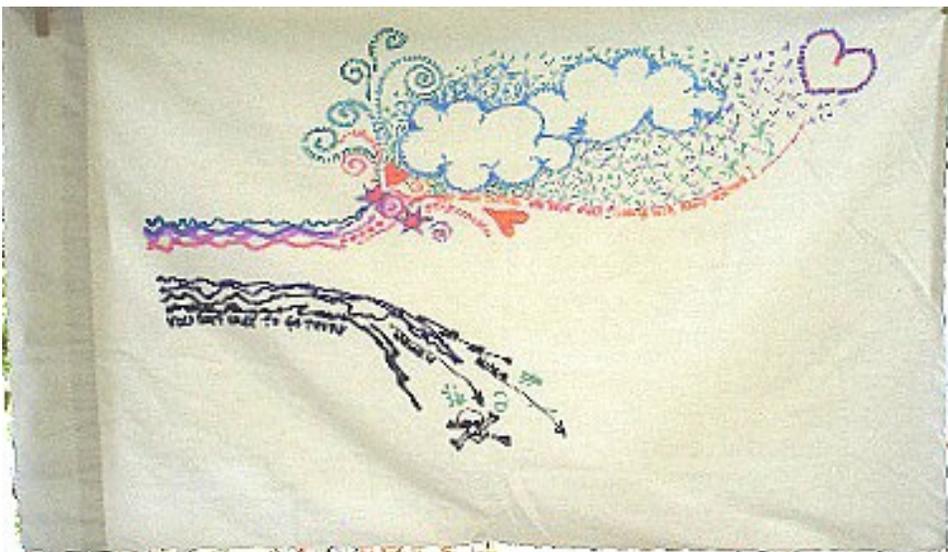
***“Pillows of Unrest”***

***Sometimes our dreams  
Are good  
Sometimes not as we would  
Have them be  
Sometimes they are scary  
To you and me  
Sometimes they are so  
Dreadful they  
Awaken us in the night  
With our minds full  
Of thoughts of fright  
So .....  
We paint and we color  
Pillows of unrest  
It has helped many of us  
The best!***

***By Toni C.  
Osawatomie State Hospital  
Osawatomie, KS***

## Materials to gather for project:

- Pillowcases—white is best but any color may be used, but they must be without prints (Some hotels, linen supply houses and laundries are often willing to provide used pillowcases.)
- Permanent or indelible markers such as Sharpie Markers of varying sizes and colors—Markers must be washable so they do not run if pillowcases are washed. Office supply stores and arts & crafts stores such as Michael's are good sources for multiple color packets.
- Cardboard to fit inside the pillowcases to provide stability. (empty boxes can be obtained from your grocery store and cut up).
- Plastic covering, newspaper or other large paper sheets to cover tables
- Other items such as tracing paper, glitter, bits of colored cloth and added newspaper if crayons are used
- White glue
- Scissors, and other tools for cutting
- Tongue depressors or popsicle sticks to spread glue
- Cleanup items, paper towels or pre-moistened wipes for cleaning hands
- Clothes line and clothespins for displaying the pillowcases



*This was done by a consumer/survivor artist from "The Haven" Drop in Center in Port Charlotte, FL. Arts Fair. It shows a dark design dropping into despair with the inscription "You don't want to go there" with a skull and cross bones at the end of that direction. A colorful design goes up into the heavens toward hope and recovery.*

## Before you begin:

The exercise uses pillowcases as a canvas and encourages those who participate to express the personal turmoil that can exist within one's own recovery. Ask them to think of their struggles with mental illness and how they are working on their recovery and to reflect on personal issues in their recovery. Ask them to think about barriers or discrimination they might have encountered along the road to recovery and what their hopes might be as they recover. They may use art, writings, poems or bits of colored cloth or glitter on their pillowcases in telling their story.

Depending on the facility or venue, you can prepare an exhibit by hanging the completed pillowcases on a clothesline or just hanging on the walls. If you have the ability to display, encourage each artist to complete the permission form and leave the pillowcase for display for a period of time. Each pillowcase should be identified with the artist's name. Displaying them will create a feeling of pride for each artist. Be sure and have a camera handy to photograph the artworks.

