

TH Activity Plan – Herbal Tea Blending & Tasting

Text by Silvia Yoshimizu-Yee, MPA

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will blend & taste herbal teas using all their senses.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Learn about a new topic and acquire a new skill; practice decision making skills; be mindful & learn about mindfulness

Physical: Use fine motor skills

Psychological/Emotional: Exercise mindful awareness

Sensory: Stimulate olfactory, gustatory & visual senses

Social: increase social interaction; participate in a group activity

Materials

Herbs in 3 inch pots: lavender, chamomile, mint
suggested OR an herb garden

Dried herbs in wide-mouth jars, labeled: lavender, chamomile, mint. Other herb suggestions include moringa and lemon verbena.

Scoops for herb jars
Mugs or insulated cups
Paper or cloth tea bags
Spoons

Honey for optional sweetening
Hot water kettle

Pitcher for extra fresh water
Small plates to discard used tea bags

Container of ice to quickly cool too-hot cups of tea

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Prepare herb plants for transport. Label and decant dried herbs with scoops in containers. Communicate with facility staff to identify & accommodate participants with allergy or other tasting/swallowing issues for participation in tea blending &/or tea tasting. Some may not participate based on safety issues. Have hot water kettle filled with fresh water and ready to heat before activity begins, and depending on size of group, have second pitcher prepared with more water.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing participants to herbs with name of plants and historical/traditional wellness uses and benefits. Pass plants around for touching, tasting, and smelling.
3. Distribute a cup, spoon and tea bags to each participant. Start hot water kettle.
4. Explain which parts of the plants were dried to create the herbal tea blend options.
5. Passing the containers around on a tray, invite each participant to add whichever herb they prefer to their teabag, encouraging them to blend more than one if they wish.
6. Participants will place their filled teabags into their cups, and facilitator/assistant will pour hot water into their cups. Steep the tea for about 5 minutes.
7. While tea is steeping, facilitator will guide participants through a tea mindfulness activity to encourage multisensory experience.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Participants touch, taste, and smell herb plants that can be used as dried leaves in herbal tea blends. Then they are able to choose from several containers of dried herbs to blend a tea for tasting, specific to their preferences. Participants also make tea blends to take home. This TH activity has several components in session and as a take-home tea blend. This can re-enforce their experience and provide a

self-led wellness activity for later. Most populations will find this activity interesting with plant information on a common product – tea. Intellectual and cognitive goals can include exposure to new ideas, activities and skills like mindfulness. Children and populations/individuals with health issues like swallowing, allergies or food/fluid intake restrictions may not participate based on advice from medical or facility staff.

Mindfulness activities are appearing more often in TH and other therapeutic services. In a 2024 article on [therapeutic techniques applicable to people-plant programming](#), HT practitioner Eva Creus describes mindfulness as “an individual’s self-regulation of attention to experiences in the present moment with curiosity, openness, and acceptance, and is a technique and practice used in therapy. Several forms of clinical mindfulness-based interventions (MBI), (mindfulness-based stress reduction, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy) as well as non-clinical mindfulness-based therapies like meditation and mindfulness-based art therapy and nature-based mindfulness interventions, all non-pharmacological techniques, can be used in combination to reduce anxiety/depression, promote stable disposition and life satisfaction (Campos et al., 2016; Djernis et al., 2019)”. Incorporating elements of mindfulness into this activity can introduce participants to the concepts, and reduce stress while enjoying a positive social experience. There are mindful tea moments digital tools with scripts now available free online. An activity like tea blending and tasting can combine social and psychological therapeutic goals (mindful awareness mentioned above) in a sensory-focused way.

Some participants may need fine-motor assistance in filling tea bags with herbal blends. It is recommended that TH facilitators do not use thickeners for participants with swallowing difficulty, this better left to facility or medical staff because of liability risk. Suggesting small sips in/out of mouth only, or smelling the tea scents rather than tasting can be accommodations for some, but note that vigilant supervision may be required.

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

Care with hot liquids! Have ice available to quickly cool down a cup that is too hot. As with all TH activities where participants will taste or eat plants, allergies, swallowing issues or contraindications with medication need to be identified prior to session.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Harvesting and drying of fresh herbs from the garden can be an extension of this activity. Tea flavors mentioned by *Healthline* as having calming effects include chamomile, peppermint, ginger, hibiscus, sage, rose hip, echinacea and lemon balm (Jones & Ajimera, 2023).

This TH activity has been adapted from one by Amy Bruzzuchesi.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

- Fleming, L., & Creus, E. (2024). Therapeutic techniques applicable to people-plant programming. *Cultivate*, 4(3).
- Gladstar, R. (2012). *Rosemary Gladstar’s medicinal herbs: A beginner’s guide: 33 healing herbs to know, grow, and use*. Storey Publishing.
- Green, G. (2023). [Tea meditation: Inner calm and happiness](#).
- Herb Society of America. (2023). [Herbal beverages](#).
- Jones, T., & Ajimera, R. (2023). [10 healthy herbal teas you should try](#). *Healthline*.

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2024.

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