

Activity: Planting Goal: Social Populations: Specialized Population

TH Activity Plan – Ready, Set Grow the Hydroponics Way

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Photos by SucSeed



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will ready & set up a hydroponic grow station.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Use executive function to set & space seeds in a unique garden set-up; understand institution’s definition of safe space & confidentiality within the group

Physical: Clean & restock SucSeed bin using gross & fine motor actions

Psychological/Emotional: Explore renewal & growth for plants & humans; expand understanding of life cycle

Sensory: Handle seeds using tactile, proprioception senses

Social: Participate in social activity in a safe place; socialize with like-minded people; participate in group decision-making

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Set up the physical space for the hydroponic structure.
2. Facilitator begins session by defining the session as a safe space where confidentiality is a priority. Participants introduce themselves & share their favorite plant. This opening activity promotes an opportunity for meaningful social interactions as a precursor to the hands-on activity setting up the hydroponic grow station.
3. Facilitator explains hydroponic set-up & tasks to be undertaken by small groups who share the identified goal. Beginning with emptying and cleaning the hydroponic bin, discussion & actual work of removing old growth, root web network & preparation with new growing medium + nutrients provide opportunities to understand interconnected relationships (plants & metaphor for humans), hydroponic vs soil differences as growing methods. Each team takes turns at this part of activity.
4. The grow bin is filled with water & nutrients in a collaborative manner.
5. Seed selection and setting occurs next in the small group format, taking turns. Written info sheets with directions for measuring nutrients & setting seeds as well as verbal guidance transfer horticultural information. On-going engagement within group, led by facilitator relates nurturing seeds in this context to nurturing self, others.
6. Participants select the seeds they choose to plant (parsley, basil, cilantro) & plant in the hydroponic compartments, tracking the number of seeds they planted.

Materials

Hydroponic setup (SucSeed or other)

Seeds (parsley, basil, cilantro)

Buckets, water, towels,

Info sheets on hydroponic process

Nutrients, measuring tools

Eye protection, gloves, wipes

Sign-up sheet

7. Facilitator leads discussion on strategies for new personal growth, safe nurturing environments, positive parent-child interactions mindfulness activities & plant-based activities can provide insights.
8. Concluding the session, each participant describes themselves & the session using a plant & metaphor (thistle-hard but doable, sunflower-sunny, positive).
9. Facilitator asks for volunteers to monitor growth of seeds & water levels on a daily basis.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This TH activity was developed and structured for use by a social service agency working with families during the perinatal period. In some cases, nurturing skills were weak and the use of hydroponic growing set-up served two purposes: a growing station for use at the agency with the children and as a hands-on therapeutic horticulture activity encouraging positive personal growth in several health domains. Using a group format has proven to be effective for several reasons including opportunities for participants to socialize and meet others in similar circumstances (parenting young children), learn collectively about horticultural activities/food production, build confidence participating in group decision-making, and recognize a safe space at the agency.

Parent-child attachment is the development of an emotional bond that forms between a child and the significant adult in the parenting role. Many adults experience traumatic events in their childhood that affect their ability to form secure, trusting relationships and bonds. This can impact their parenting skills. Attachment is foundational for an individual across the life span. The quality of the attachment experiences helps a child to grow cognitively, emotionally and physically. TH activities, such as this one, provide opportunities to children and adults to relate to the need for care and attention from growing the herbs to growing their skills and abilities. The delivery of this type of session is most effective when the needs of the participants can be met to support their participation. This may include transportation and child-minding needs for the session.

Applicable to other populations, this TH activity offers opportunities to integrate multiple health goals, selecting a few per session, and relevant to specific populations. Children and youth find hydroponic growing interesting because it is different than soil-based gardening/growing; this can correspond to intellectual stimulation, science curriculum (math, sustainable environmental practices, inquiry-based learning) while encouraging cooperative interactions in the small group and classroom format. The First Nations Regional Adult Education Center, Kahnawake, Quebec has used hydroponic growing to address food insecurity and education.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Accessibility of work area (height), hazard-free and dry floors, and working electrical system for grow bin should be pre-checked prior to use. Hand and eye protection is recommended when handling nutrients and growing medium. Allergies should be considered (snacks are typically available). Protocols for trauma responsive care should be in place for some populations, if needed.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Hydroponic growing uses water-based nutrient solutions instead of soil with this technique growing in popularity for horticulture-based programming. Several types of hydroponic set-ups exist with information available from [USDA National Agricultural Library](#) on this and related topics of food production, research and history. Using SucSeed or other company's hydroponic set-ups provide a good starting point for success.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

SucSeed. (2024). Helping people grow fresh produce.

[SucSeed Hydroponic Grow Gardens | Canada's Indoor Growing Company](#)

SucSeed. (2021). SucSeed in the Classroom. [YouTube]. <https://sucseed.ca/pages/educational-content>

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.