

WORKSHOP EXPERIENCES OF THE STUDENTS & THE PARTICIPANTS

What would the inhabitants like to do? A representative from one department said that they clearly do not want to make potholders! Perhaps they started to think about their own school days when they heard we were studying to become craft teachers? Maybe they had bad memories about potholders... So no potholders.

Almost every one of them said that they used to do at least some handicrafts, but few had kept up the hobby. This was surprising. On the other hand, if crafts become an obligation, it's no wonder people stop doing them once they no longer have to.

I've always liked to knit, that was always my craft. I haven't done it in years, my kids have grown and they don't need handmade clothes. I liked making things for them when they were little. I'm not that interested in it anymore.

Even those who stated that they had never really been a craft type of person said that they had done a considerable amount of handicrafts. This made me think about how they understand craftiness, creativity or being a "craft" person.

I'm not really into crafts but... this one's pretty good, right? Look how pretty! Even if I do say so myself. Cheers!

I noticed that they were very modest when discussing their skills. All of them had done at least some crafts, but many said that they had no skills at all.

It was a culture shock. The whole culture was so foreign to us that at first we had trouble seeing the people behind the behaviours and symptoms. Once we got used to the things that are normal and are caused by the illness we started to recognise them as individual people. We see such a tiny fraction. It's difficult when you don't know the background.

How can we motivate the participants?

At first we were nervous about our ability to motivate our clients to take part. One lady almost stole the CD I was using in my demonstration and started to weave in the yarns. Others needed some more coaxing. This group required constant encouragement to participate.

We are still good for something! Nothing's lost yet.

They did want to frequently check whether they were doing it right, whether the result was too loose or tight, whether they were doing something wrong. It may have been a new concept for them that there wasn't a single right answer, that everyone could work in their own style and that all solutions were equally valid.

It was interesting to see how much importance they placed on selecting colours. The colourful wool was particularly popular, and the rich selection of colour had something for everyone. We had a summer theme for the colours, so we could talk about what summery things each colour brought to mind .

Maybe I'll add some blue because I used it earlier... Maybe it'll even this whole thing out.

Some were more certain of their colour selections this time. I showed them last time how they could try out colours in their work. Choosing the colours was also easier because we supervisors helped the planning with questions.

It felt like they had wanted something to do with their hands. Everyone should have the RIGHT to do crafts for as long as possible. If you're no longer able to continue with a particular craft, there are always new techniques to try.

The new technique feels pretty fun, I'll finish this today.

It was rewarding to see the positive impact of crafts. Everyone perked up and seemed happier and more active. It seemed that they became more active as they worked, even though they were a little slow to start. Just picking up the work seemed to get things started.

It's nice to work on this. It's something new.

The target group and the environment were so foreign to me that just being there was a little unnerving.

The technique proved to work very well. It was new to them – CDs are familiar objects to us, but strange to them. They knew how to use a needle, however, so it was easy to grab one.

Now my relatives should see what I've made!

One lady is very talkative, and she often repeats the same things. When she was holding her project and working on it, her stories gained new elements. Focusing on the craft project helped her thoughts to expand!

What if they won't or can't do what we intended?

It was a pleasant surprise to see their stamina and the speed at which they worked. Once they figured it out, they took to the work quite well, which I believe is a sign that the difficulty level was appropriate. Time passed quickly for both we supervisors and the participants, and we could have gone on longer.

We have to remember to take a breather!

Their joy was palpable! They were so surprised and delighted by having done something they had never imagined doing. It was amazing, and wonderful.

Their development was astounding, so fast... and all the ways people can express creativity, even in a very simple technique. Looking at the colour choices and the designs, it's obvious that they have a clear intention behind the project. It generates so much joy and meaning for the project when people can do it through their own approach.

When the technique is easy and the teaching is clear, it lets the mind run free.

I've never done this. I'm learning a totally new thing! I would not have believed this morning that I'd be doing this today!

At first it seemed that they didn't remember the previous session at all. But that all changed when they resumed the project. They remembered the work! The needles started whizzing, and they started muttering "over-under-over-under" with no prompting.