

Activity: Design Goal: Psychological/Emotional Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Valentine Kissing Ball

Text by Lesley Fleming, HTR

Photo by Tablecloths Factory



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will make a Valentine kissing ball with live flowers to take with them.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Conceptualize how the arrangement will be made using a round foam base; estimate the number of flowers needed based on their size

Physical: Use fine motor and finger dexterity skills

Psychological/Emotional: Reminisce about lost love, current love, loved ones (not necessarily romantic) & the importance of love

Sensory: Inhale the fragrance of the flowers as kissing ball is being constructed

Social: Work in pairs to make kissing ball; gift the flower arrangement to a loved one

Materials

Foam ball (wet floral foam that absorbs water)

2-3 dozen flowers per ball (carnations, roses, mums, daisies)

Ribbon, scissors, pruners, hot glue gun, screw (to hang ball from)

Boxes to transport arrangements

Gloves, wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials & prep cut flowers.
2. Facilitator begins session by describing & demonstrating the technique of soaking floral foam ball, prepping flowers, poking holes in the foam, recutting stems, then inserting flower stems into ball using the appropriate length of stem so that blossoms are all same at finished surface. Insert flowers close to one another without gaps. Try using an alternating pattern.
3. Participants undertake these steps and begin inserting flowers into ball ensuring that there is total coverage of foam.
4. A pause in the activity can allow time for discussion within group about challenges of the activity, sensory elements being experienced or related topics (see comments below).
5. Facilitator directs group re inserting screw for the ribbon to hang the kissing ball. Make a hole at top of ball, insert glue, then screw or knob. Let dry. Attach ribbon.
6. Take time to admire horticultural arrangements in the group. Discuss history of kissing balls, meaning of flowers or other appropriate themes. At session's conclusion, provide boxes to transport kissing ball.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: The concept of love can be the starting point for this therapeutic horticulture activity. Connecting with others, experiencing love in many forms—romantic, familial, or friendship—is universal. Research now validates that social connections are important health determinants (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023; Fleming, 2023). Most populations will find this flower-intense arrangement intriguing—configuring flowers into a round form that will hang or sit on a stand. Cognitive/intellectual goals can involve math elements estimating the number of flowers per kissing ball, and/or

conceptualizing and discussing the process for inserting the flowers. Psychological goals can explore types of love, lost love (perhaps due to circumstances, age, immaturity, poor lifestyle behaviors common in some populations with addiction or self-regulation dysfunction, or adversity), as well as the meaning of love (and how it is demonstrated in healthy relationships).

The Greeks identified 8 types of love: storge (family love), pragma (longstanding love), ludus (playful love), philia (deep friendship), eros (sexual passion), mania (obsessive love), agape (love for everyone) and philautia (love of self). These can be discussed relating love to plant reproduction for populations mature enough to receive this information, or for groups where behavior pertaining to love and sex is relevant.

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

Choose flowers without thorns. Many roses are thornless or have had their thorns removed. Pruners, scissors, screws and hot glue guns may not be appropriate for some populations. Use of fabric gloves with hot glue guns is recommended. People with allergies to flowers/pollen may find session uncomfortable. Fabric flowers can be substituted but closed room environment may still pose discomfort.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Choose fragrant flowers if possible to expand sensory elements. Flower preparation for any type of arrangement is key to long-lasting and beautiful flowers. As soon as possible after flowers are purchased, cut each stem and place in water with preservative. Use clean containers, sharp scissors or pruners and remove any greenery that will be below water line (even for the short period of time in the prep bucket). When each stem is to be placed in kissing ball, recut to 1” at a 45degree angle. These tips would be helpful to share with participants. Most people buy and gift flowers at some point in their lives.

Purchasing the number of cut flowers required for this activity can be expensive. Arrangement could be made in pairs if the kissing ball is to remain at facility and not sent home with one or the other person. Consider planning for this activity by planting appropriate flowers in facility garden at beginning of season so that when flowers are mature, they can be cut and used. This may or may not coincide with Valentines, impossible in cold climates. Alternately, flowers can be purchased wholesale, donated from funeral homes, or fabric flowers used instead of live flowers. Or kissing ball can be made at times other than for Valentines. Love is eternal some say.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). [How does social connectedness affect health?](#)

Fleming, L. (2023). [Gardening's social side](#). *Cultivate* 3(1).

HGTV Magazine. (2024). 5 DIY Valentine's Day Flower Arrangements.

<https://www.hgtv.com/lifestyle/holidays/5-diy-valentines-day-flower-arrangements-pictures>

HGTV Magazine. (2024). 12 easy bouquet ideas using supermarket flowers.

<https://www.hgtv.com/design/decorating/design-101/easy-bouquets-using-supermarket-flowers-pictures>

Scott, T.L., Masser, B.M., & Pachana, N.A. (2020). Positive aging benefits of home and community gardening activities: Older adults report enhanced self-esteem, productive endeavors, social engagement and exercise. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 22, 8.

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.