

## Cognitive Disabilities

### Activity Example 7-5

# Straw Hats with Potpourri (Level 5)

This is an appropriate activity for spring, and utilizes the strengths of Level 5, trial and error exploration in creating a pleasing result with the materials provided, utilizing more than one sensory system (visual and olfactory). It also includes a safety check, as members are supervised in the use of the hot glue gun and advised of the need for caution as needed.

*Materials:* 6-inch straw hats for each member, four rolls of thin satin ribbon (one each in pink, baby blue, red, and white), a variety of 1/2-inch silk flowers (daisies, roses, etc.), scissors, a glue gun with glue sticks, bags of potpourri in floral and herbal scents, nylon netting, spool of thread, and several colorful samples of finished hats.

Timing: Introduction—5 minutes  
Activity—30 minutes  
Processing/summary—20 minutes  
Clean-up—5 minutes

*Directions:* The leader introduces members, and explains the project and its purpose. It could be a door decoration, a gift, or a preparation for the Easter holiday. Doing the craft will be a way to monitor the skill level of members and to observe how they deal with limited choices, verbal instructions, and safety precautions. The goal is for each member to design and decorate one straw hat.

- Step 1: Potpourri—Cut a circle of nylon netting about 6 inches in diameter. Fill this with enough potpourri to fill the interior portion of the straw hat. Gather in the edges of the netting and tie it with a piece of string. Set this aside to be glued in later.
- Step 2: Decoration—Choose ribbons to tie around the center portion of the hat. Ribbons may be tied with bows or knotted with streamers hanging down. Each member may choose two to four flowers to glue around the ribbon cluster. One piece of ribbon should be cut about 10 inches long, with the ends tied in an overhand knot to serve as a hanger.
- Step 3: Gluing—The therapist should have the glue gun plugged in and heated to the correct temperature. A separated area with a fireproof surface and nothing flammable nearby should be maintained for gluing. Members can approach the gluing area several times during the session. First, the ribbons should be stabilized with a blob of glue right under the bow or knot. Next, the silk flowers are attached with glue. The nylon packet of potpourri is glued with the “tail” tucked inside the hat. Finally, the ribbon hanger loop is glued on the back, so that the hat may be hung from a hook on the door or wall.

*Discussion and Summary:* Feelings about the craft are elicited, followed by generalization of what other spring tasks around the house have similar attributes (i.e., getting out spring clothes, fixing up the house, making it smell nice). Discussing the use of the glue gun may be a good lead-in for reinforcing safety precautions around their homes. Other tasks involving heat and electricity (e.g., cooking, ironing, or using hair dryers, curling irons, or electric razors) should be discussed with each individual member with regard to safety. The straw hat activity may also trigger discussion of planning ahead for spring, the importance of spring cleaning, storage of winter clothes, care of lawns and gardens, or other tasks requiring anticipation, a typical problem area for Level 5. Summary should include feedback from the therapist. Hats are kept by the members to use however they like.