

Activity: Creative Expression/Art **Goal:** Psychological/Emotional **Populations:** All but dementia

TH Activity Plan – Button Wreath Cards, Altruism & Narcissism

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Photo by N. Ellis, Lorraine D., & Holiday Crafts and Creations



Materials

Live wreath, pine needles,
holly leaves
Cardstock or paper, flat
buttons of varying
sizes/colors, ribbon
Glue, markers, pens, gloves



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will make holiday cards with plant themes using buttons & paper.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Use reasoning skills to discern, sort & organize buttons by colors & sizes; compare & contrast button sizes

Physical: Practice sensorimotor & fine motor skills; practice writing skills & strengthen pincer grip

Psychological/Emotional: Expand the number of selfless acts; discuss narcissistic behavior, self-regulation & conscious discipline

Sensory: Focus on tactile & visual senses for completing tasks; modulate self-regulation

Social: Practice altruism; send or gift cards to others; share materials with group members

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather buttons. Set up work stations. Have ornaments & live evergreen pieces & wreath as examples.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing activity & showing a few samples. Facilitator shares brief horticultural facts about evergreen used in wreaths & as Christmas trees. Option: making wreaths from evergreens, rosemary or dried vines.
3. Beginning the segment on card making, distribute cards. First step is signing their name on back of cards or handwriting "Handmade by....".
4. Participants select materials. It is suggested that participants lay out design prior to gluing. Use paper, ribbon, markers to add details to cards and small live plant materials – pine needles, fascicles & [holly](#).
5. Facilitator suggests participants make (choose the quantity) cards. If the activity involves a service project, a good rule of thumb is to have participants make one card for themselves (or their family) & one for the service project.
6. Discussion of selfless acts like service projects, making items to donate or send to others, [defining altruism](#), self-regulation & conscious discipline can conclude session. Participants show the group their finished cards, & sharing who they will be sending them to. Session can include writing, addressing & sending the actual card.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Integrating service projects into TH sessions provides opportunities to discuss and act in selfless ways. Topics for discussion can include defining altruism, ways to be selfless, treatment of others, and then moving into more serious aspects that involve self-regulation, [narcissism](#), and conscious discipline. This is appropriate across populations. For youth, incarcerated, or mental health populations, this focus can balance serious introspection with creative expression.

Clinicians and health professionals define narcissism as having distinct types and degrees, depending on each individual. For patients with clinically diagnosed narcissism, a TH session may not be the most effective intervention. For others who may exhibit selfish, immature or narcissistic behavior, but not to the degree that it is/should be diagnosed may benefit from this TH activity.

“In recent years, three-factor models of narcissism have been described that help to better understand the key dimensions of narcissism (Back, 2018; Crowe et al., 2019; Krizan & Herlache, 2018). Specifically, there is an emerging consensus that three factors—agentic, antagonistic, and neurotic narcissism—can be distinguished, corresponding to the trifurcated model of narcissism (Miller et al., 2017; Weiss et al., 2019). Agentic narcissism is characterized by the need for admiration, feelings of grandiosity and superiority, assertiveness, leadership, and approach motivation (Back & Morf, 2018; Miller et al., 2021). Agentic narcissism leads to fewer interpersonal problems compared to the other factors of narcissism. Antagonistic narcissism includes aspects such as arrogance, exploitiveness, deceitfulness, entitlement, callousness, and low empathy. Thus, this factor captures the disagreeable and antisocial facets of narcissism. Finally, neurotic narcissism is characterized by emotional dysregulation, hypersensitivity, and shame proneness (Miller et al., 2021). All three factors are dimensional constructs that allow us to describe the distribution of these narcissistic characteristics in the general population (Krauss & Black, 2024)”.

Goals in addition to psychological ones, can be included in the Button Wreath Cards activity as listed above. Physical goals of improving handwriting and pincer grip skills for individuals with these challenges are appropriate. Sensory skills focusing on tactile and visual responses for selecting materials and completing tasks, along with self-regulation modulation are recommended. Discussion of [conscious discipline](#), a technique being used more frequently to guide individuals in self-regulation can also be integrated into the session.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Buttons may pose a choking hazard for some populations, particularly for individuals or populations who may have tendencies to put items in mouths. Holly may be sharp, its berries poisonous and leaves can cause discomfort (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea). Gloves are recommended.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Related TH activities can include making live or [Dried Herb Wreaths](#) or [Mini Evergreen Doorknob Decorations](#), [Tree Shaped Ornaments from Buttons](#), or [Service Project: Making Plant Photo Game Cards](#). Links between creative expression and mental health are being more firmly established by empirical studies (Jean-Berluce, 2024). Many forms of creative expression, and [multiple therapies within the expressive arts domain](#) further substantiate this.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

- Conscious Discipline. (n.d.). [Conscious discipline methodology](#). *Conscious Discipline.com*.
Jean-Berluce, D. (2024). Creative expression and mental health. *Journal of Creativity*, 100083.
Krauss, OU., & Black, MD. (2024). Development of narcissism across the lifespan: A meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 150(6).
Kraut, R. (2026). [Altruism](#). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
Phillips, CS., Hebdon, M., Cleary, C. et al. (2024). [Expressive arts interventions to improve psychosocial well-being in caregivers: A systematic review](#). *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 67(3), e229-e249.

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2024.