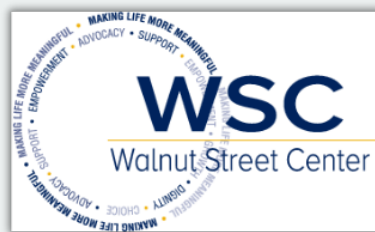


Walnut Street Center



ACTIVITY GUIDE BOOK

FOR STAFF FACILITATION

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Introduction and Welcome

Welcome, staff of Walnut Street Center, to this exciting journey into the world of art and its transformative potential for individuals with cognitive impairments! This activity book is designed to equip you with the tools and inspiration to incorporate art into individuals daily lives.

Within these pages, you will find a host of different art activities. We'll also delve into the importance and benefits of art and creative expression, drawing insights from established research in the field. We'll guide you through the process of "grading activities" to ensure a "just right challenge" for each participant, maximizing their engagement and fostering a sense of accomplishment.



Introduction

Why Art Matters



The world of art offers a vibrant and enriching experience for everyone, but it holds particular significance for individuals with cognitive impairments. Engaging in art activities goes beyond creating something beautiful; it fosters cognitive, emotional, and social benefits, making it a valuable tool for educators, caregivers, and therapists.

Understanding Needs of the Individuals

Adults with intellectual disabilities have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings verbally and may display as maladaptive behaviors (e.g., **agitated, aggressive, and self-injurious behaviors**) which disrupt social relationships (Antonacci et. al., 2018).

As body gestures, sounds

and pictures are effective non-verbal means of human communication, (Phutela, _____ 2015), arts-based interventions may be a useful and viable way to help this group.

Evidence shows that arts-based interventions such as music therapy, mandala making, and art facilitation can enhance the well-being of people with intellectual disabilities in terms of **reduced stress and enhanced language comprehension** (Ho et. al., 2020).

Introduction

Research has shown that artmaking can stimulate and improve cognitive function in individuals with cognitive impairments. A study published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease found that **art therapy led to significant improvements in cognitive function** for people with Alzheimer's disease dementia (Fionarelli et. al., 2023)

Making art isn't just about creating something pretty. It's a powerful tool that can unlock **creativity, independence, and self-awareness**. Participation in art activities can lead to a deeper understanding of oneself through the process of exploration and expression.

Engaging in art stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system leading to reduced stress. It offers people the opportunity to explore personal problems without relying on a verbal form of communication as well as helps them deal with symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences in their lives and to connect with their inner selves.

Introduction

The Benefits of Artistic Expression

(Fionarelli et. al., 2023)

01 Mindfulness and Self-Knowledge:

Art can be a calming experience, helping individuals focus on the present moment and connect with their inner world.

02 Neuroplasticity and Improved Cognition:

Engaging with art stimulates the brain, potentially leading to improvements in memory, problem-solving abilities, and overall cognitive function. This phenomenon is potentially linked to the concept of neuroplasticity, the brain's capacity to adapt and form new connections.

03 Social Connection and Positive Lifestyle Choices:

Creating art in a collaborative setting fosters social interaction and can even encourage the adoption of healthier habits, such as a reduction in sedentary behavior.

The “Just Right” Challenge

The “just right challenge” emphasizes the importance of finding activities that are neither too easy nor too difficult. Overly simplistic art experiences can lead to boredom and a lack of engagement. On the other hand, excessively challenging activities can result in frustration and discouragement. The “just right challenge” strikes a balance, offering individuals the opportunity to experience success while also pushing their creative boundaries and fostering a sense of accomplishment.

**Too
Easy**



**Just
Right**



**Too
Difficult**



The “Just Right” Challenge

Here’s How to Find the “Just Right” Zone



01 Think about the Artist

- What are they good at?
- How long can they usually focus on something?
- Have they done a similar activity before?

Check the Activity 02

- How many steps are there?
- What are the materials needed?
- Does it require much hand-eye coordination or planning?



03 Make Adjustments!

- Can we break down the steps into smaller ones?
- Can we offer choices of materials or techniques?
- can we modify materials to make them easier to use?

Approaches to Facilitate Participation

When thinking about ways to get individuals to engage in art and art projects, there are a few things to remember. Every participant brings a unique blend of strengths and needs to the program. As their facilitator, be mindful of these individual talents. As you get to know each participant, take note of tasks in which they are successful independently and those in which they need some extra support (this can come in the form of cueing, hand-over-hand support, etc.).

Once you have come to understand the individuals' needs you can start to engage them in art and other projects. Here are some things to keep in mind when running art groups with the individuals.



Client-directed Vs. Staff directed

The client is offered the choice to participate in the group art activity or to engage in their own activity. Encourage the client to participate in the group activity by offering them the opportunity to complete their own activity afterward.



Focus on the activity

This is about “**doing**” - use a “no discounting rule”. Staff and clients should not discount their own work or anyone else’s work, maintaining a safe and positive environment.



Getting Started

Clients may not know where to start and may need a gentle push to start. Show the clients the finished product and make it sound enticing, allowing for individual choice to adapt the project to their liking.



Accessibility

Clients need to have access to materials /time/space to engage in these activities. Allow flexibility in timing and space to promote a stress-free and successful participation.



Structure and Consistency

Provide a clear schedule and routine for art activities. Maintain a consistent layout for the art space and have all materials easily accessible. Schedule short breaks for movement and stretching as needed. Encourage gentle movement during the activity itself, if appropriate.



Structure of Art Groups

When running an art group, it is important to remember that participation looks different for each individual. The following table offers a recommended structure for running art groups, but be sure to adapt the structure, tasks, and environment to the best fit the needs of participants.

1. Check in <ul style="list-style-type: none">Starting sessions with a check-in on participants' feelings promotes social and emotional skills development, self-awareness, and a safe space for expression. A simple emotion rating picture can be used.
2. Orient to project <ul style="list-style-type: none">Once the individuals are ready, staff may show the participants a finished version of the day's project, and explain the steps to the activity. Allow options for different activities. If the participant cannot decide, facilitators may offer a first, then option.
3. The Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">Depending on the task and the participant's strengths, facilitators may walk around the room providing help when necessary. Some participants are independent once they are set up. Always start with the least amount of support, increasing as needed.Physical and verbal cues may help participants stay focused on the task.Be patient! Some participants need some time to figure out the activity. Do not jump in right away.
4. Check out <ul style="list-style-type: none">About 10 minutes before the group ends, remind participants about the time and ask them to start tidying up their area.

Helping Re-engage Clients

The Remotivation Process (de las Heras et. al., 2019) helps people with low motivation, or "volitional challenges," re-engage in activities. It focuses on client interests, provides choices, and removes barriers to participation. Therapists take a supportive role ("doing with") to guide clients through three phases: Exploration, Competence, and Achievement. These stages progressively build self-direction and engagement in activities and therapy. The following table offers an overview of the remotivation process and how to incorporate it.

Exploration Phase



- This stage addresses **the root of motivation**, "volition." When clients struggle to express interests, make choices, or participate actively due to low self-efficacy or underdeveloped values, Remotivation steps in. It emphasizes exploration through engaging activities, allowing clients to discover their interests and build a sense of self. This shifts the focus from achieving a perfect outcome to appreciating the client's journey within the activity.

