



Presents

A Therapeutic Art Workshop

Prescription Art



Session 1: Nature Altars

A video and hands-on workshop developed by Sarah Brodie and Arne Rickert of The Arterie

Facilitator's guide for:

Caregivers
Staff in Long-Term Care facilities
Retirement Homes
Adult Day Programs

May 10, 2020

Main phases of this creative workshop:

1. Gathering natural materials
2. Laying it all out so that you can see patterns
3. Enjoying arranging and rearranging your bits of nature in a pleasing way
Talking about what comes to your mind as you work - memories? wishes?
4. Taking a picture and sharing it with us
5. Expansion Activity

Decide what will work best for you and your group. You may want to enjoy the video first and then get started on the activity, or you may wish to start watching and pausing the video at certain times as you complete each step.

1. Gathering natural materials:

I recommend starting with a mix of a bouquet of flowers from a local florist and natural bits, and pieces that you pick up on a walk. It can even be pretty little food items: little lettuce leaves for example, or fruit or nuts. Where possible, be sure to include rocks, feathers, petals - find abundance in the natural world and gather it up. Enjoy this part, facilitators. May you gift yourselves a little contemplative walk as a part of your preparation. This may be done in advance of the workshop.

2. Laying it all out so you can see patterns:

Find and clear a table. If it's a plastic table, perhaps cover it with a lovely cloth tablecloth to match those bits of the natural world you have gathered? Lay out the nature materials you have gathered in little piles, with the center of the table left clear where you can create your altar.

3. Enjoying arranging and rearranging your bits of nature in a pleasing way and talking about what comes to your mind as you work:

This is where the meaning-making happens. As I suggest in the video, stories might come to mind. You and your participants might know the names of plants or flowers. Smell them, let scents remind you of places or times. Reminisce about any memories that might come up. You might enjoy the quiet reverie of placing and replacing elements in your Nature Altar. You might replay the video while you are making your own altar in order to enjoy the music and get inspiration.

Questions to encourage reminiscence:

- Do you have fond memories of a garden or somewhere in nature that you would like to recall? Please tell us a story about your garden, your favourite place in nature.

- Do you know about growing and gardening? Flowers or vegetables? Remember aloud how you cared for your indoor or outdoor garden.
- Flowers and plants are used to mark so many special occasions. Do you recall a time you gave or received a bouquet or a plant that stays in your memory? Please tell a story about it. Who was it to/ from? What was the occasion?

4. **Taking a picture:**

Feel free to share it to willow.foundation@halton.ca. Don't forget to include suggestions/comments for upcoming workshops. Note that sending your photo provides consent for it to be used for promotional purposes by The Willow Foundation and/or The Arterie.

5. **Art expansion activity:**

If you would like to continue creating from your nature altar, how about a nature drawing? Using pencils, paper and colours, you can choose your favourite element of the nature altar to draw.

Some thoughts and ideas:

You may be surprised at the beauty that comes from these fleeting arrangements. You're welcome to write about your experience in making them, especially if you have memories or revelations that you treasure and want to return to.

You might also wish to print pictures of your Nature Altar to make cards of gratitude or well wishes for family and friends.

Please keep in mind:

In this time of public health crisis, we are all shaken and unsure of our footing. Sometimes, ironically, it is when we relax that we get most in touch with our fears. This can make you or your participants avoidant, or rushed, or disengaged, or overwhelmed by their fears. That's the fine print "warning" for this Prescription Art – the worst-case scenario is that this creative activity be meaningless or procedural – which isn't such a big bad worst case in this rough world. Maybe, though, these words here can help you to carve out an hour for yourself and a senior (or even a group, if such a gathering is permitted), that is fortifying for you all.

About this video:

The inspiration for this video is from Day Schilbrecht's website and book, Morning Altars. You might be interested in having a look by visiting: <https://www.morningaltars.com>

Nature Altars is the first of four videos, to learn when the next one becomes available, follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/willowforseniors/>. They will be available on The Willow Foundation's website at www.willowfoundation.ca/library.