

Activities for Older People in Care Homes

A Handbook for Successful Activity Planning

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Heat-embossed Christmas cards

Helping people to create slick-looking pieces of art is always a challenge, but this technique can create a really professional finish for people working on a very sensory level. I work one-on-one with this technique. You can use this with a high-level group, but you will need to think about sharing a heat gun and embossing powders around the group. Supplies are available from most craft shops these days or you can order them online. NB: If you are working over a bed, use an extra sheet to protect the bedclothes from the embossing powder.

Ingredients

- Card blanks – regular squares or rectangles, or die-cut shapes, e.g. Christmas trees
- An ink block (the colour does not matter)
- Embossing powder in a variety of colours
- Newspaper
- Heat embossing gun – a hairdryer will work at a push, but do not use a DIY heat gun as it is far too hot!

Method for Christmas tree card

- » Use a pre-cut Christmas tree shape card. Dip fingers in the ink and make finger marks on the tree shape.
- » Working over newspaper, sprinkle the tree with embossing powder so that it covers all the ink marks. Shake the excess powder onto newspaper and return to the pot.
- » Use the embossing gun to gently heat the powder. You will be able to see the powder gently melt and become a slick embossed piece of paintwork – it is fascinating to watch!

Method for robins in the snow

- » Dip fingers in the ink and paint a few prints on the card.
- » Work with red embossing powder and the method described above; emboss the robins.
- » Dip fingers in white paint and paint freely on the rest of the card to create the snow.
- » Use a black pen to add the highlights and definition.

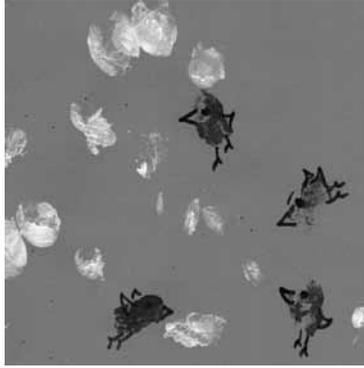


Figure II.3 Embossed robin Christmas card

Making a friendship quilt

This session can help people with different abilities to work to create something together. It can also be used during one-on-one time. Working with fabrics rather than paper and paint brings very different sensory experiences to the group – and can be a real tonic to many women who have knitted and sewed for much of their lives.

Ingredients

- Brightly coloured felt material in lots of different colours
- Ribbons
- Buttons
- Scraps of fabric
- Glue and scissors sharp enough to cut fabric
- Felt-tip pens
- Cardboard templates, about 6 square inches

Method

- » Unpack the fabric across the table – and give everyone the chance to enjoy the colours and textures. Use this opportunity to talk about the fabric, and any sewing or craft projects they bring to mind.
- » Ask people to select a favourite colour from the pieces of felt.
- » Ask them to draw around the templates with the felt-tip pens (use a colour that will show up well). Encourage everyone to line the templates up to edges and corners – this way you will get more from your fabric. If some people need extra support – a hand to hold the template steady, or someone to do the actual drawing for them – see if another resident can help them out,

- Hole punch
- Needles and thread

getting everyone to work as a team. Once drawn, the squares will need to be cut out. Felt is good for this, as it should cut easily without sliding around too much. However, make sure your scissors are up to the job before you start.

- » Use the hole punch to make a hole in each corner of the squares, but not too close to the edge. These will be used to join the finished squares to one another.
- » Encourage people to decorate the squares depending on their preferences and ability. Sorting brightly coloured buttons and sticking them in place, embroidering their name, cutting shapes from fabric scraps and gluing or stitching in place will all look good. This is the time when more one-on-one work can happen – take squares to people’s bedrooms and get them involved; suggest themes, objects or events from a person’s life story that could be represented. If people are able and would enjoy it, suggest that they blanket stitch around the edge of their square. Encourage people to help one another.
- » When the squares are completed, pick pieces of ribbon to tie the corners of the squares together. Lay the pieces flat on a table to tie them together, or you may tie them too tightly, and they will not lie flat. When cutting the ribbon, cut at an angle – this should stop it fraying.
- » Display the quilt on a noticeboard where everyone can enjoy it. If you need to take it apart at a later date, return the squares to their makers with a piece of ribbon in one corner so they can be hung up – naming the backs of the squares as they are made will help with this!

- » Fabric squares made in this manner can also be used as lavender bags – glue two pieces back to back with dried lavender between them. Or apply them to the front of cushion covers – use iron-on Bondaweb (following the manufacturer’s instructions).