Promote participation by:

- Reducing/Eliminating Failure
- Maximize enjoyment/pleasure
- Promoting Discovery (learning through doing vs telling)
- Building up choices - start small then increase the number of choices within an activity
- Reducing/Removing time limits.

Modify Environment

- Ensure that the space is safe and promotes attention
- Use group norms. it may be helpful to put them up to be easily seen and referred to
- Use a trauma-informed approach

Modify Task/Activity

- Grade activities so that everyone feels successful
- Use visual cues or physical support (assistance)
- Choose activities that have one way of doing them

Competency Phase



- Phase Two of the Remotivation Process **focuses on internalizing the progress made.** Clients consistently participate, express interest, and even initiate activities. This stage emphasizes building self-worth and solidifying a positive outlook. Clients now set personal goals, embrace challenges within meaningful roles, and adapt to environmental changes. Performance improves as social expectations for participation rise. This phase is all about practicing new skills, navigating expectations, and ultimately building self-confidence within their chosen context
- Staff empowers individuals by providing progressively challenging activities that build their sense of accomplishment. This goes beyond simply acquiring skills.

- Staff fosters the development of habits and routines that bring satisfaction to daily life.
- Staff may work with clients to explore their potential, offering personalized feedback and guidance. This collaborative process helps clients build a vision for their future, one that goes beyond present limitations, and equips them with the skills needed to thrive in various situations.

Achievement Phase



- The last phase **pushes clients to reach their full potential**. They actively seek challenges, set long-term goals, and leverage resources available in their environment. This phase emphasizes accountability. Clients take ownership of their choices, integrating desired activities into their routines and striving to participate fully within their community. Finally, they work on mastering these skills across different environments.
- Staff can coach the client to be independent. We help you track your progress and remind you of your amazing ability to make decisions, set goals, and tackle challenges.
- Staff gradually steps back. This allows clients to practice independence, even if it means facing setbacks sometimes. These experiences help them build self-confidence and problem-solving skills.

By Knowing which stage the individual is in with their motivation, you can strive for full participation and learning new skills.

As stated in the previous section, Some individuals may be independent in the activity once set up (all materials needed are gathered and placed within reach). The table below may be used to identify the level of participation the individual is currently in, using 3 simple art activities: (Adapted from Volitional Questionnaire, Chern et. al., 1996).

Activity	Participation Level 1	Participation Level 2	Participation Level 3	Participation Level 4	Participation Level 5
Stickers	Shows minimal interest in stickers.	Explores stickers but doesn't place them.	Places some stickers independently.	Places stickers with intention and some planning.	Creates a simple composition using stickers.
Coloring	Shows no interest in coloring pages or materials.		Holds art supply but doesn't color	Scribbles or colors within a small area.	Colors within lines with some control.
Painting	Shows no interest in paint or brushes.	Touches paint or brushes but doesn't explore.	Makes random strokes or explores color mixing.	Paints with some control and explores different techniques	Paints with focus and creates a clear image or design



Based on the individual's participation level, we can offer assistance or adapt activities, incorporating principles from the Remotivation Process:

01 Participation Level 1: Shows Minimal Interest

- **Remotivation Approach:**
 - **Exploration:** Present the activity in a visually appealing way. Let them explore the materials freely without pressure.
 - **Acceptance:** Don't force participation. Acknowledge their disinterest and offer alternative activities.
- **Adaptations:**
 - **Simplify:** Break down activities into smaller steps. Offer pre-colored shapes for sticker placement or pre-mixed paint colors.
 - **Sensory Exploration:** Focus on the sensory experience of the materials. Let them touch stickers, feel the texture of paint, or explore the sound of crayons on paper.

02 Participation Level 2: Explores but Doesn't Engage Fully

- **Remotivation Approach:**
 - **Competence:** Offer positive reinforcement for any interaction with the materials.
 - **Linking Topics:** Connect the activity to their interests.
- **Adaptations:**
 - **Offer Choices:** Provide a variety of materials with different textures and colors. Offer sticker sheets with themes they might enjoy.
 - **Demonstrate:** Briefly demonstrate basic techniques with paints or crayons to spark interest.

03

Participation Level 3: Starts Engaging Independently

- **Remotivation Approach:**
 - **Competence:** Continue offering positive reinforcement for independent exploration.
 - **Sharing Experiences:** Encourage them to share their creations with others.
 - **Adaptations:**
 - **Increase Complexity:** As their skills develop, offer more complex materials or coloring pages with intricate details.
 - **Project Ideas:** Introduce simple art projects with basic instructions to guide their creativity.
-

04

Participation Level 4: Engages with Control and Exploration

- **Remotivation Approach:**
 - **Achievement:** Acknowledge their progress and celebrate their accomplishments.
 - **Work Applications:** Discuss how their artistic skills can be used in other activities (e.g., decorating cards for birthdays).
- **Adaptations:**
 - **Challenges:** Offer age-appropriate art challenges or prompts to encourage further exploration of techniques.
 - **Individualized Support:** If needed, provide minimal assistance with specific skills like holding a brush or using scissors safely.

05

Participation Level 5: Creates Focused and Intentional Art

- **Remotivation Approach:**
 - **Achievement:** Provide opportunities for them to showcase their artwork (e.g., community art shows).
 - **Appreciation:** Express genuine appreciation for their creativity and dedication.
 - **Adaptations:**
 - **Advanced Techniques:** Introduce them to new art materials and techniques based on their interests.
 - **Freedom and Exploration:** Provide them with the space and freedom to pursue their artistic vision independently.
-

Remember:

- The goal is to create a positive and encouraging environment that fosters a love for art.
- Adaptations and assistance should be offered based on individual needs and preferences.
- Focus on the process of creating art, not just the final product.



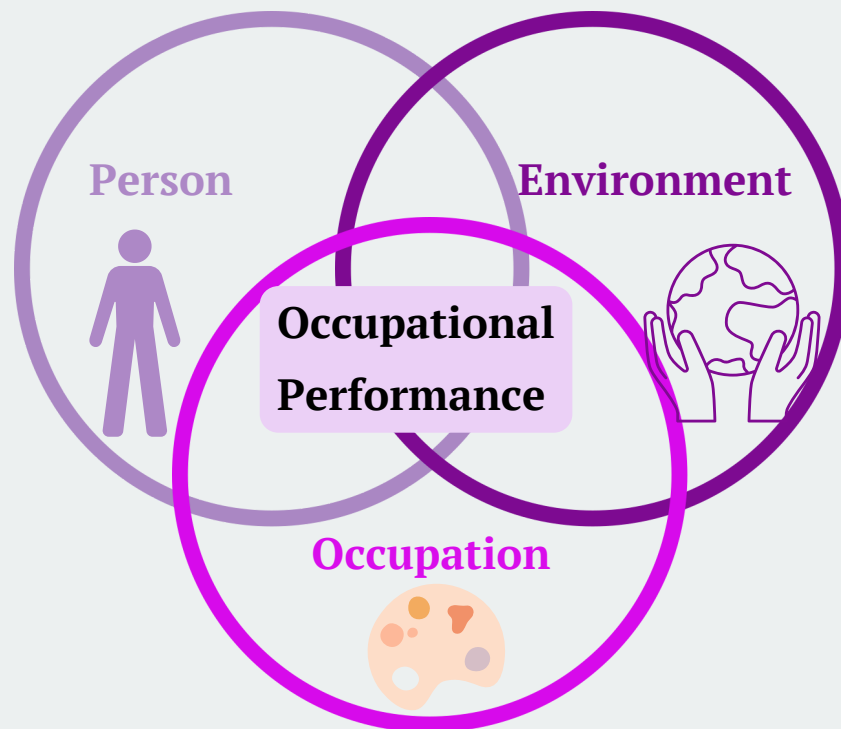
Part I: Getting Started

This part of the book will look at different recommendations and materials needed for adapting the activity, environment, and/or materials to suit each individual's needs. When looking to adapt the activity or material, we need to understand the different aspects of the activity. **This includes the person (the individual's Strengths and needs), the Environment, and the occupation (meaningful activity).** Pictured below is the Person-Environment-Occupation-(PEO) Model of Occupational Performance.