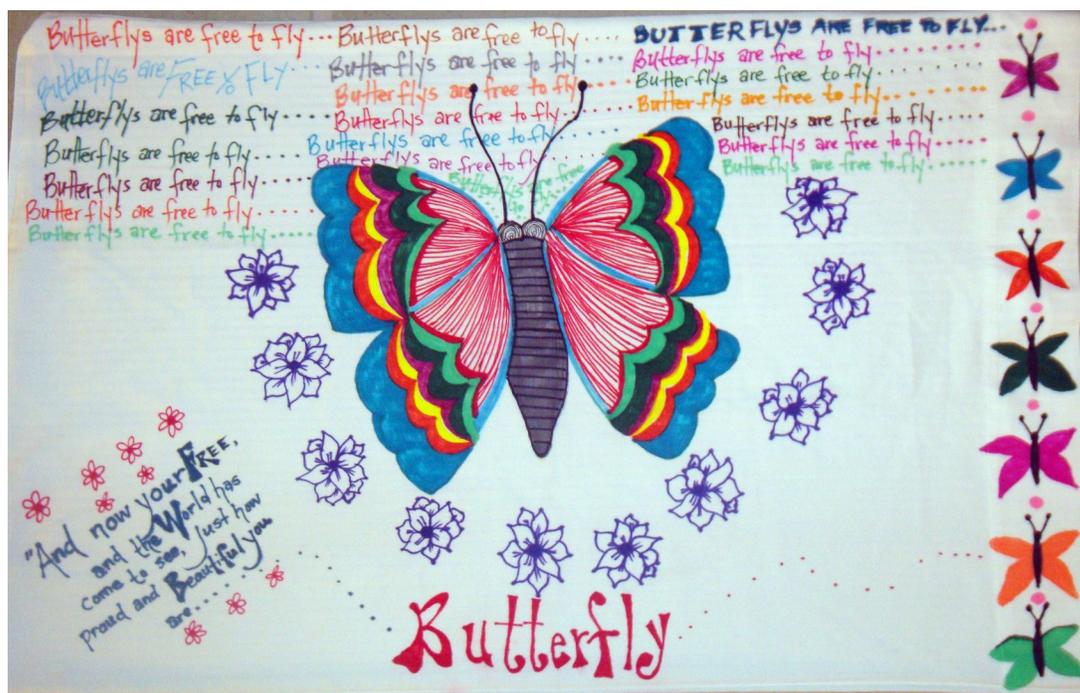
*This pillowcase was done as part of a project at Fulton State Hospital, Missouri. It has a simple message "When it Rains, the Flower Grows." The pillowcase was done with marking pens on a white pillowcase..*



## Getting Started

1. Give each participant a pillowcase and a piece of cardboard to slip inside the pillowcase to provide stability while doing their work.
2. Lay out the markers and crayons on the table allowing them to share sizes and colors.
3. For those who will do writing or poetry, the finer point Sharpies are best.
4. Ask them to think about the previous discussion and to plan out their pillowcase before beginning.
5. If anyone plans to use **crayons**, there is a second step that follows the design of the pillowcase. You will need a **hot iron** and newspaper. 
  - a. Keep the cardboard filler in and cover the pillowcase with newspaper.
  - b. Iron over the newspaper covered pillowcase with a medium hot iron until all the wax from the crayons is absorbed into the newspaper. Allow the newspaper to cool, then carefully remove. The result is a surprising bright colored design.

** Warning! Crayons and irons should not be used where rules or safety prohibit their use!**



*A pillowcase done at the 2009 Alternatives Conference in Omaha, Nebraska done by our facilitator, Sharon Wise.*

