

## TH Activity Plan – Love Letters to a Local Forest

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Photo by L. Fleming



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will create love letters during *Craft for a Cause* event, advocating for environmental protection of the local forested area.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Advocate for environmental efforts; intellectualize sense of place while learning about local community

**Physical:** Maximize fine motor skills creating artwork; extend stamina for standing

**Psychological/Emotional:** Take action supporting personal principles related to environmental protection; explore topic for sense of purpose; adopt strategies for eco-anxiety

**Sensory:** Explore sensory inputs of vision, touch, proprioception & vestibular balance during session

**Social:** Join others in a community event advocating for environmental protection; expand social connections across ages at session; practice mentoring others

### Materials

Location for event, promotion materials

Write a Love Letter Station:  
paper, tissue paper, markers, pens, scissors, glue

Learn About Issue Station:  
educational materials

Plant a Tree Sapling Station:  
Small sapling, small containers, soil, spoons, trays, watering can, care instructions

Petition for Action Station:  
petition, refreshments

Wipes

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Schedule the TH event (effective as a Valentine-related event) & promote in the community. Estimate number of participants & gather materials. Set up stations.
2. Facilitator begins session by opening the doors to the facility, welcoming participants of all ages, directing them to materials and stations. Self-directed instructions, love letter samples, potted trees & saplings, & information on the local forest are available.
3. Several stations will allow participants to explore event, connect with others, educate selves and take action. These can include: **Write a Love Letter** (to & about trees, reflecting on their importance & sending to elected officials in support of maintaining a natural area); **Learn About the Issue** (with continuously running short videos & other educational materials on the issue); **Plant a Tree Sapling** to take home & care for; **Petition for Action** (networking area + signature gathering if appropriate). Other stations could include: making eco-friendly tote bags with [leaf prints](#) or wishing stones for trees, as reminders of conservation with “save our trees, plant more trees or nature needs us” phrases.
4. Facilitator can structure event for specific age groups or extend an open invite to the community. Facilitator’s role is to ensure safe, welcoming environment where participants engage with others, feel

empowered but not “recruited” for extreme activism. Volunteers to assist in these roles is helpful.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Eco-anxiety has been defined by the American Psychological Association as “the chronic fear of environmental doom, stemming from the observance of climate change’s seemingly irreversible effects and the worry about one’s own future, as well as the future of the next generations”. This includes loss of biodiversity and natural habitats. Studies have revealed young people in great numbers are feeling eco-anxiety (Schechter et al., 2023). Reactions and symptoms of eco-anxiety can be emotional, physical and behavioral, and can include strained relationships, isolation, over-engagement in activism, avoidance or withdrawal, intrusive thoughts, catastrophic thinking, sleep disturbances, headaches and fatigue (Anderson, 2024). Therapists suggest strategies for addressing and coping with eco-anxiety including taking action individually or with others, building resiliency, adopting sustainable practices, and engaging with nature.

This TH session addresses concern for environmental issues and the more complex eco-anxiety. A special events format involving members of a local community that focuses on an environmental issue like protecting a local forest can provide multiple benefits. Hosted by an art society, this session called *Craft for a Cause*, involving plants, forests and natural areas uses the term—[craftivism](#)—referencing activism, environmental education, creative expression and community sense of place, in a group communal effort ([Ecology Action Centre](#)).

Wellness populations, and people of all ages, abilities and interests will find this activity is recreational, therapeutic, and educational all at the same time. The physical therapeutic goals can include, depending on each individual, using and strengthening fine motor skills cutting, writing, and gluing cards. For children these will involve basic skills development. For seniors, use of hands for creative expression and advocacy can aid in dexterity, strength and movement important for functioning with arthritis. Some participants may have to complete work in a standing position (if attendee numbers are large and work space limited). This can strengthen stamina but facilitator should be observant and sensitive to those who may need to be seated.

This TH session seeks to increase social engagement as a mechanism for wellbeing. Psychological benefits of this type of engagement, when advocacy is presented in a welcoming manner and not as extreme action, can help people become involved in their communities and causes important to them. In this case, environmental action supporting natural areas. A sense of purpose, particularly when it is shared by others, can be vital for establishing social connections. Creating positive change through actions like *Craft for a Cause* TH session can foster a stronger sense of self-advocacy and build self-confidence in voicing ideas and opinions. The tree love letters offer a creative, fun way to voice support, reflect on personal convictions and interact with others.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.** Facilitator needs to be alert to participants who may need assistance performing tasks, may tire from standing, or who may need supervision for scissors, glue or other materials. The facility’s restrooms, thresholds and ramps should be accessible and sufficient number of chairs should be available for those who may need to be seated.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** The [USDA plant hardiness zone map](#), local extension services and [Arbor Day Foundation](#) can provide information for selecting saplings that will survive and thrive in a given local area. Saplings can be ordered in bulk and online including: [Colorado Blue Spruce](#) (*Picea pungens*) zones 2-7, White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) zones 3-8, [Norway Spruce](#) (*Picea abies*) zones 3-8, American Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) zones 2-8, Arizona Cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*) zones 7-9, and Eastern Red Cedar (*Junioerus virginiana*) zones 2-10. Care instructions should be provided at special event.

#### **REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

Anderson, K. (2024). [How to deal with eco-anxiety](#). Leaf.

Arbor Day Foundation. (2025). [Trees in communities](#). [Arborday.org](#).

Schechter, D., Rush, H., & Homer, C. (2023). [As climate changes, climate anxiety rises in youth](#). CBS News.com.

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2025.

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