The PEO Model

This model was developed to analyze and demonstrate the dynamic relationship between people, their roles and occupations, and the environments where they live, work, and play (Law et al., 1996). At any time, people's internal and external experiences can impact the three dimensions (see figure below). As an individual's skills develop, environments change, or your priorities change, so does your performance (Strong et. al., 1999).

Using this framework, we can use it as both an assessment and intervention to help participants identify strengths and challenges with occupational performance and address them by developing or refining skills, adapting to the environment, or modifying the task.



The Aspects of the PEO Model (Law et al., 1996).

Person: A unique being that assumes various roles simultaneously that vary across time and contexts. They hold abilities related to motor, sensory, cognition, health, etc.

Environment: This doesn't just include the built environment but also consists of the cultural, socioeconomic, institutional, political, and social aspects.



Occupation: These are clusters of meaningful activities and tasks that people do to meet intrinsic needs for self maintenance, expression, and fulfillment.





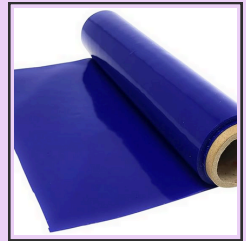
Occupational Performance: This is the outcome of the transaction between the person, environment, and occupations. It's the dynamic experience of people engaged in purposeful occupations within an environment.

Adapting Materials for Different Needs

This section delves into the "E" (Environment) component within the PEO model. Presented below are examples of low-tech adaptive equipment for art supplies designed to enhance the inclusive involvement of individuals. Additionally, a QR code is provided for convenient access to purchase these items using your mobile device.



	<p>BUILT UP FOAM HANDLES</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals who cannot maintain grip, fatigue easily, or have arthritis or tremors.</i></p> <p><i>*Can be cut to size with scissors. Easily washable.</i></p>
	<p>ROUND HANDLED BRUSHES</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals who have trouble gripping skinny brushes or have smaller hands. Offers greater control of brush due to grip and short handle. The Flat shield near bristles prevents paint from getting on hands.</i></p>
	<p>DOOR KNOB PAINT BRUSHES</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals with fine motor difficulties and turning their wrists to hold a regular paintbrush. The brush fits into the palm of hand, allowing for greater control of brush</i></p>

	<p>EASY GRIP PAINT BRUSHES</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals who have trouble controlling longer brushes. Allows for easier grip with thick handle and forces individual to hold a “normal” grip for painting.</i></p>
	<p>MINI LOOP SCISSORS</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals with low coordination or hand strength. offers an easier grip and automatically re-opens blades for easier control and stability.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use with staff supervision
	<p>UNIVERSAL CUFF</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals with no grasp or limited hand control due to arthritis, parkinson’s or. dexterity issues. Can be adjusted to fit various hand sizes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be used with household items (toothbrush, razors, pens, etc_
	<p>LEANING BRIDGE WRIST REST</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals who tend to use their entire arm to paint with little control of wrist, or fatigue easily. Allows forearm and wrist stability for greater control of details in art. Clear acrylic allows you to see the art underneath.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjustable height
	<p>DYCEM NON SLIP MATERIAL</p> <p><i>Ideal for individuals with stabilization , gripping problems, or have one functional hand. Keeps items in place , preventing movement and spillage.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be cut to size

Scan the QR Code below for a link on where to order more



To scan:

1. Open the camera on your mobile device (phone, iPad, etc).
2. Hover the camera over the square.
3. Click on the yellow pop-up on your device. This will bring you to the Amazon link.

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1JLVLW7USSLKB?ref_=wl_share

Other Art Materials

	<p>DAUBERS</p> <p><i>Ideal for Individuals with limited hand strength, dexterity, or coordination, and those who enjoy sensory experiences or prefer mess-free art activities. Easy to squeeze.</i></p> <p><i>, *Helps build muscle control and coordination</i></p>
	<p>THICK COLORED PENCILS</p> <p><i>Ideal for Individuals with limited hand strength, dexterity, or coordination. People who enjoy bold colors and expressive art styles. Those who may find traditional pencils difficult to hold or sharpen. Easy to grip</i></p>
	<p>JUMBO CRAYONS</p> <p><i>Ideal for Individuals with limited hand strength, dexterity, or coordination. People who enjoy bold colors and expressive art styles. Those who may find traditional crayons difficult to hold.</i></p>

Other Environmental Modifications:

While art activities offer a variety of benefits, some individuals may require additional support to fully engage and enjoy them.

Environmental modifications play an important role in creating an inclusive and accessible art space. These modifications can address sensory sensitivities, physical limitations, or attention difficulties. By adapting the environment to individual needs, we can encourage exploration, improve focus, and ultimately, enhance the overall art experience for everyone. Here are some examples of how you can reason through this process.

Examples

Sensory overload from loud noises or bright lights, social anxiety



- Provide noise-canceling headphones or earplugs.
- Use dimmers or task lighting to create softer light.
- Offer a designated quiet space for individuals to take breaks if needed.

Trouble focusing in a busy setting



- Cue the participant to a mindful moment (ex. taking a break, doing some stretches, etc.).
- Have the participant try doing another task.
- Use visual timers to help manage time during activities.

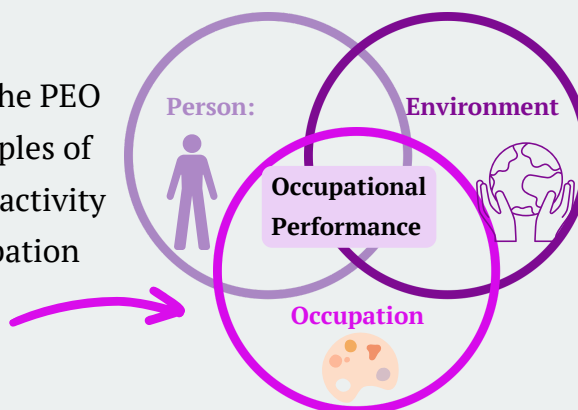
Navigational difficulties or limited mobility



- Encourage collaboration with peers
- Provide clear walkways and ample space to maneuver wheelchairs or walkers.
- Offer lightweight art supplies for easier transport.

