

Activity: Planting Goal: Psychological/Emotional Populations: All

## TH Activity Plan – Spring Kokedama in Vases

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### Materials

A plant (tulips, hyacinth, overleaf, mini roses)

Peat-free compost, sphagnum moss, water

Glass vase, string, gardening gloves, wipes

**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will create an artistic re-planting of indoor plants in kokedama style using glass containers.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Promote creativity; learn new skills & horticultural knowledge about plants & their needs; retrieve memories; follow the instructions

**Physical:** Develop strength in hands by molding the compost ball, strengthen eye-hand motor skills by applying string

**Psychological/Emotional:** Develop a sense of self-worth; relate care of kokedama to self-care; enhance positive emotion by observing and creating beautiful plant decorations; express innovation and creativity

**Sensory:** Develop greater awareness of tactile differences (smooth glass, moist and soft moss, compost, water); touch plant textures as a practice for reducing defensiveness; smell the aroma of flowers to create a relaxing sensory experience

**Social:** Focus on team building; promote trust in others; respect each other's work and value uniqueness; help build healthy boundaries and allow practice dealing with conflicts

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Sustainably gather materials.
2. The facilitator begins the session by introducing the Japanese kokedama art form of planting plants.
3. Participants mix the compost and some of the sphagnum moss. Moss should represent around 15% of the mix.
4. Add water to the mix and knead it to form a firm ball that will hold its shape. This can take some time, do not rush. The ball should be around the same size as it is the pot of the plant you will use for the kokedama.
5. Take the plant gently from the pot and carefully remove most of its compost to reveal the roots/bulbs.
6. Split the compost ball in half. Then gently pack the two halves back together around the plants' roots/bulbs.
7. Lay out the moss on the table (approximately 1cm/1/2inch thick layer) & then set the compost ball with the plant in the middle of the moss.
8. Tie up the moss around the compost ball using the string. Wind it around repeatedly to secure the moss in place.
9. Place your kokedama into a glass jar. To keep the kokedama moist use a layer of stones at the bottom of the glass jar and fill half with water and then place the kokedama plant in.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** This activity provides a hands-on therapeutic horticulture activity that combines gentleness and power. It was developed initially for participants who had faced adversity in their lives, and who are in the process of healing from trauma and wounds of the heart. The participants felt empowered by developing new skills and this activity provided an effective platform for conversations about brokenness and restoration – especially when the kokedama ball broke down and the participants needed to rebuild them from scratch again. Using plants to encourage participants to talk about resiliency and attitudes of not giving up allows safe distance and transference of emotions and behavior to the plants, and where, when they are strong enough and ready, to relate their journey, making the connection between plant and human resiliency.

The concept of gentleness and power has both plant and people connections. Creating a kokedama and caring for it requires gentleness and nurturing. Creating something new, as in a new way to have a plant, like in a kokedama style, requires strength, with power over the process, and power to make choices about materials and type of kokedama. The combination of the two seemingly opposite traits is part of life, a good reflection of past journeys and positive modelling for future interactions and experiences.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Some of the plants listed in this activity have toxicity. Facilitator needs to gauge the maturity of participants when using these and the safety risks. Safety protocols for handling all materials should be included in the session. Glass containers may not be appropriate for some participants or facilities.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** This activity requires hand strength and steadiness. Accommodations for participants with weak hands or challenges with hand mobility can be made, or alternate activities selected. The theme of sustainable and caring relationships can be modelled in the activity; sourcing the materials with respect for nature and for participants.

Plants suitable for the kokedama art –ferns (asparagus and other types); anthuriums; begonia; Jacob’s ladder, rosemary, strawberries and pansies. Cyclamen, peace lily and bulbs—tulips, narcissus, hyacinth—contain toxins, not considered toxic to handle but should not be ingested (America’s Poison Control Centers, n.d.).



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

America’s Poison Control Centers. (n.d.). Home. <https://www.aapcc.org/>  
Bradley, N. (2024). [How to make a DIY kokedama ball](#). *Better Homes & Gardens*.  
Health, S. (2022). [How to make kokedama Japanese art](#). *The Spruce*.  
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. (n.d.). [Make a kokedama](#).

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