

TH Activity Plan – Therapeutic Nature Journaling

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Photo by Joyous Lessons



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will use nature items for journaling during a virtual TH session.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand observational skills; learn & practice a new skill/hobby

Physical: Strengthen hand grip skills & strength; accommodate for arthritis or other hand challenges

Psychological/Emotional: Express emotions during session; practice strategies for stress relief

Sensory: Use all senses during session & for nature journaling activity

Social: Share comments, artwork & strategies used for nature journaling; support others in group with positive comments; expand social connections

Materials

Nature items

Pen or pencil

Any art materials you prefer

A piece of paper or journal

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Ask participants ahead of session to bring one or two items from nature, noting date, time of day & weather conditions.
2. Facilitator begins session by welcoming participants to the nature journaling (virtual or in-person session that can be in a room or a nature setting). Asking an opening question “Do you journal?” can begin a brief discussion of this, along with “What benefits do you get from journaling?”. Encourage participants to share their experiences & thoughts that will support social engagement.
3. Facilitator interjects interesting facts & resources about nature journaling, drawing & history of nature art during session.
4. Participants identify their nature objects to group with some details about their connection to them, then begin drawing (or painting) items. Facilitator sets the amount of time that will be allotted for this.
5. To conclude session, participants share their art if they are willing, expressing their feelings, & interest in future journaling. This theme of nature journaling can be a stand-alone session or one of several.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This therapeutic nature journaling TH session can be delivered in-person or as a virtual session. Most populations can benefit and enjoy it. Providing pre-session instructions to gather items from nature so they are available once session begins, or including a nature outing as part of an in-person session can accommodate many situations. Alternatively, nature items can be provided by facilitator, with participants selecting items that speak to them.

Therapeutic goals for wellness groups may be left to the individuals to choose for themselves. Refer to therapeutic goal box above. Facilitator can ask participants if they are journaling presently and what benefits

they have experienced. Using the question as a prompt at the beginning of the session can spur discussion and sharing of ideas on how people can benefit. These can include physical accommodations for arthritis (wider diameter pencils or brushes, line drawing vs detailed realistic drawings), stress relief by spending time in nature, improving communication and expression of emotions via journaling, and addressing pent-up feelings of inadequacies of drawing that may have occurred previously in school or work settings.

For other populations, specific therapeutic goals may be chosen by the facilitator based on client or group needs. As noted in the therapeutic goal box above, these may include improving social skills in a group setting, developing cognitive skills through a new hobby, or strengthening observation skills applicable to many tasks at home or work.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Facilitator should preview nature area that the session will take place in (if it is not a virtual session) to identify poisonous plants or other unsafe areas or items. Bat droppings for example are toxic. Accessibility and mobility challenges should also be identified and considered based on the participants' and their abilities.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Tips for facilitators leading this type of session can include:

- Recommend sit spots in nature, where quiet reflection and observation can be calming
- Using a [soft long range gaze](#) so participants can consider colors and shapes, bird calls, process emotions
- Integrate a [few history facts](#) (mankind has always used art for expression)
- Introduce some resources/books on journaling, nature art, concepts of blind contour drawing, cyanometer color measurement, drawing options like line drawing vs realism sketching
- Hands-on drawing time a minimum of 10 minutes

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Anderson, C. (2020). The art of looking. *Carolynanderson.com*.

Desnos, R. (2019). [How to make watercolour paints from petal](#). *Rebeccadesnos.com*.

Live to Plant. (2025). [Understanding veination patterns in plants](#). *Livetoplant.com*.

Lotzpf. K. (n.d.). [Nature on our doorstep: The art of British natural history](#). *Natural History Museum*.

Nelson, S. (1998). *Painting garden birds with Sherry C. Nelson*. North Lights Books.

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2025.