

TH Activity Plan – Commemorative Seed Packets - Bereaved

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will design and make commemorative seed packets in memory of a loved one.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Undertake a grief related activity where sense of control making packets begins a journey of understanding & healing

Physical: Practice repetitive movements making several seed packets as a strategy for coping and calming emotional grief

Psychological/Emotional: Reflect, name & share flower preference of deceased loved one

Sensory: Use tactile sense handling paper & seeds

Social: Grieve with others during the session; share cherished memories with others; listen as others process their grief

Materials

Pre-made or hand-made seed packets, packet template, markers, stickers

Glue, tape, pencils, scissors

Seeds: sunflowers,

Wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Make a sample seed packet.
2. Facilitator begins session by asking participants the name of their loved one they lost and something special about them. Did they have a special flower, place in nature or green thumb? Explaining the TH activity of designing and making commemorative seed packets to be given to others in their memory, the tone of the session is intended to be a safe space for memories, emotional discharge and communal grieving.
3. Seed packet templates are provided to participants or are created depending on abilities of participants. See references below. Designing the packet artwork, using interesting paper like seed catalogue pages or printing a poem including loved one's name are some ideas (see example). Facilitator suggests how many seed packets are feasibly made in the session's allotted time.
4. Continuing a discussion about seeds that can be put into the packets, the concept of ashes to ashes, renewal, love of plants, or other topics that organically emerge from the group can precede the actual selection of seeds to be placed in the seed packets.
5. Participants distribute seed packets to family & friends. Suggestion by facilitator that one packet be framed for themselves may be a reminder of their loved one and lovely actions taken in their memory.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Grief is often defined as the internal part of losing a loved one. Elisabeth Kubler Ross and David Kessler wrote the important book *On Grief and Grieving* attempting to explain the process of grieving. Now understood to be very personal, the grieving journey takes many different paths. Using

therapeutic horticulture to work with people who are bereaved, hands-on activities, along with talk therapy can help the healing process.

Life and death cycles fit so well with nature - we are nature and some folks die inside and feel disconnected from their strong roots through grief and loss, especially if it is traumatic. Bessel van Der Kolk, a psychiatrist who specializes with trauma, talks about the healing power of creating and being in a therapeutic group setting without pressure to process or talk about the art they are working on in his book *The Body Keeps Score*. It can be empowering for folks to be given the option of talking or not talking about their creation. Sometimes just showing up is a major triumph. Using hands-on activity as part of the grieving process can ease, distract or rekindle memories, particularly if this is done in a safe setting like a therapy group or garden.

Designing seed packets for grieving family and friends can be incredibly healing. Creating the design can address losing a loved one which can be so disempowering where the sense of control is disorienting. Adding flower seeds to the packet using ones that were important and representative of the lost loved one can be meaningful and grounding for both the creator and the gift recipient. When participants are able to make choices about design, flower seeds and artwork, a sense of control can begin to be re-established in the face of uncertainty. In cases where the loss has traumatic elements or ambiguous loss, the facilitator may choose another activity to address therapeutic goals better suited to the individual.

The TH activity can incorporate hand-made seed packets or ones where computer graphics are selected by the participants. This will depend on access and availability to computers. The session might begin by making a hand-made version, with the suggestion that more packets be made using either method at home, and as the participant has the energy to do so.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Caution and/or close supervision may be required for seeds that may be put into mouths by some participants if their cognitive function is diminished.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Numerous seed packet templates are available online. These include origami seed packets with interesting shapes requiring no glue that can also be hand painted (Christine, 2023), ones with windows allowing for unique and colorful designs (Papanikolas, 2024), or basic shapes starting with a square piece of paper (Spydarbot, 2024).

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Christine. (2023). [How to make quick and easy origami seed packets](#). Christines-crafts.com

Kessler, D. (2020). *Finding meaning: The sixth stage of grief*. Scribner.

Papanikolas, C. (2024). [Make your own seed packets – free printable PDF](#). Creativebug.com

Spydarbot. (2024). [Perfect seed envelope](#). AutoDesk Instructables.com

Van Der Kolk, B. (2015). *The body keeps the score*. Penguin Books.



Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2024.

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