Adapting Activity for Individuals

This section delves into the "O" (Occupation) component within the PEO model. Presented below are examples of adapting the steps of the activity/activity itself to ensure successful participation



Sticker Activities



Peeling Off the Sticker

- Begin by assuming that each participant can complete this step on their own. Communicate to participants that you can help them if they get stuck.
- If a participant is unable to peel the protective layer off independently, begin by pulling the back corner & orienting the participant to this area.
- If still unable to complete this step, peel more of the protective layer off (1/2 way or so).
- If the participant is unable to peel off 1/2 way, peel the protective layer off for the participant.

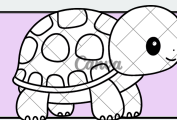
* Foam Stickers may be easier to grip and less likely to rip for some individuals.



Additional Tips

- Use larger stickers to start
- If stickers are hard to peel, try placing them on wax paper for easy removal
- Use visual cues such as glue dots or colored dot to help with placement on craft

Coloring



Staying within the lines

- Begin by assuming that each participant can complete this step on their own. Communicate to participants that you can help them if they get stuck.
- If a participant seems to be scribbling all over the page, Use coloring pages with thicker lines or raised lines (textured coloring books) to provide a tactile guide for staying within the lines.
- If still unable to color in the lines, try tracing the section they want to color with the specific color. Additionally, you can place a dot of a specific color.
- If still unable to color in the lines, Provide stencils with the desired design, allowing participants to color within the stencil cutout for a precise image.



Additional Tips

- Use verbal cues like "stay on the road" or "color inside the house" to help individuals visualize staying within the lines.
- Encourage them to color large areas of the picture first, then move on to smaller details within the lines.

Painting



Creating an Image

- Allow the individual to pick their own colors. If participants cannot, ask them what they would like to paint, and suggest colors.
- Start with Larger Canvases: Provide larger canvases or painting surfaces to allow for broader strokes and minimize the need for precise details.
- Pre-Draw Outlines: Lightly pre-draw outlines of shapes or images on the canvas to guide participants in staying within a defined area.
- Break down painting into basic techniques like stamping, splattering, or fingerprinting
- Use visual aids like pictures or demonstrations to illustrate the desired techniques.



Additional Tips

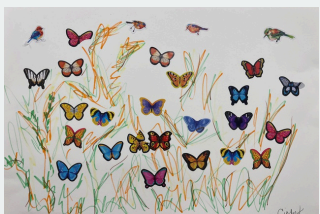
- Daubers work great for individuals who like to stamp their paint.
- Tape down stencils, and allow individuals to paint over them with thicker brushes/sponges to create a design

Drawing



Creating an Image

- Begin by assuming that each participant can complete this step on their own. Communicate to participants that you can help them if they get stuck.
- If an individual cannot decide what to draw, allow a “theme of the day” such as “draw a house pet” or “your favorite vacation spot”
- If an individual just scribbles, provide them with simple stencils they can trace and color.
- If an individual does not prefer stencils, Create simple line drawings and then use sponges or cutouts dipped in paint to add color and texture.



Additional Tips

- Staff can combine media to create an image (create a simple nature drawing and individuals can add stickers).
- Stamps are easy and fun to use.

Crafts



- Begin by assuming that each participant can complete this step on their own. Communicate to participants that you can help them if they get stuck.
- Creating an example craft at the start of the activity is encouraged to increase motivation and comprehension of the steps of the activity.
- Based on the individual's strengths, allow the individual to complete part/the whole craft
- Demonstrate the technique to the individual, allowing time for practice. Don't just do it for them.
- Use visual aids like pictures or demonstrations to illustrate the desired techniques.



Additional Tips

- Provide alternative materials than the ones in the kits if proven too challenging.
- Sometimes, starting a part of the activity allows individuals to complete the rest of it.

Part II: Art Activities

In this part of the book, we will shift our focus to finding different activities targeting various areas of art and skill-building that work well with the individuals at WSC. There will be 3 categories focusing on exploring colors and textures, building fine motor skills, and encouraging self-expression. We will also take a look into activities encouraging mindfulness and social participation. You will find a sample of these activities in the following sections.

Exploring Colors and Textures

Textured Art: Exploring Different Surfaces:

This art activity focuses on the process rather than the product. It gives individuals a sensory exploration as well as experimenting with how art materials interact with different surfaces.

Materials:

- Crumpled aluminum foil
- Paper Towels
- Wool
- Plastic freezer bags
- A row of 1 popsicle sticks
- A sheet of fingerprint paper
- Colored tissue paper
- Plastic paint palette



Directions:

1. Distribute 1 art material at a time.
2. You can use crayons, washable paint, markers, and doobers

3. Lay out the materials on the table (you can customize the textures to what you have available).

Let the individuals explore!

Adapting the Activity For:

Sensitive Sensory Needs:

1. *Set up a different station with calming sensory materials such as beans, rice, or provide a different activity*

Vision:

1. *High Contrast Materials:* *Use dark-colored crayons or markers on light-colored paper for better visual distinction. Offer textured surfaces in contrasting colors for tactile exploration.*
2. *Verbal Cues:* *Provide verbal descriptions of the materials and their textures as individuals explore.*

Attention:

1. *Time Segments:* *Break down the exploration into smaller time segments with clear transitions. You can use visual timers or simple verbal cues like "Let's explore crayons for 5 minutes, then we'll try paint."*
2. *Focus on One Material:* *Start by offering just one material at a time to minimize distractions.*



Helpful Tip: You can grade **up** this activity by challenging the individual to create a drawing/product with the materials. One way is by incorporating stencils.

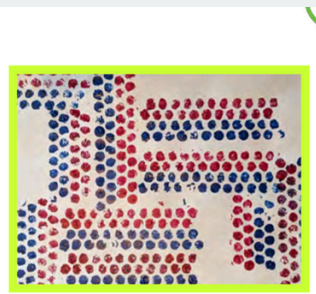
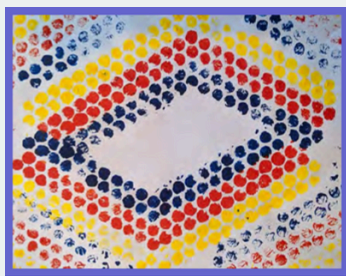
- For individuals who have trouble gripping, built-up foam handles, thicker art materials or universal cuff may be used.



Painting with Bubble Wrap:

Materials:

- Bubble Wrap
- Paper
- Paint
- Paintbrush
- Water
- Plastic paint palette



[Discovery Science Center](#)

Directions:

1. Using a paintbrush, apply paint onto the bubble wrap. You can paint a design or pattern or just paint random splotches. If you are using more than one paint color, make sure to wash out your paintbrush between colors.
2. Once you are done painting your bubble wrap, place your piece of paper over it, and press down with your hands to transfer the print from the bubble wrap to the paper.
3. Carefully lift your paper from the bubble wrap and let it dry.

