



Rock Painting

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Fine motor activities can be difficult for older adults experiencing arthritis, impairments due to stroke, and problems with vision. Here is an activity designed to allow participants to demonstrate basic abilities underlying fine motor skills and can serve as a foundation for further refinement of these skills.

BENEFITS: Enable fine motor development and increase hand-eye coordination skills

MATERIALS

- One or more rocks that display a color change when wet, such as granite. It helps to have rounded rocks from a riverbed. The rocks should be approximately 3" in diameter but no more than 6" in diameter
- Two small paintbrushes
- One small bowl to hold water
- One tray
- One dry rag



SETUP

1. Fill the small bowl $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water.
2. Place the bowl on the center of the tray with a brush beside it.
3. Place the rock that you will be using in front of the bowl, but still on the tray.
4. Take the second brush in your hand.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Demonstrate how to hold the brush with a pincer grip.
2. Dip the brush in the water.
3. Show the participants how to "paint" the rock by using strokes that go from the top to the bottom in a straight line, starting on the left-most side of the rock and then moving from the left to the right. Only demonstrate two or three strokes, moving slowly and deliberately.
4. Hand participants the paintbrush on the tray and invite them to finish painting the rock you started.
5. Ask the participants to continue painting another side of the rock after they master the strokes.
6. Invite the participants to finish a second rock. You can also be painting a rock while they paint theirs.
7. Ask the participants to clean any spilled water with the rag when the task is complete, demonstrating use of the rag with a small part of the spill first.

Note: During the activity, try to encourage the participants to notice the aesthetic qualities of the rock. For example, you may say something like "Look at how pretty the colors are" or "Feel how rough (or smooth) the rock is." This provides sensory stimulation while allowing participants to display appropriate social skills.

EXTENSIONS

Have participants use watercolors to fill in the outlines of shapes using the same motions used in rock painting.

HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

Show participants how to "polish" the leaf of a plant by stroking off the dust with a small swab that has cotton wrapped at its end, using the same strokes and motions used with rock painting. Have participants fill in outlines of shapes on paper using a colored pencil, one stroke at a time, from left to right.

VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

DOWNWARD EXTENSION

- If participants have difficulty holding a small paintbrush and/or seeing the rock, use larger rocks and larger paintbrushes. More impaired participants may want to simply watch another person paint the rock.

UPWARD EXTENSION

- Using smaller rocks and/or smaller brushes can increase the difficulty of the task. Using a smaller brush with a larger rock requires more time to complete the activity, thereby increasing the amount of sustained attention the task requires.
- Have participants paint wooden objects such as their name on a shingle for their doorway or a birdhouse that can be placed outside their window.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

P: The participants are unable to grip the brush.

S: Use a brush with a thicker handle.

P: The participants start but do not complete painting a rock.

S: Focus on a single element of the activity at a time (i.e., just do one stroke at a time, with additional direction given as needed after each stroke).

S: Paint all but a small portion of one side of the rock, and then invite participants to finish it for you.

Find this manual and other resources for memory care at www.cen4ard.com

