

TH Activity Plan – Insect Hotel

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Materials

Biodegradable pots
(or wooden frame)

Paper straws, paper,
newspaper, straw, pinecones,
branches, bark, leaves, dry
organic material,
hollow stems, hay

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will learn about their local pollinators & insects and create a safe space for them in an insect hotel.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Learn about beneficial & pest insects, local pollinators and their value in the world in the context of food production, biodiversity and protecting natural habitats

Physical: Practice eye/hand coordination working with different forms of organic and decomposable materials

Psychological/Emotional: Recognize human & personal safe spaces & emotions as insect hotels are created; express creativity

Sensory: Compare materials with different tactile texture (paper, wood, bark, straw) and fragrances (relaxing earthy senses)

Social: Focus on team building & creating positive social boundaries; practice sharing & working together; value each other's creations demonstrating respect for others; encourage nurturing of all beings

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials & set up the activity area.
2. Facilitator begins the session by introducing the creative activity of building insect hotels with a little quiz about local insects.
3. Introduce concepts of beneficial/pest insects & pollinators. Continue by showing participants different pictures of insects and the natural habitats they live in. Make a point to mention the materials they are made of. Insect hotels can be made individually or in groups. Session may include going outside to gather materials.
4. After the introduction of different habitats, facilitator begins the building of insect hotels by offering a selection of pots & materials.
5. Participants choose a pot and fill it with chosen organic materials. The pot is finished when it is turned upside down and all the organic matter stays tidily in the pot.
6. Facilitator presents the elements needed for gardens or pots to attract and accommodate insects; the value of creating a safe space for insects to rest, grow and multiply (show different possibilities of bug hotels); and the importance of pollinators in the garden and connecting that to human food production. All this is brought up in conversations with children, identifying their need to feel safe, to grow and prosper, and identifying the need for community and mutually respected environments.
7. All participants help to clean up the activity area.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: The level of difficulty is guided by the participants' cognitive/intellectual and physical abilities. This specific activity was delivered with children aged 5-8 and is described as such, however it

is appropriate for all ages including adults. The TH session focused on psychological/emotional goals addressing safe space, identifying safe spaces and helping to create one as an insect hotel.

By physically creating a safe space for another living creature, we allow children and other participants to think and talk about their own needs, respect each other's differences and value each other's uniqueness. Talking about the complexity of the environment and its biodiversity allows children to experience a sense of safety by belonging to their family, classroom and community. Exploring the needs of insects and humans promotes care and love in the community. By giving freedom to fill the pots with materials of individual choice children have freedom to be creative and make decisions. Practice and mastery of these contribute to creating healthy coping mechanisms if they experience anxiety, overwhelming emotions, fear or lack of confidence.

This TH activity is suitable for children/others who are experiencing difficult situations in their family (parental separation, abuse, neglect, death). It is a platform for having open conversations about safe space, care and love. This activity provides a safe environment for children to open up and share their emotions as they talk about what they identify as important elements of safety for the bugs.

Learning about insects and pollinators offers potential follow-up sessions for participants. Making connections between insects and the food we eat re-introduces the value of pollinators and respect for their hard work. At the same time, it can relate to protecting and caring for the local and wider environment and biodiversity.



SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitator is responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. This activity is not suitable for a population that cannot intellectually comprehend the concepts ie. very young children or some people with mental health issues. Prior identification of allergies to any of the organic materials is important so that substitutions can be made.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Applications of this TH activity for older children, youth or adults can incorporate more detailed information on insects and more elaborate construction of insect hotels (or not..there is something special about using a child's approach for experiencing nature, building etc.). These may enhance intellectual abilities, support learning new skills and offer more extensive physical activity. For example, If there are no hollow stems, the activity could include participants drilling holes in bigger branches if this could be done safely.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

- Mason, A. (2022). [The beginner's guide to bug hotels and insect houses](#). HomeandGardenextras.com
- Rose, S. (n.d.). [Build a bug hotel](#).
- Whittlesey, L. (2002). Chapter 4. Insects and diseases. *Junior Master Gardener Handbook: Level 1*.
- Wildlife Trusts. (n.d.). [How to build a bug mansion](#).

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.