Adapting the Activity For:

Sensitive Sensory Needs:

1. Texture Modifications: *If the bubble wrap texture is overwhelming, use other textured surfaces like crumpled tissue paper or textured craft foam instead.*

Vision:

1. High Contrast Colors: *Use paints with high contrasting colors (black and white, yellow and blue) for better visual distinction in the final print.*
2. Tactile Guidance: *For individuals with visual impairments, provide tactile cues on the paper to guide the placement of the bubble wrap. You can use raised lines or pre-drawn shapes on the paper.*

Attention:

1. *Visual Timers: Use visual timers to signal transitions between painting and transferring the print, helping individuals with attention difficulties stay focused.*
2. *Smaller Sections: Divide the bubble wrap or paper into smaller sections for easier management, especially for young children or individuals with limited attention spans.*



Helpful Tip: Model the activity by doing it with the individuals.

- You can grade **up** the activity by allowing the individuals to cut the bubble wrap into shapes/patterns
- You can grade **down** the activity by using sponges filled with paint.

Recycled Shapes

This lid stamping project offers a fun way to create unique patterns and textures!

Materials:

- Thick Paper
- Acrylic Paint
- Paintbrush
- Water
- Plastic paint palette
- Recycled materials (Caps, jars, TP roll, etc.)



Directions:

1. Paint the entire surface of your Paper. Allow it time to dry.
2. Working with one color at a time, dip the lids, caps, and or boxes into the paint and stamp them onto the paper (Keep some paper towels handy so that you can wipe the excess paint off of your stamps before dipping into the next color.)

Adapting the Activity For:

Sensitive Sensory Needs:

1. Paint Alternatives: If the texture of wet paint is bothersome, consider using stamp pads or pre-painted lids instead.
2. Alternative Stamping Materials: Offer other textured objects for stamping like crumpled paper balls, textured rubber bands, or even cut-up sponges.

Vision:

1. High Contrast Colors: Use paints with high contrasting colors for easier distinction in the stamped patterns. Offer textured surfaces in contrasting colors for tactile exploration with the stamps.

Attention

1. Limited Color Palette: Start with a limited number of colors at a time to avoid overwhelming individuals with attention difficulties. Introduce additional colors once they've mastered using a few.



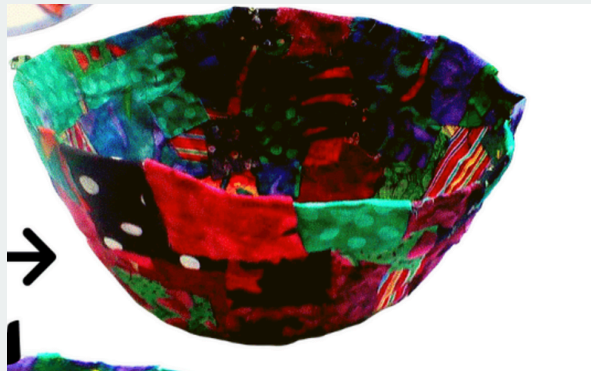
Helpful Tip: Variety of Lids and Shapes: Offer a range of lids and containers in different sizes and shapes to create diverse stamped patterns.

- You can grade **up** the activity by challenging the individuals to create a scene with the patterns.
- You can grade **down** the activity by prepainting the lids for the individuals or by using pre-made stamos.

Fabric Bowls

Materials:

- Plastic/Styrofoam bowls
- Modge Podge
- Plastic Wrap
- Modge Podge Brush
- Lightweight Fabric
- Scissors



Directions:

1. Wrap the bowls tightly with plastic wrap. Make sure that the wrap is folded over the top of the bowl with plenty of excess plastic wrap, that will make it easier to pull off later.
2. Cut small squares of fabric. Apply the squares to the bowl using the sponge brush and Mod Podge or glue to coat the fabric. Make sure the fabric is coated before adding the next layer. Use lots of Mod Podge or glue.
3. Allow the fabric to dry for 24 hours, then carefully peel away from the plastic wrap.
4. Trim away any extra fabric from the edge of the bowl.

Adapting the Activity For:

Sensitive Sensory Needs:

1. Alternative Wrap: If the texture of plastic wrap is bothersome, consider using a large balloon instead. Once dry, the fabric bowl can be easily peeled off the deflated balloon.
2. Fabric Choices: Offer a variety of fabrics with different textures. For those sensitive to rough textures, provide softer fabrics like felt or fleece.

Vision:

1. High-Contrast Fabrics: Use fabrics with high-contrasting colors or patterns for better visual distinction on the bowl.
2. Tactile Guidance: For individuals with visual impairments, provide tactile cues on the bowl with tape or string to guide fabric placement.



Helpful Tip: Offer different tools for applying fabric, like small spoons or craft sticks dipped in Mod Podge.

- You can grade **up** the activity by asking the individuals to create a pattern with the fabric
- You can grade **down** the activity by precutting the fabric or putting on the Modge Podge for the individual.

DIY Mosaic

Materials:

- Paper/Canvas
- Stickers
- Different types of paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- other materials (fabric, foam, etc)



Directions:

1. Have the individual start by sketching their idea on the paper. A standard black or white construction paper works best for smaller mosaics, but any size or color paper will do.
2. Cut the paper into 1/4 in. strips. Create tiles from different colored paper and paper types. You can even use fabric.
3. Once the strips are complete, snip the ends into squares. Sort the squares into piles by color. This will make it easier to find different colors as you create your mosaic.
4. Glue the “tiles” to the sketch they created earlier. Try “tiling” from the outside edges of the paper and work your way inward.
5. Allow the glue to dry.

Adapting the Activity For:

Motor Skills:

1. Pre-Cut Paper: Instead of cutting strips, offer pre-cut paper squares in various sizes and colors. This reduces the need for fine motor skills like cutting with scissors.
2. Assistive Cutting Tools: Provide adaptive scissors with thicker handles or loops for easier gripping for those with limited hand dexterity.
3. Gluing Assistance: Offer assistance with applying glue to the paper squares, especially for individuals who might find it difficult.

Vision:

1. Pre-Drawn Templates: Provide pre-drawn outlines or templates on paper to guide mosaic placement for individuals with visual impairments. **Use bold lines and high-contrast colors for the templates.**
2. Tactile Cues: Use raised lines, dots, or textured materials on the paper to define sections for mosaic placement.

Attention:

1. Smaller Sections: Divide the paper into smaller sections and work on the mosaic one section at a time. This helps individuals with attention difficulties stay focused on the task.



Helpful Tip: Encourage starting with simple sketches or pre-drawn shapes to minimize the complexity for those who might find detailed drawing challenging.

- You can grade **up** the activity by incorporating more materials, or cutting different shapes (stars, hearts, etc.).
- You can grade **down** the activity by using stickers, stencils, or no shapes

Building Fine Motor Skills

Bracelet Making/Stringing Beads

Materials:

- Colorful Feathers
- Cardstock papers/wooden figures
- optional: shape puncher
- Stickers
- Plastic Beads
- Glue/ Tape



Directions:

1. Start by cutting a bunch of circles (or other shapes) from scraps of colored card stock. You can also use wooden shapes.
2. Tape the feathers to one side of the shape.
3. Put another one of the same shapes on top, sandwiching the feathers in between.
4. Punch a hole through the shape and add string.
5. Paint, draw, or add stickers to your shape.
6. Add the beads to the string.

