

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Cognitive Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Cinnamon Stick Holiday Ornament

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will make a holiday ornament using small cinnamon sticks.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Practice research skills learning about cinnamon

Physical: Reduce stiffness in hands by practicing fine motor movement

Psychological/Emotional: Reduce suicidal thoughts or sadness through diversion doing hands-on activities with positive emotional connections to family, new traditions, holidaytime

Sensory: Develop appropriate responses to sensations & interactions

Social: Relate history (of cinnamon) to society today (geography, medicinal use of cinnamon, traditions, anthropology)

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Cinnamon sticks may need to be cut to appropriate size.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing cinnamon as a plant, tree bark, spice and common flavor in today's society. Samples of cinnamon can be laid on workstation.
3. Reviewing the steps for making the holiday ornament, begin by distributing the materials, cutting the ribbon & twine, then gluing the cinnamon sticks together trying to position them with some space between (refer to photo). Glue twine loop onto ornament. Working in pairs can make gluing easier.
4. Discussion/lesson about cinnamon as a valuable food product, its nutritional & medicinal value can pique interest. Smelling & tasting cinnamon (in warm drink flavoring coffee or coco) can provide sensory stimulation if no allergies exist.
5. When sticks are dry enough to handle, glue ribbon over twine as a decorative touch.

Materials

Small, thin cinnamon sticks; 4 per ornament/person

Thin holiday ribbon, thread or twine for loop

White glue, cotton tips, paper/plates, scissors

Gloves, wipes

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This therapeutic horticulture activity can celebrate the holiday season with all populations while providing an activity requiring hand dexterity. People with hand injury, arthritis, carpal tunnel or restricted arm movement may find the activity challenging unless after their functional assessment it is within their treatment plan. Adaptive accommodations can include partnering with others (clients or volunteers), use of playdough to hold cinnamon sticks in place for gluing, drying and tying, or use of larger cinnamon sticks, wider ribbon, and glue applicators (larger than cotton tips).

Cinnamon sticks can be purchased at craft or natural food stores. Choose size of sticks relative to size of trees; larger sticks are more expensive and this may be a budgetary consideration. This activity may be short in

duration, even when allowing for drying time. To eliminate gluing for any reason, tie bundles of cinnamon sticks with yarn or ribbons (photo below). Other ornaments made with cinnamon sticks can expand session. Knot ribbons on cinnamon stick for a Christmas tree shape, form into a star with 4 sticks, or make reindeer heads (photos below).

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: If hot glue gun is used by participants, ensure that they are wearing fabric gloves and have the capacity to handle hot items safely. Alternatively, use non-toxic glue which takes longer to dry but will not burn skin. Cinnamon sticks used for ornaments should not be put in mouths though tasting cinnamon can be part of the session.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Some populations may find researching the history of cinnamon, the geography of Sri Lank, India, Myanmar, South America and parts of North American that historically grew and now produce cinnamon contributes to intellectual goals including seeing the world as a global community. Other historical facts like the role cinnamon has played as medicine (Romans used it for digestive and respiratory tract illness, embalming of mummies), Chinese use for purification in temples and protection by hanging sticks over doorways, and the purpose for Christopher Columbus' voyage to the new world demonstrates the interesting history of this plant and its flavor, fragrance and oil properties. Current research into cinnamon's medicinal benefits have focused on diabetes, heart disease - cardio protection (due to active components of cinnamaldehyde and cinnaminic acid), its phytochemicals boosting the brain's ability to utilize glucose, anti-microbial and antioxidant properties, in addition to anti-inflammatory effects (Kawatra & Rajagopalan, 2015).

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library UCLA. (2002). Cinnamon.

<https://unitproj.library.ucla.edu/biomed/spice/index.cfm?displayID=5>

Kawatra, P. & Rajagopalan, R. (2015). Cinnamon: Mystic powers of a minute ingredient. *Pharmacognosy Res.* 7(Supp. 1).

Rhodes, M.G. (n.d.). Cinnamon sticks crafts. Pinterest.com.

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Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2023.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.