

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Psychological/Emotional
Populations: Bereaved

TH Activity Plan – Journal Collage with Dried Plant Materials

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create a journal collage using dried pressed plants, to be used for observations in nature, guided journal activities and expressions related to the loss of a loved one.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Process grief; recognize journaling as a way to move forward while expressing emotions of grief & creative expression as healing modality

Physical: Use fine motor skills to assemble collage

Psychological/Emotional: Reduce feelings of isolation

Sensory: Promote creativity while selecting & touching dried flowers

Social: Interact with group members, sharing crafting materials; increase social interactions

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Cover table with craft paper. Place dried plants in a single layer on paper plates. Distribute dried plants and all materials in the center of the table. Place journals around table perimeter. Boil water for tea and set up tea service.
2. Facilitator begins session by sharing how expressive creativity can be a useful healing modality and how on-going journaling can be a tool for working through grief. Sharing a favorite quote or poem could be inspiring and meaningful.
3. Facilitator sits at table with participants and shows example of collage and all are invited to begin. Facilitator offers plant ID throughout activity, as participants are interested.
4. Collage is created inside the front cover of journal where it is protected from wear. Leave journals open to dry until end of session.
5. Cardboard sheets are placed in back of journal for use in plant collecting. String is tied to the spiral for use in tying the journal closed.
6. Participants are encouraged to select pre-cut quotes and prompts to glue inside their journal to promote future use.
7. Optional - Participants share their creations and any journal entries they have selected, allowing an opportunity to connect this to their love one.

Materials

Spiral journals

Dried flowers

Paper plates

Tacky glue, tweezers

2 corrugated cardboard sheets per journal, hemp or jute string

Black and colored gel pens

Craft paper roll table cover

Printed: grief themed poems/prompts, quotes, nature metaphors, sensory prompts

Printed photos of loved ones

Scissors

Several varieties of tea, cups

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Expression through art and creativity is a way to make meaning after loss and is useful as a healing modality. Plants serve well as an art medium making this an appropriate and meaningful therapeutic horticulture activity. Art, in all of its forms, empowers with mediums for self-expression. It helps people work through loss by transforming grief into something outside of themselves so it can be processed and released, even if only to a small degree (Dreese, 2023). There is evidence that journaling can bring about significant and sustained reductions in grief symptomatology (Thompson and Neimeyer, 2014). Journaling helps to relieve stress and provides an outlet for emotional expression. Writing allows the opportunity to express feelings and thoughts one may not be able to share with others. Journaling through grief can be a tool to help understand and move through emotions to find a way forward.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Plants with poisonous parts, even when dried, should be avoided. Gloves should be available. People with allergies may find working with plants, dried or fresh, challenging – providing participants with advance notice of plant materials is advised. No dried plant materials should be ingested. If tea will be consumed, pre-determine food allergies, swallowing issues or contraindications with medication. Safety issues should be evaluated if this TH activity is used with young people, or people with intellectual deficits including dementia.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Making collages using natural or dried materials can be a stand-alone activity, and used for many activities including journalling. Sharing the collages within the group, in this case, bereaved individuals, provides opportunities to share memories of loved ones, which can be impactful and therapeutic. Collecting and pressing flowers for collage making can be a separate stand-alone activity, especially with a multiple session program. A purposeful outdoor walk can provide moderate exercise and opportunity for socialization.

Plant materials for this TH activity can include easy to dry flowers that have a single layer of petals, without a thick center. Examples: violets, daisies, pansies, cosmos, and umbel flowers like wild carrot. Thin vines like wild grape vines, unusually shaped or colorful leaves like maple or ginkgo, spiked plants and grasses can add interest. Plants should be pressed for drying 2-4 weeks before using. A flower press or a heavy book can be used for pressing, along with thin cardboard, newspaper, coffee filters, blotting paper or parchment paper. Collect flowers and plants after morning dew has dried. Fold paper in half, place inside the book, then arrange plants in a single layer on one side of the paper. If using cardboard, sandwich flowers between two pieces. Close the book and place a heavy brick or other books on top, pressing flowers evenly. Several pages of flowers can be placed in one book. Pre-dried leaves and flowers can be purchased if fresh plants are not accessible.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

- Dreese, D. (2023, June 1). [Beauty and grief: The artists of green burial](#). *Psychology Today*.
- Schneider, F. (2023). *Grief journal with 55 prompts & exercises for reflection and healing: Workbook with motivational, affirmation and self-care tips to help cope with... along with space to write and reflects*. Indie Publisher.
- Thompson, B.E., & Neimeyer, R.A. (2014). *Grief and the expressive arts: Practices for creating meaning*. Routledge.

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.