Adapting the Activity For:

Motor Skills:

1. Pre-Cut Shapes: *Instead of cutting out shapes, offer pre-cut circles, squares, or other shapes in various sizes from different colored cardstock.*

Sensitive Sensory Needs:

1. Alternative Feathers: *For those sensitive to feather texture, consider using felt cut into leaf shapes, colorful paper scraps, or even textured ribbons.*

2. Alternative String: If the texture of the string is bothersome, use yarn, colorful ribbon, or pipe cleaners for hanging the mobile.

Attention:

1. Limited Steps: Break down the activity into smaller steps and focus on completing one step at a time. This helps individuals with attention difficulties stay focused on the task.



Helpful Tip: Offer a range of materials like buttons, sequins, or small bells to add visual and auditory interest to the mobile.

- You can grade **up** the activity by incorporating beads into a different craft (such as suncatchers).
- You can grade **down** the activity by using precut shapes or bigger, easier-to-string beads.

Sticker Activities



Sticker Activities like this are a great way to build fine motor skills. See **page 24** for how to adapt the activity.

Pot of Gold Lacing Activities

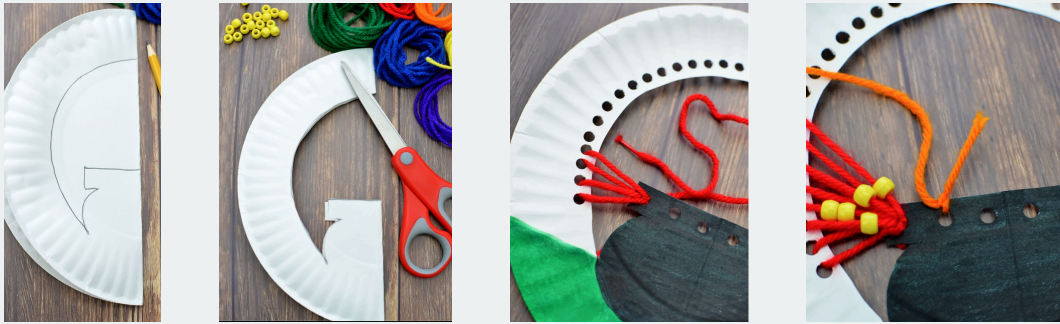
Materials:

- Paper plates
- Yarn in rainbow colors
- shape puncher
- Scissors
- Black and green markers
- Yellow pony beads



Directions:

1. Fold the paper plate in half. Most paper plates have a ridged border, trace this to form the inside circle.
2. Draw half of a pot on the plate
3. Cut out the shape with scissors.
4. Then hole punch 6 holes along the top of the pot of gold, one for each rainbow color.
5. Hole punch along the inside circle of the plate, make sure they are evenly spaced.
6. Color the pot of gold black and the bottom of the paper plate in green for the grass.
7. Start with the red yarn on the first pot of gold hole punch, thread through, and tie to secure. Then thread through the border hole and back at the pot.
8. Sporadically add a yellow pony bead to the yarn before threading it back through the next hole to fill the pot with gold (beads).
9. Add in the following colors of the rainbow.



Adapting the Activity For:

Sensitive Sensory and Motor Needs:

1. Alternative Beads: For those sensitive to the texture of pony beads, use large plastic beads or even buttons for a textured effect.

Vision:

1. High Contrast Colors: Use brightly colored yarn, beads, and markers for better visual distinction. Offer pre-drawn templates or outlines on the paper plate for tracing the pot of gold shape.
2. Tactile Cues: Use raised lines or textured materials on the paper plate to help with positioning the holes for the yarn.



Helpful Tip: For individuals who might find threading beads challenging, offer pre-filled pots of gold with cut-up paper scraps or glitter glued inside.

- You can grade **up** the activity by encouraging adding details to the background beyond just green grass, such as a cobblestone path leading to the pot, a rainbow arching overhead, or a leprechaun hiding behind a shamrock.
- You can grade **down** the activity by using a precut paper plate, larger beads, or stickers.

Encouraging Self Expression

Feelings Inventory

Materials:

- An empty box or container
- Brown paper
- Tape
- Paper
- Markers/paint
- Envelopes (optional)



Directions:

1. Tape the box closed and cut a slit into the side of the box (like a post box). Wrap the box like you would a present.
2. Ask the individuals to draw a picture to decorate the box e.g. adding a sun, clouds, raindrops etc.
3. Tell the individuals that they can draw or write about their feelings, using whatever medium they like.

Adapting the Activity For:

Making it more accessible:

1. Pre-Decorated Boxes: Offer pre-decorated boxes with different themes (happy, calm, angry, etc.) or simple polka dots or stripes. This allows for immediate participation for those who might find drawing challenging.

Vision:

1. Tactile Decorations: Provide textured materials like felt cutouts, fabric scraps, or self-adhesive braille shapes for decorating the box. This caters to individuals with visual impairments or those who prefer tactile exploration.

Sensory:

1. *Place small, safe objects inside the box that represent different emotions. For example, soft cotton balls for calmness, crinkly paper for frustration, or smooth stones for peace. Individuals can feel these objects while writing or drawing to inspire their expression.*

Expanding Communication:

1. Word Banks: *Provide word banks with emotion-related words like "happy," "sad," "angry," "excited," or "calm." This can help individuals who might struggle to find words to express themselves.*
2. Symbol Communication: *Offer picture cards or symbol charts depicting various emotions. Individuals can choose the symbol that best represents their feelings and include it in the box with their drawing or writing.*



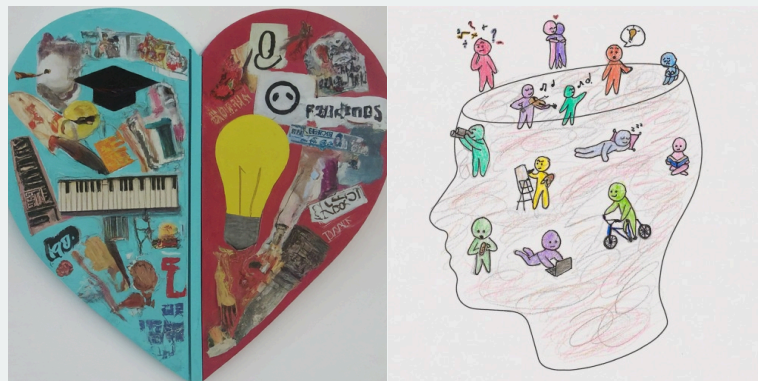
Helpful Tip: You can encourage storytelling by offering prompts like "Draw a picture of a time you felt happy" or "Write a short story about a character who feels scared." These prompts can help individuals who might struggle to get started.

- You can grade **up** the activity by using multiple boxes and designate each with a specific theme like "Gratitude Box," "Challenges Box," or "Dream Box." This encourages deeper reflection on specific emotions.
- You can grade **down** the activity by providing pre-drawn faces with different emotions on the box. Individuals can choose the face that best represents their feelings and decorate the box further.

Collage of Heart and Brain

Materials:

- Paper
- Markers/crayons
- Stickers
- magazines



Directions:

1. Provide a paper with a pre-drawn outline of a head and heart. If the individual can, they may choose to draw them themselves.
2. Prompt the individuals to fill it with images and words representing their thoughts, ideas, hopes, dreams, anxieties, and fears.

