

Activity: Plant Care Goal: Cognitive Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Repotting Plants

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Materials

herbs in 2"- 4" containers that need to be repotted
potting medium
larger plastic containers with drainage holes, no more than 2" larger than previous container (approximately 4-6" in diameter)
gloves, trowels, trays, wipes

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Expand understanding of plant development by repotting growing plants, relating this to human growth.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Recognize when plant growth occurs & what plant care is appropriate for growing plants

Physical: Strengthen endurance, stamina, upper body movement

Psychological/Emotional: Practice emotional connection to plants through care & repotting task relating this to human connections

Sensory: Develop sense of touch & vestibular (balance) sense; address sensory challenges

Social: Used as a group activity, possibly in classroom setting, take turns doing repotting if space/equipment is limited

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Prep:** Gather sufficient number of plants (herbs recommended) for number of participants & water them the day before the session. Set-up work area with trays, potting medium, trowels, water & plants. Gloves recommended.
2. Facilitator demonstrates process of repotting: select plant & larger container, look for pests/problems, squeeze sides of current pot to ease removal, gently remove plant, tease roots & remove some of the old soil, practice placement in new pot, put some soil in bottom, place plant so it sits at correct depth in new pot, fill pot around plant with soil. Water. Do not place in full sun immediately.
3. Repeat as necessary to repot all plants.
4. Discuss plant needs, growth & development & steps to take to ensure a healthy plant. These can be related to human growth & development identifying essential elements of food, parenting, exercise, nutrition, schooling, & socialization.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity is appropriate for most populations and is particularly effective with student populations when a therapeutic goal of understanding plant and human development is used. For people with sensory challenges, repotting plants can support sensory stimulation focused on integrating level of comfort for sense of touch (gloves may provide an adaptive strategy) and vestibular (balance) sense where appropriate.

Repotting plants offers many different themes to explore and therapeutic goals that may be appropriate. For example, the theme of plant growth as a

metaphor for human growth. Therapeutic goals of increasing physical stamina (standing, bending, moving arms and hands), expanding sensory integration, increased exposure to outside light/wind/temperatures, and connections to plant/nature life can address challenges in many of the health domains.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Choice of potting medium may be based on allergies, sensitivities of participants or tendencies to put things in mouth. Potting medium with vermiculite or other amendments which may be put in mouths can be harmful. Sterilized soil and soil-less potting mixes may be appropriate. Use of gloves, sunscreen and plastic potting trays provide protection and containment of materials.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Extensions of repotting plant activity: curriculum topic for vocational horticulture programs, plant preparation for plant sales and fundraisers, donations to community groups, role reversal-participants give repotted plants to teachers, facility staff or other.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

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Kids Garden Community. (2023). Growing together: Open forum: Plant sale fundraisers [video].

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

