

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Cognitive/Intellectual Populations: All

## TH Activity Plan – TH Professional Development: Painting Plants

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### Materials

Plant specimens, paint supplies, brushes, water

Tables, easels, aprons

Retrospective evaluation

**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will practice HT/TH skills for treatment plans/interventions as professional development using painting plants activity.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Develop skills for treatment plans or TH interventions; expand knowledge of treatment process applied to TH practice; evaluate self-knowledge using retrospective post/pre test or questionnaire (RPT)

**Physical:** Strengthen pincer grip & manual dexterity

**Psychological/Emotional:** Expand confidence in HT/TH professional skills

**Sensory:** Use multiple senses to paint – vision, touch, smell, vestibular balance, proprioception

**Social:** Actively participate in a professional development group session including discussion & evaluation; engage appropriately with peers demonstrating sensitivity & tolerance

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials, select delivery site indoors or outside, develop retrospective post/pre test or evaluation.
2. Facilitator begins session by welcoming participants to this professional development focused on practicing treatment planning & process using a painting plants activity. Materials are distributed.
3. Facilitator determines the sequence of the training. Theory may be presented first, followed by painting. Or treatment components may be discussed during actual painting, stopping throughout so that participants can consider the inter-relatedness of goal-setting to activity selection, pre-determining outcomes before setting goals etc.
4. The actual painting of plants is the prompt for participants to think about & develop treatment or intervention steps. Neither participants or clients are meant to create professional artwork, but rather, use a plant-based activity to address health challenges, working towards improvements.
5. Tips for session delivery are shared, time is allowed for actual painting of plants, discussions are encouraged, and the retrospective post/pre evaluation is administered. Facilitator may need to explain evaluative tool.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Painting plants can be used for experiential training as TH professional development. “While treatment plans are most often used for horticultural therapy, less often for therapeutic horticulture, practice in developing a treatment plan for clients who do not require a formalized treatment plan can be a helpful tool in strengthening a practitioner’s skills.... Treatment plans by their very nature are complex. They are integral to the health improvements of clients. A treatment plan is the process that includes assessing the functioning level of a client, identifying deficits, identifying short and long term health goals to improve functioning, planning and delivering activities as the intervention that will work towards the targeted health improvements, and the measurement and documentation of outcomes” (Fleming, 2013).

The following is a condensed version of treatment planning presented as key components for a TH professional development session snapshot. HT courses provide essential detailed foundational knowledge.

**Needs Assessment** – By using a TH activity like painting plants, participants begin by considering how to do a needs assessment. Having a concrete activity can be helpful in thinking about what client’s needs are. Some facilities and programs have formalized needs assessment protocols. Example from painting plants: weak pincer grip; client avoids tasks that require holding pencils/utensils.

**Goal-Setting** –Based on client needs, setting goals is a collaboration with client, facility staff or interdisciplinary treatment teams. There may be a range of therapeutic goals, too many to do in one session, however, planning an approach to interventions, and selecting goal priorities can begin this stage. Expressing these as [SMART goals](#) with measurable outcomes impacts the treatment process. Example from painting plants: Client will participate in a group TH session painting plants; client will hold paintbrush for 3 – 2 minute periods in session.

**Task Analysis** – This component may be considered prior to goal-setting or after activity has been selected. It should correlate to client needs and desired outcome. Example from painting plants: painting requires ability or accommodation to hold paintbrush; paintbrush can be larger diameter or held in hand with assistive device.

**Therapeutic Activity Selection** – Typically selected after previous treatment process components have been undertaken, this is not always the case with TH programming. The activity should work towards achieving the goals and desired health outcomes of individuals or in the case of TH, group goals. Example from painting plants: use pincer grip to strengthen skills for holding paintbrush.

**Measurable Outcomes** – Prior determination of SMART goals and how outcomes will be measured guide this step in treatment. These may include client self-evaluation/questionnaire, practitioner observation and charting, timed tests - use of paintbrush during session (referring to goal of 3- 2 minute periods).

During the professional development session, each of these stages or components of a treatment process are discussed using the plant painting activity to provide concrete examples. Encouraging participants to explore goals, task analysis, measurable outcomes with peers – in a safe setting like a professional development session can expand their confidence and understanding of this very complex process that is the backbone of HT/TH.

The professional development session can conclude with a [retrospective post/pre questionnaire](#), an example of a measurable outcome tool, where “respondents self-report changes in attitudes, behavior, knowledge and/or skills immediately after the training or activity, reflecting on these before and after training” (Fleming, 2012). These can be used for professional development and for TH sessions with participants.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.** Accessible facilities, and considerations for sun protection and water hydration should be in place for session.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Professional development for HT/TH practitioners has occurred frequently at botanical and public garden settings. The plant-rich environment lends itself to professional development where plants and gardening are key to health interventions. Strong relationships between public gardens and HT practitioners exist in many communities. This professional development was delivered at [Leu Gardens FL](#).

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

- Fleming, L. (2013). Treatment plans: Bringing some simplicity to a complex process. *American Horticultural Therapy News Magazine*, 41(1).
- Fleming, (2012). A tool of the trade: Retrospective evaluations. *American Horticultural Therapy Association News*, 40(1).

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