



Operation Comfort Doll

{ by Lucy Blaire }

THIS YEAR *SEW NEWS* BRINGS YOU “SEW YOUR SUPPORT: OPERATION COMFORT DOLL.” Every year women all over the country find themselves in terrible situations that end with a stay in a domestic abuse shelter. The Comfort Doll Project encourages crafters of all abilities to make special gifts so these women know they’re not alone as they begin to rebuild their lives and start anew.

The Comfort Doll charity began in 2007 by Pat Winters, a craft lover with an even bigger love for giving back. Now Brenda Hutchings runs the project and together they’ve received and distributed over 1,000 dolls to women’s shelters nationwide. Once Brenda receives the dolls, a special card is attached to each one with the following inscription: I am a Comfort Doll. I was made especially for you by a woman’s heart and hand who cares. When you need strength or just a smile, hold me and feel the love I send. Like me, you are unique, worthy, beautiful, and deserve all good things in life. You have the strength within yourself to be extraordinary. Find the strength and shine! Comfort Dolls—created with our hands—given with our hearts.

A comfort doll can be any type of softie, such as a doll, an animal or even a brooch. The design is up to you. Make a doll using any fabric in any style with only one rule: The doll must be less than 6” tall so it can be carried comfortably. As soon as the dolls are received, they’re sent twelve at a time to shelters across the U.S. and given to women in need of support.

Find instructions to make a simple comfort doll on page 15. But don’t be discouraged from using your personal ideas and special techniques to create your own comfort doll design. To contribute even more to the cause, host a Comfort Doll party and get your friends involved. The featured doll only takes 20 minutes to complete, plus it’s a great project for using up fabric scraps.

Send completed comfort dolls to:

**Brenda Hutchings
Sew News Operation Comfort Doll
303 McKinley St.
Valparaiso, IN 46383**

Make a simple draw-string bag to house your comfort doll, if desired.



For more information, doll design inspiration and to view past donations, visit The Comfort Doll Project blog at comfortdollproject.blogspot.com.

Sew News Comfort Doll

Supplies

- 5" x 7½" rectangle of quilting cotton fabric (in your choice of skin color)
- 4" x 12" rectangle of print cotton fabric
- 4" square of felt (in your choice of hair color)
- Embroidery floss: black, dress matching & skin matching
- Fusible web scrap
- Fiberfill
- Press cloth or fabric scrap
- Hand embroidery needle

Construct

Use ¼" seam allowances.

Copy and cut out the Comfort Doll templates from pages 16 and 17. From the quilting cotton, cut two bodies. Mark the eye placements on one body right side.

Choose the front hairstyle template desired: Bangs, Curly, Middle Part, Over the Eye Part, Side Part or Straight Bangs. Choose the back hairstyle template desired: Long Hair or Short Hair. Cut one hair front and one hair back each from the felt and fusible web. Fuse the web to each corresponding fabric hair piece, following the manufacturer's instructions. Peel off the paper backing, and then set aside.

Thread the hand embroidery needle with a length of black embroidery floss. Hand embroider each eye using a French knot or satin stitch. (To download

a helpful Hand Embroidery Stitch Guide, visit sewitallmag.com/articles/Hand_Embroidery_Stitch_Guide.) Note: If using the Over the Eye Part hairstyle, only one eye is stitched.

Fuse the front hair to the front body piece right side using a press cloth or fabric scrap over the felt to prevent melting. Repeat to fuse the back hair to the back body piece (1).

Edgestitch each hair piece lower edge to secure (2).

Pin the front and back bodies with right sides together. Stitch the perimeter leaving a 2" opening along one belly edge for turning (3). Grade the seams around the head to reduce bulk.

Turn the doll right side out through the opening. Stuff the doll with fiberfill until firm. Slipstitch the opening closed using matching embroidery floss.

With right sides facing, fold the print rectangle in half widthwise; stitch the short ends and then press open. Double-fold each long edge ¼" to the wrong side; press and then stitch close to the first fold (4). Designate one long edge as the dress upper edge.

Using matching embroidery floss, sew a gathering stitch (or long running stitch) along the dress upper edge, just below the previous stitching. Place the dress on the doll where desired and pull the gathering stitches tight to fit the doll. Triple knot the thread tails. Trim the tails, and then evenly distribute the gathers (5).





