

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Psychological/Emotional Populations: Bereaved

TH Activity Plan – Gifts of Gratitude

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Materials

Cardboard patterns, 4 – ½” square, 5-6 sheets of various holiday-themed scrapbook paper

Scissors, glue sticks

Assorted wrapped teabags, wrapped chocolate squares

Quotes about friendship, gratitude or self-care

Wipes

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will plan, make and give gifts of gratitude during holiday time to people who have been supportive during their grieving process.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Recognize why being active & creative supports grief processing; problem-solve ideas; acquire a new skill

Physical: Identify & address symptoms of grief, sadness, depression; maintain or improve fine motor skills

Psychological/Emotional: Practice self-care by being altruistic; experience flow, a positive feeling of focus; strengthen confidence

Sensory: Engage sense of smell; recognize individual responses & preferences to chocolate & various tea flavors

Social: Thank others with words & gifts of gratitude; discuss with group gifts of gratitude that use plant materials; strengthen social relationships

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials for 3 packets per person. Determine any allergy or swallowing issues participants might have.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing the idea of treats for gratitude. This session will make *Packets of Gratitude* for others.
3. Each participant chooses a sheet of scrapbook paper & traces the pattern. Cut out pattern with scissors.
4. Place the paper so that it forms a diamond shape. Fold the paper into an envelope by folding opposite sides together, then the bottom flap upward.
5. Glue the edges of the sides, leaving an opening at the top of the envelope.
6. Fill with one teabag & one chocolate square, then glue the top tab closed.
7. Choose a quote to glue on the packet. Quotes can be pre-printed or found by googling appropriate phrases. Handwriting quotes an option too.
8. Discussions can focus on aspects of tea & chocolate like health benefits, traditions, & types of teas.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Making gifts of gratitude for people who have been supportive through times of grief is a thoughtful, healing way to say thank-you while also working on self-care. Therapeutic goals can be drawn from all health domains. Psychological goals can include the importance of [expressing gratitude](#)

to others and why this feels good for self, especially during the holidays. Research validates [an increase in personal resilience when gratitude is expressed](#) (Chowdhury, 2019).

Altruism and giving promotes positivity and recognition of what one has, not just what has been lost and discussion of this in the TH session can reinforce the purpose and effectiveness of such. Cognitive/intellectual goals can address mechanisms for grieving such as being active and creative and why these can support grieving. Reasoning, problem-solving skills, and confidence can be affected during grieving. These can be strengthened by pleasant tasks like thinking about who will receive a gift of gratitude and what the gift will be. The group can discuss ideas for gifts and then make one in the TH session. Relatedly, acquiring a new skill like [herbal wreath making](#), using the loved one's buttons for creating [Christmas tree shaped ornaments](#), or making [lavender cookies](#), [cinnamon stick holiday ornament](#), [no bake healthy date cookies](#), or [mixing herbal tea](#) and chocolate blends can be positive as can practice focusing on a (plant) task for re-building confidence and focus.

Gift Ideas:

Treats for Gratitude – Handmaking packets containing edible treats can demonstrate friendship, gratitude and love. Directions for packets (instructions above) can include quotes on friendship, meaningful for self and gift recipient.

Scrapbooking – Using holiday-themed papers, readily available, sharing the loved one's interests or photos can provide special meaning for the friends and family receiving these scrapbooked cards or framed pictures.

Mixing Herbal Teas or Hot Chocolate Blends – Intentionally selecting the ingredients can reinforce memories of loved one, create new memories, while providing points for discussion when gift is delivered, as well as a reason to spend time with the friend who has been supportive.

Participants can talk about who will receive gifts and why this is important to the gift giver. Discuss in the subsequent session how the recipients responded to the gifts and how this made participants feel.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Some participants may need help or supervision with scissors.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: When working with grieving children, [UC Davis Health's Children's Hospital](#) recommends activities that are creative, physical and fun. This allows children to express their feelings and ask questions. Self-expression like the packets of gratitude with notes, or heart-shaped notes of gratitude can be meaningful for both the giver and receiver. Scrapbooking with family memories can be helpful as suggested above. Adapt this to suit the age and maturity of the child or youth.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Chowdhury, MR. (2019). [The neuroscience of gratitude and effects on the brain](#). *Positive Psychology.com*.
Florida Horticulture for Health Network. (2024). [Grief and bereaved populations and programs](#). *Resource Hub*.
McCraty, R., & Childre, D. (2004). The grateful heart: The psychophysiology of appreciation. In RA. Emmons & ME. McCullough (Eds.), *Series of affective science. The psychology of gratitude*. Oxford University Press.
UC Davis Children's Hospital. (2025). [Activities for grieving children and families](#).

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2025.

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