Adapting the Activity For:

Attention

1. Multiple Templates: Offer a variety of templates with different prompts on the head and heart sections, allowing individuals to choose the prompts that resonate most with them.

Enhancing Expression:

1. Offer magazines, newspapers, colorful paper scraps, or fabric swatches for collage within the head and heart sections. This provides an alternative to drawing for expressing thoughts and feelings.
2. Word Banks and Prompts: Provide word banks with words related to thoughts, dreams, anxieties, etc. Additionally, offer prompts like "What makes you happy?" or "What are you afraid of?" to spark ideas for filling the head and heart.
3. Symbolic Representation: Encourage using symbols or pictures to represent abstract concepts like hope or fear. For example, a drawing of a house could represent a dream of owning a home.



Helpful Tip: For individuals who might feel uncomfortable expressing themselves alone, consider making this a group activity. Participants can share their creations and discuss the ideas represented in their head and heart drawings.

- You can grade **up** the activity by challenging the individuals to think of a memory and what that meant to them.
- You can grade **down** the activity by providing a word bank, or stickers of emotions or objects.

Abstract Self Portrait

Materials:

- White Cardstock paper
- Pencils/Markers
- Stickers
- Optional: Paint or crayons

Directions:



1. Fold the paper into fours and draw the nose. Use heavy-weight white paper or cardstock folded into fours to create guidelines.
2. Use the middle line as a guide and draw the nose. Make sure to extend either side of the nose to the top of the paper.
3. Now draw the mouth and chin below the nose, draw a mouth or lips.
4. Start just above the center guideline travel underneath the mouth to the adjacent side and draw the chin.
5. Draw the eyes in the middle of the top quadrants, and draw two curved lines horizontally for the eyes (touch the bridge of the nose to the side of the paper).
6. Finish the inside of the eyes using two curved lines touching the top to bottom of the inside of the eye. Add two small circles inside.
7. Add the neck. Finally, reach from the chin and in line with the corners of the mouth, draw the neck and extend it to the very bottom of the paper.
8. Outline the drawing with a black marker.

Adapting the Activity For:

Attention:

1. Chunking Information: Instead of providing all the instructions at once, give them in smaller chunks after completing each previous step. This reduces cognitive load and improves task focus.

Motor Skills:

1. Simplified Lines: Instead of focusing on intricate details like eyelashes or individual hair strands, encourage drawing simpler lines and shapes for facial features.



Helpful Tip: For those who learn better by doing, demonstrate the drawing steps yourself and encourage them to follow along by physically guiding their hand.

- You can grade **up** the activity by not folding the paper in 4, allowing individuals to lay it out themselves. Encourage more detail such as freckles, facial hair, etc.
- You can grade **down** the activity by providing stickers of facial features (eyes, nose, etc.) or lightly sketching the different elements.

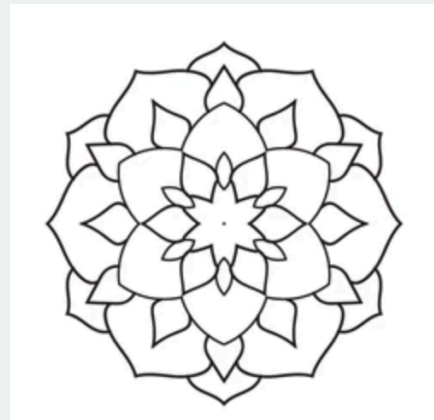
The next set of activities will focus on mindfulness and relaxation, as well as encouraging social interaction. These areas are also important to take a look at as they can improve participant's mood and overall well-being (Rehman et. al., 2023). Moreover, prior studies have indicated that mindfulness facilitates one's thought process to help positive behavior and self-regulated acts (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Below are examples of evidence-based activities that encourage mindfulness and social interactions.

Mindfulness and Relaxation

Mandala Drawing

Materials:

- White paper
- Pencils/Markers
- Stencils (optional)



Utilized as a therapeutic tool, mandala drawing can be a great outlet to begin. A mandala is a 2D, circular drawing that can contain patterns, sketches, or additional drawings inside. There are no hard rules when it comes to creating them, so don't be afraid to get creative.

Adapting the Activity For:

Attention:

1. Simpler Patterns: Start with simpler mandalas with fewer repeating patterns and larger sections. This reduces visual clutter and makes it easier to focus on each element.
2. Color Coding: Assign specific colors to different sections of the mandala. This helps individuals with attention difficulties stay focused on one section at a time while completing the design.

Motor Skills:

1. Stencils: Use stencils with pre-cut mandala patterns for individuals who might find drawing freehand challenging. They can trace the stencil shapes onto their paper and then fill them in with colors.
2. Stamps: Create custom stamps with simple mandala shapes for individuals who might find drawing difficult. They can stamp these shapes repeatedly to create a mandala design.



Helpful Tip: Digital Mandalas: For individuals who might find using traditional drawing materials difficult, consider digital mandala drawing apps or websites. These tools often offer features like symmetry guides and pre-set shapes to simplify the process.

- You can grade **up** the activity by allowing the individuals to freehand the activity, adding different colors.
- You can grade **down** the activity by providing stencils or stamps. You can also have the individuals color the mandalas.

Painting to Music

Materials:

- White paper
- Pencils/Markers
- crayons/oil pastels
- Dobbers



Painting to music is a simple and effective way to practice mindfulness while staying in the moment and connecting to the environment. The colors chosen might reflect the mood of the song, with vibrant hues for upbeat tempos and softer tones for more mellow tunes. This creative process not only enhances artistic expression but also fosters a deeper sense of inner peace and presence.

Directions:

1. Practice listening to the environment with eyes closed for 1 minute. Prompt the individual to name the different sounds they were able to hear.
2. Next practice some intentional listening by listening to 1-2 minutes of a longer piece, ideally without lyrics. Get comfortable and breathe deeply.
3. Set up your art materials before you start listening to the music.
4. Play the entire piece once with the individuals' eyes closed, silently. The second time, ask the individuals "What did you notice?"
5. When the individuals are ready for art, play the song one more time, and ask them to respond while listening to the music.
6. Some prompts to ask: What colors did the music make you think of, Was it smooth and flowy, or short and choppy, soft or loud, and demonstrate with some lines or marks that follow the flow or feel of the music.

Adapting the Activity For:

Attention:

1. Shorter Listening Periods: For individuals with attention difficulties, start with shorter listening periods (30 seconds to 1 minute) and gradually increase them as their focus improves.
2. Fidget Tools: Provide fidget tools or stress balls for those who might need something to keep their hands occupied while listening, without distracting from the sounds.

Motor Skills:

1. Alternative Techniques: Consider alternative art techniques like finger painting, stamping, or using textured materials to create art if drawing is challenging.



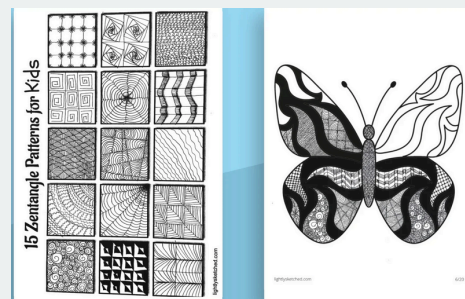
Helpful Tip: Variety of Music: Offer a variety of music genres to choose from, catering to different preferences and interests. Nature soundscapes or calming instrumental music can be particularly beneficial.