## Some Additional Tips:

- If you plan to use glitter, bear in mind that it can be very messy and difficult to clean up. Check with the facility or venue to make certain they permit it. If you do use it, keep a plastic covering, newspaper or heavy craft paper over the tables to prevent spillage. **Glue guns should only be used with very close supervision from someone with expertise in their use.** They are a safety hazard and can be injurious. Use a white glue or similar instead.
- This is an excellent workshop and/or activity to be included as a centerpiece at all types of mental health conferences, special events and celebrations. Some hotels may have heavy curtains in the area to be used and will provide silver pins to hang them on the curtain. Discuss with this with the conference representative at the hotel, advising her of the project so that they may prepare the tables in advance or provide older tables for you to use.
- Variations on special themes may be considered. Hope, Recovery, Self-determination, among others selected by the participants.
- If you have a digital camera, you may want to consider taking pictures of the finished pillowcases for future display on a website or in a newsletter.
- **Naming and Claiming:** Be sure to ask each individual to sign their artwork and for permission to place their name on an accompanying card when showcasing the pillowcase in public places. A sample permission form on page 13 of this manual may be used for that purpose. This is an essential part of empowering the artist and is often overlooked (due to a misunderstood HIPPA Law) particularly in inpatient settings. HIPPA laws do not preclude asking for a person's consent and the majority of the time, persons will feel honored to be identified with their artwork.



*"I wanted my pillowcase to say that I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life in chains and shackles of mental illness. But I found out that this was not the case. I am in remission from my mental illness, thanks to the medication, the psychiatrists, the doctors, the nurses and the staff that we have here who care for us on a day to day basis. It's a 24-hour around the clock thing."*

*Vinneta Hatton, Fulton State Hospital, MO*

## Post-Discussion

At the completion of the project, ask each person to stand and show their pillowcase design to others in the group. Ask them to talk about their design and what it means to them. Ask them if the project helped them and if so, how?

You might want to have the group discuss each person's art as they show it to see if they find some meaning in it for their lives.

Talk about the possibility of displaying their work outside the facility as well as inside. Ask for suggestions as to places they might know that would display their pillowcases. Explain to them that public viewing is a method to help remove discrimination and acceptance of the talents of those with mental illness.

Don't forget to have each person fill out the permission form for display.



*Another pillowcase design from a patient at Fulton State Hospital. The wall represents the barrier her mental illness has placed in front of her. Each brick shows the many feelings and behaviors she experienced and shows her eyes looking through a missing brick which is the beginning of her breaking down the wall.*

## Displaying the Pillowcases

After the pillowcase project is completed, string a clothesline somewhere in the facility and hang each pillowcase on the line. Some facilities have actually displayed their work at local public facilities such as libraries, town halls, around the hospitals and in local Chambers of Commerce.

If you plan on doing this, make up a card for each pillowcase describing the design and the ideas the artist is trying to convey and include the artists name. This kind of display is a good tool for de-stigmatization in the community and additionally building the self-esteem of each artist.

There are numerous ways the pillow cases can be used for display. Local Universities can show them in their student union or other facility on campus. You may want to show them at local arts festivals or fairs.

In order to be able to display any artwork publicly, it is advisable to obtain a permission form from each participant allowing their material to be displayed. A copy of a permission form is available on the next page of this manual

Make certain you get good pictures so that you can consider displaying them on the Altered States of the Arts Web Site. We would welcome any of your work for display and can be contacted through the web site [www.alteredstatesofthearts.com](http://www.alteredstatesofthearts.com) or email at:

[ed@alteredstatesofthearts.com](mailto:ed@alteredstatesofthearts.com)  
[gaylebluebird@aol.com](mailto:gaylebluebird@aol.com)

We wish you fun and creativity in your endeavors.

*This pillowcase was done by a patient at Fulton State Hospital who was in great despair prior to entering the hospital and was close to taking his life.*





**“Pillows of Unrest”**

**Permission to Display Artwork**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby grant permission to have photographs of my “Pillows of Unrest” artwork and of my person if included, to be displayed at public venues for the purpose of promoting anti-stigma and other mental health programs such as the web site “Altered States of the Arts-Pillows of Unrest Showcase”

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

*Notice to facilitator: The story for the pillowcase if the artist chooses to provide one, may be written on the back of this sheet. You may fax, copy or scan this sheet as an e-mail attachment to [ed@alteredstatesofthearts.com](mailto:ed@alteredstatesofthearts.com) along with [jpeg](#) copies of the photos.*

**“What My Pillowcase Art Means to Me”**

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(Location, City—State

## Notes

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[www.alteredstatesofthearts.com](http://www.alteredstatesofthearts.com)

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