

Activity: Nature Goal: Cognitive Populations: Specialized Population

## TH Activity Plan – Acrostic Nature Poetry

Text by Cliff Thorbes, HTR, CCDP®

Photo by C. Thorbes



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will create acrostic poems using nature & plant themes.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Explore vocabulary skills using words connected

to plants & landscapes; expand curiosity about the environment; improve memory retrieval using mnemonic device like acrostic

**Physical:** Practice handwriting; address dysgraphia; expand physical exercise walking outdoors

**Psychological/Emotional:** Expand imagination through writing; build a sense of accomplishment

**Sensory:** Expand sensory learning using nature words that can appeal to multiple senses

**Social:** Share acrostic with group; share positive comments & praise

### Materials

Printed copies of an acrostic poem

Paper, pens

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Have acrostic printed & ready to use in session.
2. Facilitator begins session by using a grounding exercise like a walk outdoors to activate the senses & to clear the mind.
3. Facilitator describes & shares an example of a nature-focused acrostic poem. Participants read the poem silently to themselves, then volunteers read it out loud.
4. Participants try to write an acrostic beginning with a simple three, four, five and then six letter word with plant or nature theme. Facilitator provides options from the following: bee, sun, sky, oak, tree, moss, seed, rock, fern, leaf, lake, snow, rain, plant, bird, nest, earth, grass, river, ocean, petal, sprout, forest, flower, garden, and sunset. Or using their own word choice with nature/plant theme.
5. Write the word that is chosen in a vertical format, one letter on each line top-down. Use the first letter of each line as the starting point for a line in the poem.
6. Share acrostic with others in the group. This is not mandatory.
7. Debrief the experience of creating an acrostic with the group. Discussions may include any number of topics based on participants' interests, therapeutic goals or dynamics of the group.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Using acrostic poetry to engage participants in TH sessions can be done indoors, outdoors, or virtually. Outdoor locations are preferred. Applying contextual learning and engagement whenever possible by introducing the word prompts when sitting in a garden setting or actual outdoor exploration is most effective. Most populations respond to this creative, nature-immersive activity. Being mindful of cultural sensitivity when some words might have different connotations or be less familiar to some should be considered before the session by knowing group participants if possible. Incorporating positive comments from participants and facilitator, avoiding feedback on how to improve poems is recommended.

### Mental Health Populations with a Concurrent Diagnosis

A concurrent disorder is when a person has a substance use disorder and another mental illness at the same time. Examples: Being diagnosed with clinical depression (major depressive disorder) and living with an opioid addiction. Or having a post-traumatic stress disorder and an alcohol addiction.

In Canada, recent statistics (2020) indicate more than 50% of those seeking help for an addiction also have a mental illness, and 15 to 20% of those seeking help from mental health services are also living with an addiction.

Source: [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#)

Working with young adults (19 – 25) and adults (26+), creative writing activities like the Nature Acrostics activity described here can provide an opportunity for healthy distraction from cravings and harmful behavior patterns. Creative writing taps into natural creativity, builds self-confidence, and exposes participants to healthy post-treatment activities they can further explore independently. Creative writing also supports the skill of regular journal writing, a therapeutic activity on its own.

### **SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.**

Facilitator should ensure outdoor areas for walks are safe, free from poisonous plants or barriers, and accessible for all participants. Facilitator should be aware and sensitive to triggering words, settings or interactions.

### **NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

#### **LAVENDER**

Lamiaceae, mint/sage family member  
Affinity for maritime breezes  
Violet, lilac, blue, pink, and white colored flowers too  
Essential oils have a nervine effect – calming  
Native to warm and dry regions of the Mediterranean  
Derived from “*laver*” – to wash  
English lavender, the most commonly used species in cooking  
Reported uses include placing between items of clothing to deter moths

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Adaptations:  
Acrostic Landscapes

Choose a nature word (FOREST, OCEAN, EARTH) and create an acrostic poem where each line uses at least one additional nature word:

F – Ferns unfurl beneath ancient red cedars  
O – Owls watch silently from lichen covered branches  
R – Rivers carve paths through mossy stones  
E – Eagles soar high above in the sky  
S – Sunlight dapples the forest floor  
T – Time comes to a standstill amongst the trees

### **REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

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Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2025.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2025.