

Activity: Creative Expression/Arts Goal: Psychological/Emotional
Populations: Mental Health

TH Activity Plan – Positive Energy Sun Satchel

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create a Sun Satchel that symbolizes and fosters positive energy.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Cognitive practice of following sequential steps; learn positive affirmations; express healthy goals for the present and future

Physical: Exercise/walk & breath fresh air; support melatonin production-improved mood by exposure to sunlight

Psychological/Emotional: Develop strategy for self-care; develop coping skills addressing self-defeating thoughts

Sensory: Enhance mood through sensory stimulation

Social: Make an emotional regulation tool; connect with nature in a group setting

Materials

Clippers

Small cloth bags/mini satchel
(4" x 6")

Sprigs of fresh herbs:
rosemary, basil, thyme, dill

Citrus essential oil
(lemon or orange)

Dried or fresh flower petals

Small circle (¼ ") fabric/cloth
of bright color
(preferably yellow)

Small stones

Small pieces of paper

Pens or pencils

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Demonstrate asking the plant for permission to collect. Thank the plant for the offering.
2. Facilitator begins session by leading a 10 minute nature walk to look for & gather natural items (i.e. small stones, herbs, flower petals).
3. Participants select a satchel and fabric color of their choice.
4. Start by filling the satchel with offerings from nature. First add petals, and ask participants to say quietly in their mind to themselves kind things to themselves.
5. Next, crush fresh herbs with fingers and take time to smell the selected herbs, then add to the satchel. * **Crushing releases fragrance/smell and awakens the senses.**
6. Nestle stone into the items in satchel.
7. Take a circle of yellow fabric and place a drop or two of essential oil on it, then placing into satchel.
8. Write positive affirmations or goal on a small piece of paper, tucking this into bag. Sit quietly for 5 minutes with eyes closed.
9. Facilitator encourages participants to recharge their items in the sun.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: In this TH activity, participants will create a Sun Satchel that symbolizes and fosters positive energy. The purpose of the Sun Satchel is to serve as a tool for enhancing emotional well-being. This engaging process involves several key steps. Firstly, participants will articulate a personal wellness goal, which they will note down on a small piece of paper. Following this, they will craft a positive affirmation to support their

emotional and mental health journey. The activity begins (or culminates) in a nature walk, designed to gather natural elements while encouraging the participants to open their minds to new growth and creativity. This holistic approach aims to rejuvenate the mind, body, and spirit, aligning with a commitment to comprehensive wellness. Items can be recharged in the sun when feelings of low energy arise.

Originally delivered as a TH activity for women ages 18+ in an outside garden area of a treatment center for addiction and behavioral health, the focus was on the exploration of the therapeutic value of mindful collection of natural items, creating something from hand, and developing a future or present goal and positive affirmation.

A variety of therapeutic goals are applicable: developing self-awareness, safe bonding, opportunity for socialization, increasing time outdoors, and empowerment for wellbeing. Additionally, exploring renewal and growth, developing coping skills to manage self-defeating thoughts and difficult moments, awareness of sense of time, sensory stimulation, and experiencing a sense of ownership through creative decision making can also be a therapeutic focus. The activity has been used for populations within behavioral health treatment and recovery. This population includes people experiencing trauma, substance misuse, PTSD, homelessness, and recent incarceration. During the activity, discussion on how mindfully collecting small items from nature helps one to focus on being in the present moment, and how this action of making a Sun Satchel can aid in the development of personal wellness goals, positive thinking and developing a sense of hope and empowerment for the present and the future in addition to use as a self-regulation tool for moving from negative to positive thoughts and emotions.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: When taking the nature collection walk, the facilitator will carry small clippers for each participant. Use of clippers or allowing each participant to hold clippers, may not be appropriate for some populations. When ready to clip herbal plants, pass out clippers. Do not hand out clippers prior to walking. Collect immediately after clipping has taken place. Use of essential oil may not be appropriate/safe for some populations. It is important to share with participants that when using essential oil it is for topical use only, in this case adding it to satchels. Emotional safety and awareness of potential for self-harm is important for participation in this activity. Some nature items may be used in harmful ways. If a participant does not wish to share or fully participate, acknowledge participant and allow flexibility, for walking or any part of the activity they may or may not want to participate in.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Participants can create both a goal and positive affirmation, this is encouraged. However, one or the other is sufficient. Herbal plants at the location of activity allows participants to clip/harvest their own herbs and flower petals. If a nature collection walk is not possible, the facilitator can provide all materials. The nature collection walk is useful in creating a sense of ownership for participants as they walk and mindfully collect items that ‘speak’ to them. Herbal plants can be planted/grown as a related activity and precursor to this activity if there is sufficient time for herbal plants to grow in order to be harvested. The small satchels do not need to be decorative. Small satchels can be purchased at most local craft stores or etsy.com and are inexpensive. Participants are encouraged to practice using their satchel when experiencing feelings of hopelessness, depression, or worry. Encourage recharging items in the sun as self-reflection to invigorate and recharge the mind and spirit. Human re-charging, by being in the sun and allowing melatonin production to occur improves mood and circadian rhythm according to scientific studies (The Royal Women’s Hospital, n.d.).

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

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Kaiser Permanente. (2023). 40 positive affirmations for better self-care and brighter days. <https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health-wellness/healtharticle.40-positive-affirmations>

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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.

