

TH Activity Plan – Paper Sunhat

Text by Lesley Fleming, HTR

Photos by L. Fleming & J. Fleming



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Working with a partner, participants will make and decorate a paper sunhat.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Demonstrate positive outlook; make positive comments complimenting others on their sunhat

Physical: Manage a physically challenging task of taping paper around a human head using hands, arms & decision-making skills

Psychological/Emotional: Create a colorful art/hat for personal use; express creativity

Sensory: Use social emotional learning & sensitivity to partner's proprioception/body awareness & personal space preferences

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Read the Jr. Master Gardener sombrero activity, adapting it for TH purposes. Make a sample hat.
2. Facilitator begins session by wearing a sunhat she has made prior to session. Introduce activity with a brief description. Organize group into pairs/partners.
3. Distribute 2 sheets of newspaper to each person, or have participants help distribute paper. First participant places paper on top of partner's head, sometimes needing to use a second piece. Or paper can be held around partner's head. Partner helps holds paper in place, and, beginning at one ear first, tapes paper to fit circumference of head making sure it is secure (won't fall into eyes). Then the pair reverses roles, with the second partner fitting paper around head & doing the same steps to form a hat.
4. With suggestions or guidance from facilitator, each person shapes the paper sunhat into something they want. This can include shapes like cones, cowboy, brimmed or free-form using tape or glue.
5. Participants decorate hats with paint, markers, dot markers, glitter, ribbon or other embellishments. Leave on tables to dry.
6. Discussion during drying time can focus on sun protection & healthy lifestyle choices, sense of self & expressing this creatively, garden design as an art form, recycling paper, tree-paper relationship, tips for working in teams or other related topics.
7. Group wears sunhats, displaying their work for others to see & appreciate, taking time to communicate positive remarks as part of the therapeutic activity in this plant-related session.

Materials

Newspaper or roll of paper
Masking tape, water-based paint, brushes, water, dot markers, glitter, markers

Decorations: ribbon,
pipe cleaner, glue

Gloves, aprons, wipes, plastic tablecloths



APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This creative activity can be delivered as an educational, recreational or therapeutic session depending on the techniques the facilitator uses and the goals for the individual or group. For example, for populations that have limited access to creative colorful materials in correctional facilities for youth, or senior facilities, schools with limited budgets, boys and girls clubs, foster programs, mental health programs or treatment centers, the goal of creating and expressing themselves can focus on positive attitudes, changing mood and finding joy in simple activities. As a social goal, the format of working with a partner supports cooperation, practicing social emotional awareness, understanding and sensitivity to other people’s personal space, their preferences, and appropriate behavior. The facilitator can incorporate complimenting other group members for their creativity as part of the session, this behavior demonstrating and modelling positive social interactions for both the one giving the compliment and the one receiving praise.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Paper cuts can be washed with soap and water. For individuals who are very sensitive to others and their personal space, a pre-formed “almost finished” hat can be offered as an alternative to the taping/shaping component, or working with someone they trust can ease this issue. Water-based paint and markers should be used.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: An extension of this activity can be Hat Day where the participants (and others) wear sunhats. This can promote acceptance of a variety of hats, styles and people, provide humor and fun in settings where there might be limited opportunities for such. Walking through the garden if there is one on site, can expand physical exercise. Or joining in a garden party can add to the festive atmosphere.

Use of dot markers, typically with a wider diameter grip than paint brushes can accommodate a variety of challenges, provide an easier and faster way to add color to hats for individuals, particularly for those who may have pincer grip challenges or short attention spans.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Fleming, L. (2019). Junior Master Gardener Program offers hands-on plant activities appropriate for all ages and abilities. *Digging In*, 7(4), 16-18.
Texas Cooperative Extension. (1999). *Junior Master Gardener Teacher/Leader Guide*.



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.