

**Activity: Herbs**    **Goal: Psychological/Emotional**  
**Populations: Medical Conditions**

## TH Activity Plan – Herbal Bath and Dresser Drawer Bags

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### Materials

- 2 large plastic mixing bowls (2-quart size)
- 10 small bowls (2-cup size), 2 for each herb used
- 1 ½ c dried chamomile flowers (to soothe and cleanse)
- 1 ½ c dried lavender flowers (to stimulate)
- ¾ c dried rose petals (for fragrance)\*
- ¾ c dried peppermint (to refresh and cool)
- 1 ½ c dried lemon verbena (for fragrance & to stimulate)
- 12 3" square muslin bags (found at health food store)
- 12 10" pieces of ribbon/twine
- Funnels, cardboard tubes, or thick art paper or cardboard rolled into funnels

\*Avoid using roses from a florist as they are treated with systemic chemicals. Use organically grown rose petals harvested from garden or purchase in bulk tea section at natural foods market.

**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will prepare small bags filled with fragrant herbs to be used in baths or to add fragrance to clothes drawers.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

- Cognitive:** Cultivate intellectual curiosity; build cognitive functions
- Psychological/Emotional:** Develop relaxation and self care strategies; build resilience; reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety
- Sensory:** Engage olfactory and tactile senses with herbal materials; enhance mood through sensory stimulation
- Social:** Create sense of belonging within peer group; cultivate new social connections

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Prep:** Harvest and prepare dried herbs (see Preserving Herbs activity). Prepare two stations with 6 muslin bags, 6 pieces of ribbon, and one mixing bowl each. Divide herbs into separate bowls for each station. Make paper funnel to use in putting mixture into muslin bag or use a plastic funnel.
2. Facilitator begins by dividing participants into two groups of 6.
3. Pass each bowl around the table, paying attention to the color and texture of each herb. With each new herb, take a full breath and take time to enjoy.
4. After each participant has smelled the herbs, mix them together in the large mixing bowl.
5. Pass this bowl around. Have each participant stir and smell the mixture. (Pressing the herbs in your hands will release the oils and give off a stronger smell.)
6. Ask open ended questions to encourage discussion. Questions may include "Do you have memories of any of these smells?" or "Have you grown any of these herbs before? If so, where did you grow them?" or "How will you use your herbal bag?"
7. Pass the bowl around again so each participant can put some of the mixture into his or her muslin bag using the funnel.
8. Tie off top with a ribbon.
9. To use in the bath, just drop it in the tub when water is running. Or place it in dresser drawers to make clothes smell good.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Present this activity as part of a multi-session program, such as a peer support group or women's/men's self care group, with a focus on building resilience, supporting self/peers, and forging a pathway through illness. Encourage discussion about self care,

relaxation, and stress reduction strategies by asking open ended questions and sharing self care tips throughout the activity. Share information – facts, tips, and even funny stories – about how different cultures around the world have done self-care and personal wellness throughout history.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** For participants with olfactory and tactile sensitivities, use disposable gloves to protect hands and reduce lingering scents on hands following activity. Supervise safe handling of materials and equipment during the activity. Monitor individuals with tendencies to place non-food items in the mouth.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** If muslin bags can't be found, use other small pouches, ends of pantyhose, small mesh gift bags, sachet bags, etc. If you do not have access to all the herbs in the Materials list, substitute or eliminate herbs from the mixture, or supplement with purchased items from bulk tea section at the natural foods market. Herbal combinations can be altered if you want different scents. Essential oils of choice can also be added (5 drops/large mixing bowl) for a stronger smell; consult medical staff if necessary. This project can be done with fresh material as well, but bags should be used within a couple of days so that they do not mold. Bags can be used for several baths before discarding. Experiment with different fabrics for the bags. They can be used as gifts for different holidays, such as birthdays, holidays, Valentine's Day, etc.

Refer to Preserving Herbs activity plan.

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

Global Wellness Institute. (2019). History of wellness.

<https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/history-of-wellness/>

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. (2015). Aromatherapy.

<https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/treatment/aromatherapy>

WebMD. (2021). Health benefits of essential oils in your bath.

<https://www.webmd.com/beauty/health-benefits-essential-oils-bath>

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.