



ART BRIDGES: Lesson Plans for Enrichment, Growth and Healing

Gratitude Tree

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Gretchen Miller MA, ATR-BC, ACTP
www.gretchenmiller.wordpress.com



Objectives:

The participants will:

1. Reflect on the blessings they have in their lives
2. Create art elements using line, color and symmetry with nature as their inspiration

Audience:

This activity can be enjoyed by all age groups.

Supplies/Materials:

- Mason jars
- Sand, stones, glitter, etc. for jar fill
- Small tree branches
- Textured scrapbooking paper
- Scissors
- Leaf templates
- Embroidery thread
- Markers, pens, etc.
- Single hole punch

The Process:

1. I started to collect small branches around my neighborhood and workplace until I had a nice bundle to use for the foundation of the tree.
2. These branches went into a mason jar filled with sand, stones, glitter, and other fun bits.



3. Using some textured scrapbooking paper, I cut out leaves and punched a hole in each of them.
4. With embroidery thread, the leaves (also referred to as “blessing tags” by some!) were threaded so they could hang from the tree’s branches.
5. On the paper leaves (with a little distressed ink, of course) I wrote or rubber stamped some of the simple, good stuff in my life I am so very grateful for: health, kindness, family, growth, friends, support, love, art & creativity, and appreciation for the abundance in my life. Little notes of thanks associated with each of these blessings are written on the back of the leaf.



6. I also included this quote inside the jar as a reminder about gratitude’s power:

*“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.
It turns what we have into enough, and more.
It turns denial into acceptance,
chaos to order,
confusion to clarity.
It can turn a meal into a feast,
a house into a home,
a stranger into a friend.
Gratitude makes sense of our past,
brings peace for today,
and creates a vision for tomorrow.”
~Melody Beattie*

Need some more Gratitude Tree inspiration? Check out:
<https://www.pinterest.com/search/?q=gratitude+tree> .

Hildegard Note to Counselors/Therapists:

Using the format for the “Gratitude Tree” provided by Gretchen, consider asking your clients, under your guidance, to create other trees that may be beneficial to them, e.g. “My Healing Tree”, “My Courage Tree”, etc. The trees could be a source of inspiration and a great way to focus on a particular area of therapy.

Plan in Action:

Retha Knapp (Team Leader and Peer Support Specialist) and her colleagues at CenterPointe of Lincoln, NE adapted this plan for use with their clientele. The mission of CenterPointe (www.CenterPointe.org) is to “help provide pivotal treatment and services for people experiencing homelessness, mental illness and addiction.”

Retha shares: “We have used several of the (Art Bridges) resources in our groups and treatment programs. Our biggest success story was using the Gratitude Tree Lesson Plan. Consumers collected tree branches, made leaves out of construction paper and wrote what they were grateful for in their lives on the leaves. It helped them realize that even when life seems like it’s not going their way, they still have positive things in their lives. It also inspired them to be more hopeful and to be thankful which keeps you going when the going gets tough. This program made it into a contest and divided into groups with one winning tree. Now they are using them on their tables as a centerpiece and a daily reminder.”



Heartfelt thanks to **Gretchen Miller MA, ATR-BC, CTC-S** for granting Hildegard Center permission to re-post this activity. Gretchen Miller MA, ATR-BC, ACTP is a Cleveland, Ohio area Registered Board Certified Art Therapist and TLC Advanced Certified Trauma Practitioner. She specializes in working with children, adolescents, women, and families impacted by trauma, domestic violence, and

grief & loss. To learn more about Gretchen and her work, please visit <http://www.gretchen-miller.com> .

If you have used this lesson plan, we'd love to hear from you! Please send questions or comments through our website www.hildegardcenter.org .

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