THAD Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database

Activity: Nature Goal: Physical Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Nature's Colors Game

Text by Lesley Fleming, HTR
Photo by J. Fleming

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants play a game finding colors in nature that match colored cards.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Use intellectual skills to match colors; follow directions; practice integrity & self-regulation

Physical: Use visual acuity, color contrast sensitivity & visual perception to match colors; walk through garden working on task at hand

Psychological/Emotional: Participate in a challenge; accomplish the assigned task

Sensory: Use visual clues & acuity to solve the game; rely on color differentiation to find the plant color

Social: Work cooperatively with a partner; assist others; encourage integrity during the game; practice tolerance

Materials

Color cards in a variety of colors

Garden location with plants in many colors

GAME: NATURE'S COLORS

*** Each person picks a color**

*** Find that color in nature**

*** Stay in designated area**

*** Working in pairs is fun too**

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Prepare color cards (paint chip card samples, construction paper or other). Walk through garden to ascertain if there are colors in nature that will make the game fun.
2. Facilitator begins session by inviting participants to have fun with nature. Asking what colors in nature are their favorites, discussing colors that seem natural, popular, and symbolic of feelings, sports teams or other can excite the group members.
3. Color cards are distributed or selected by participants who are partnered up in teams of two.
4. Going outside & into the green or garden space, the game begins. Participants are instructed to find the same color in nature – a blossom, bark or other natural element. If the challenge is quickly solved, teams can swap colors and begin the hunt anew, or be given several colors at the beginning of the game.
5. Option: Nature's colors game can be done indoors by bringing plants into the room or facility. And extending the game by providing baskets to bring nature items back to group for discussion can be fun and informative.
6. The group can discuss or share tips on what colors were easy to find, where the most colors were located in the garden, exploring topics like black flowers – do they really exist in nature?, how color affects mood and behavior (research can be introduced validating this) & tolerance of people who have color vision challenges. Integrity – the concept and practice of it during the game can also be integrated into the session where appropriate for individuals or populations.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Used as an opening for TH sessions or as part of an outdoor activity, this game that matches colors in nature can be adapted to suit all levels of intellectual/cognitive skills by partnering with adults/volunteers, or organizing people into small groups, ensuring the color is in the garden, reducing the "search" area, and having potted plants with some of the colors close at hand.

When fostering integrity as a therapeutic goal (intellectual and/or social goal), the game can incorporate the concept and practice whereby finding and reporting the color match is reliant on honesty that the person or team has done so. Or the game can be set up to have the partner accompany, then attest/confirm that the match has been made as reported. Positive reinforcement is recommended for displaying integrity; this is effective for most people. Discussion of personal growth, integrity, maturity, self-regulation, and overt and subtle ways that integrity/dishonesty are revealed can be included in the session.

For participants who have therapeutic goals for increasing physical activity (people with developmental disabilities, mobility challenges, stroke recovery patients, sedentary seniors), this game can encourage them to be more active, get outdoors and participate in a game where physical activity can be fun and social.

Therapeutic goals related to vision can address a variety of challenges including eye alignment (pointing eyes at a target), eye teaming/convergence insufficiency (using both eyes), focusing (changing focus for near then far objects), improving visual perception (practice integrating brain-vision functions and skills), eye turn, eye tracking (saccadic dysfunction), coping with refractive errors of astigmatism, myopia or hyperopia, and low vision at all ages, with greater incidence in older adults. Challenges related to color vision deficiency may have already been detected in participants. Gathering this information prior to session would be helpful, with need for health information privacy respected. The most common color vision issues are distinguishing between red and green, or blue and yellow, or less common, complete color vision deficiency. Adaptations can be made for these by partnering with others who have no color vision challenges. If any symptoms of vision problems appear during the game, referrals to senior administrators or medical personal should be made.

Some vision-related goals can be incorporated into TH. However, vision management and vision therapy that address functional vision measures of visual field, acuity and contrast sensitivity are delivered by trained optometrists. Behavioral vision therapy that incorporates mind, body and vision processes teaching the brain and body to use the eyes more effectively are designed and delivered by behavioral optometrists.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. If the activity is being used with participants with vision challenges, particularly low vision, the garden needs to be free of barriers, tripping hazards or other potential mobility liabilities.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Research has determined that certain colors are more soothing and can relieve stress (Moffitt, 2018). Color has been used to promote health and wellness. Color psychology connects colors with emotions and behaviors. Chromotherapy uses color and light to restore imbalances in mental, physical and spiritual domains. Colors can induce psychological, emotional and physical responses. Red for example is considered stimulating while pink, a soft color in some tones, can calm.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.