- You can grade the activity by dividing the music into sections and creating multiple art pieces, each responding to a different section and capturing its unique mood or feeling.
- You can grade **down** the activity by offering a smaller selection of art materials and prompts to avoid overwhelming participants.

Zentangle Art

Materials:

- White paper
- Pencils/Markers



Zentangle art offers a surprising range of benefits. The repetitive act of creating patterns is meditative, reducing stress and anxiety. It's a "no pressure" art form that sparks creativity and mindfulness. Focusing on each stroke can improve concentration, while the finished product can boost self-esteem. Overall, Zentangle art promotes relaxation, creativity, and a sense of well-being.

Directions:

1. Using your pencil, draw a light square or rectangle on your paper. This creates the boundary for your Zentangle artwork.
2. Lightly draw a few intersecting lines or curves to divide the square into sections. This can be a simple grid or more organic shapes.
3. A "tangle" is a basic repetitive pattern that forms the building block of Zentangle art. There are many Zentangle patterns available online or in books. Choose a simple pattern to start.
4. Start tangling: Begin filling the sections of your tile with your chosen

tangle pattern. Focus on creating the pattern one stroke at a time, filling each section.

5. Try another tangle pattern in a different section once you've filled some sections. You can just experiment with shading and variations within your chosen patterns.
6. There's no right or wrong way to create a Zentangle. Relax, focus on the present moment with each stroke, and enjoy the process of creating your unique artwork.



Helpful Tip: Accommodations for previous activities can be applied here including stamps, stencils, and thicker materials

Other Examples of Mindfulness and Art



VeryWellmind

Movement Based Mindfulness Activities

Mindful movement helps us nourish our body by stretching, strengthening, and toning, or even just by paying attention and bringing awareness to how our body feels. But we can also use mindful movement to elevate our emotional wellness (mindful, 2023)

When we move our body and adjust the postures in which we hold our body, we also shift the activity of our autonomic nervous system which influences reactions like our heart rate, blood pressure, and fight-or-flight response. This means that mindful movement can give us access to shift our emotions and moods from the outside-in (mindful, 2023).

4 Types of Mindful Movement



01 Breathing Exercises

- Breathing exercises are active techniques, unlike observing breath during meditation.
- We use them to calm (elongated breaths) or refresh (shortened breaths) by influencing the nervous system.

02 Walking Meditation

- Simple and effective way to explore mindful movement
- full awareness on walking, rather than the destination, focusing on how our body feels





03 Stretching and Yoga

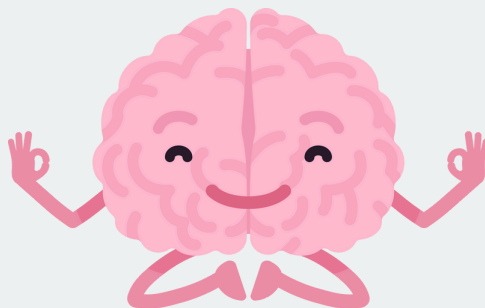
- Helps to release tension, stiffness, and heavy emotions.
- Taking a moment to let go of the day's distractions, getting away from the desk or couch, and engaging in mindful movement can help boost our energy, focus, and resilience.

Physical Activity 04

- Getting exercise can be a great way to tune in to our body, synchronize our breath, and be in the moment, all while building strength and nourishing our muscles.



Scan this QR code for a list of mindful movement examples.



Yogarilla



OTis the OT gorilla shows different traditional yoga poses to help individuals understand how their bodies and minds work together. Each card illustrates a pose. On the back of the cards, there are directions, adaptations for individuals who are not able to perform a standard pose, and activity suggestions. Yogarilla was created by occupational therapists to improve fine and gross motor skills, sensory processing, attention, communication, and cognition in children and individuals of all ages.

Yogarilla Exercises and Activities Yoga Deck Includes:

- 55 color-coded cards with traditional and original yoga poses.
- 10 standing, 10 seated, 10 prone, 10 supine, and 10 hands and knees.
- 3 partner poses (Two children work together in a pose).
- 2 breathing poses (Improve awareness of breath and breath support).

Social Interaction

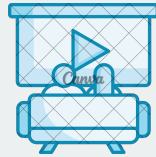
Social participation can have a significant positive impact on adults with intellectual disabilities, including reducing loneliness and improving mental and emotional well-being. Participation can also help build self-esteem, confidence, and social networks, and can lead to better health and quality of life (Bigby, 2024).

Below are some activities that can encourage social participation based on two levels of motivation: Low and moderate-high.

Low Motivation

- **Focus on creating opportunities for individuals to interact with others with minimally structured activities:**

- Coffee Hour
- Movie Nights
- Game Time



- **Use Therapeutic / Activity groups such as arts and crafts, music, or exercise.**
- **Make these opportunities safe**
 - Create and maintain group norms
 - Create buddies/mentorship opportunities
 - Model kindness, welcoming, and openness
- **Consider any history of trauma and try to minimize triggers.**



Moderate Motivation

- **Grade activities so that different levels of social interaction/communication are required:**
 - Shared Space: Individuals are in the same space but doing their own activities independently.
 - Parallel Activities: Individuals are in the same place doing the same activity.
 - Sharing Materials: Individuals are in the same place doing the same activity and sharing materials.
 - Sharing work: Each Individual shares work with the others in the group.
 - Discussion of topics: The individuals participate in a discussion about topics.
 - Structured by either the facilitator or the individuals.
 - Shared Work: Individuals are responsible for completing one part of a whole project
 - One-to-one collaboration on projects: Paired work between individuals
 - Teamwork: Small groups of individuals work together to complete a project.
 - Leadership: Individuals take on and practice leadership roles



Examples of Activities that Facilitate Social Participation (Opportunity Village, 2023)



01 Book Club

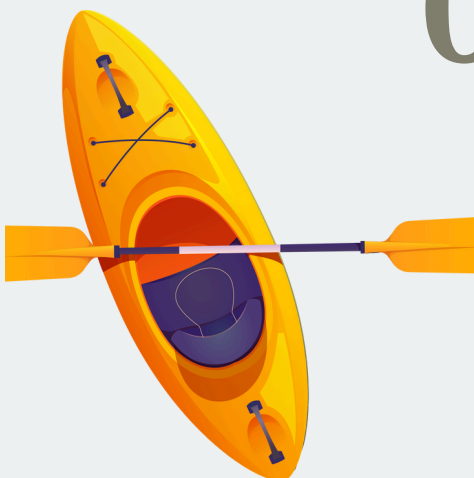
- It can be a therapeutic activity that may improve communication and social skills.
- A book club is a great way to learn new things, share opinions, and learn social cues.

02 Card Games

- Playing card games like memory and matching games can enhance cognitive skills and hand-eye coordination. They also boost memory, concentration, problem-solving abilities, and social interactions, fostering bonding with others.



03 Water Activities



- Engaging in water sports like swimming and kayaking can benefit adults with developmental disabilities by enhancing physical skills, self-confidence, cardiovascular fitness, strength, and balance.
- These activities promote staying active, enjoying the outdoors, and fostering social connections.

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