

Activity: Creative Expression/Art Goal: Physical Populations: All but Corrections

TH Activity Plan – Pounding Pansies

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create artwork using the natural pigments found in pansies.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Learn about natural pigments and dyes; follow verbal & visual directions

Physical: Improve arm strength, range of motion, fine & gross motor skills & coordination

Psychological/Emotional: Release frustrations; express creativity

Sensory: Manage auditory loudness; consider others who may find loud noises challenging

Social: Share materials (rubber mallets); be attentive to facilitator, listening carefully to directions

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Determine where the pansies will be picked, ensuring garden is accessible and without hazards. Option: have pansies indoors in containers.
2. Facilitator begins session by describing activity, with or without mention of therapeutic goals. Sample artwork is on hand.
3. Participant(s) pick pansies from plant, keeping flower intact & with as little stem attached as possible.
4. Place pansy (or piece of it) face down on the chosen fabric/paper.
5. Place layer of paper towel on top of flower.
6. Gently pound on top of paper towel with rubber mallet until pigment shows through on paper towel – small, repetitive pounding works best.
7. Take off paper towel, peel away pounded flower and reveal artwork.
8. If desired, embellish around flower with other drawing/art materials. Optional to add a protective layer with acrylic spray sealer.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity can be as simple or complex as your participants can imagine and can be based on cognitive and creative abilities. Verbal prompts can be used for individuals who need practice listening and/or following directions. Visual and even written prompts and art examples can accommodate people with hearing deficits.

Materials

Pansies

Rubber mallet, paper towel

Fabric (cotton, silk) or paper (with some texture) cut to size

Markers, other embellishments

Optional: hearing protection & acrylic spray sealer

Gloves, wipes

Physical goals can be address a range of populations including those in physical rehabilitation due to injury, stroke, heart attack, or other medical conditions like movement disorders where range of motion, or arm strength can be improved.

Psychological goals can address self-regulation dysfunction where managing stress, anger or frustration can be practiced by pounding pansies (not too zealously – this can be part of the practice of determining acceptable pounding level/noise). Discussion of strategies for coping with noise or frustration including gardening, physical tasks, pounding pansies or other, can work towards integrating psychological and physical (mind-body) integration.

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

This is a noisy activity! Use care in deciding if your chosen population may be sensitive to loud sound, tell participants in advance and consider having ear protection. People with noise sensitivity/defensiveness may prefer another activity that can provide similar therapeutic outcomes. Make sure participants can handle a rubber mallet without hammering themselves or others - different weights and sizes are easily found. Fingertips should be watched closely so as to not hit them with the rubber mallet. Use of chopsticks or tape can assist holding flowers in place. Facilitator may choose to spray artwork with acrylic spray sealer for safety and to ensure safe ventilation.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Pounding whole flowers come out beautifully including pieces of petals and even leaves. Other types of plants and flowers can be substituted including dandelions, lantana, pentas, marigolds and verbena. Select ones that are not toxic and not overly dry. Practicing with flowers prior to session is recommended. Newer crafts with pansies, some appropriate for TH might include quilt projects using fabric squares from the group, adding embroidery around pounded flowers (populations would need to be able to safely work with embroidery needles), and artwork used for notecards or book covers.

Pansies are a very popular plant with “faces” that delight most populations. Using them for creative expression can bring bright colors into rooms, artwork and help boost moods. Pansies are *Viola* hybrids (*Viola x wittrockiana*), come in a variety of colors and are short-lived perennials. Johnny jump-ups (*Viola tricolor*) are related, with most people familiar with both.

For an additional activity component, consider potting up pansy plants (University of Arkansas, 2024).

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Mueller, L. (2024). [A guide to natural dyes: Make fabric dye with food and plants](#). Skillshare.com.

Sanders, S. (2024). [All about pansies](#). University of Arkansas System division of Agriculture Research & Extension.

Weigel, G. (2024). [Pansies: The flower with a face](#). Greenviewfertilizer.com.

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.