

# Relaxing Through the **ARTS**

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***Simple Nature Poems/  
Arts Activities***



***FriendshipWorks***

Nursing Home  
Outreach Program

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he following arts activities are based on connecting residents with the natural world, the world of nature, through words and images. Most nursing home residents are unable to go outside, and miss the experience of taking a walk, smelling the flowers, breathing the crisp air of Autumn, and touching the first snowflakes that cover the ground in white. These activities help residents both remember and experience some of these times in their lives.

The focus of the activities are a collage form of haiku poetry, simple nature poems that connect nature and human nature. The collage form uses photographs or objects of nature to connect with personal experience and feelings. Since haiku is also based on the five senses, the activities include collage poems that focus on what we hear, see, touch, taste and smell.

As you create these arts activities, encourage residents to keep them in a folder, put them on the wall, or show them to staff, friends and family. In a true creative sense, these art activities reflect the life and expression of nursing home residents, giving them voice and connection.

These are examples of haiku poems that will help you with these arts activities. There are additional haiku poems in the next section for you to share with residents.

*Autumn leaf-  
a flash of light  
as it falls*

*the quiet  
inside the quiet  
first snow*

*deep inside the tulip  
the smell  
of spring*

*above  
the storm clouds -  
blue sky*

Most of these activities can be done in 20 minutes or so, and take the form of a simple collage of word and image. Some also draw from a direct experience of an object of nature such as a seashell, stone or flower. The activities are grouped according to theme and form. You are encouraged to use them but also to improvise and add you own. If you do add your own, please let us at FriendshipWorks know so we can continue to improve our program.



## **BASIC SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED.**

You do not need all of these at each session but it is best to have an assortment ready so you can easily plan and carry out your art activity. We have many of these supplies here at FriendshipWorks but it is also a good idea to gather photos and objects of nature on your own. You may be surprised at how much is available to you once you begin looking.

### **FOR THE COLLAGES OF WORDS AND IMAGES:**

Photos of nature: calendars, postcards, nature and travel magazines, seed catalogues, brochures, online sites, whatever you can find and purloin from friends, family, dentists' offices, and so on. Cut the photos into small, about 3x4 inch shapes so they can fit easily on a card. Leave some large, especially landscape photos such as beaches, fields, forests and mountains.



Card stock or heavy paper: light colored, yellow, or cream. Size 8 ½ by 11 inches. Cut in half for most of the projects but leave some full size for mounting larger photos.

Scotch tape and glue sticks for attaching the photos to the cards.

A few markers in blue, green, purple, perhaps black. Medium point.

Index cards.

### **FOR READING THROUGH HAIKU POEMS, SEE THE COLLECTION OF POEMS AT THE END OF THIS SECTION.**

Scissors (just in case).

### **FOR NATURE-BASED SENSORY COLLAGE-TYPE ACTIVITIES:**

Objects of nature to give out to residents: seashells, stones, twigs, leaves, acorns, etc. Also feel free to gather objects you find for additional activities you know your residents would enjoy. Examples are sprigs of mint, lavender, herbs and spices, various flowers and wildflowers. The choices of these are open to your imagination.

Optional: stickers, stamps, other details to include on the collage cards.



## NATURE COLLAGE CARDS

**Purpose:** To combine a scene of nature with a feeling.

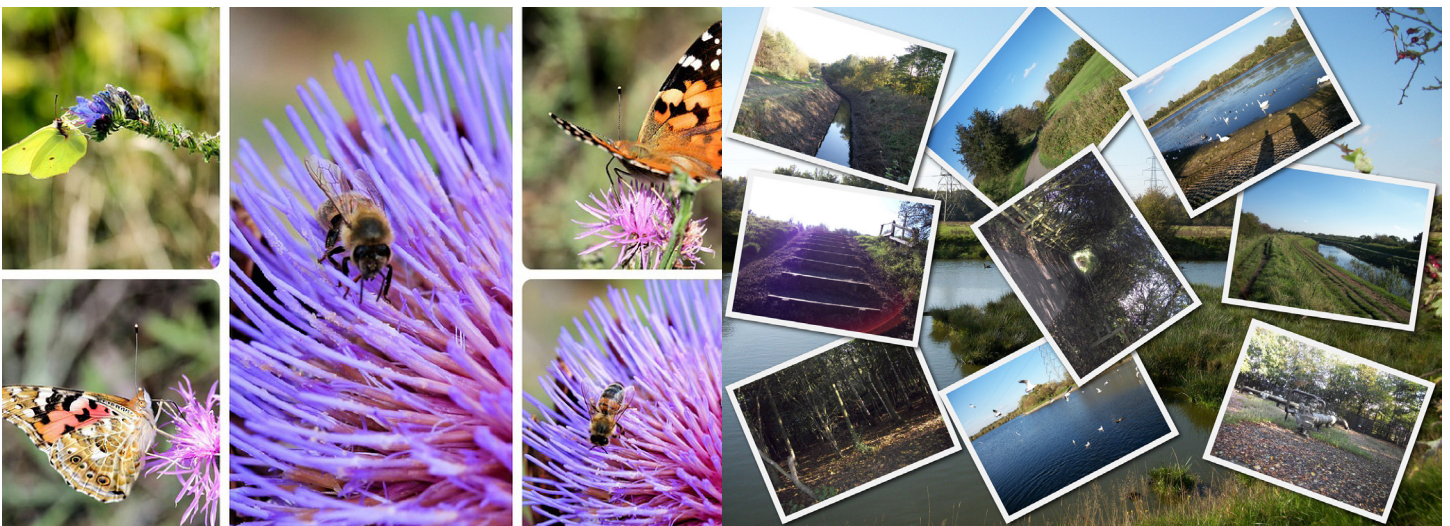
You will need: Small seasonal assorted photos of nature. Card stock, cut in half. Tape and glue stick, markers.

If you are working with one resident, show him or her an assortment of photos and together sort through them choosing several that each of you like. Share them with each other, commenting on any memories or recollections related to the themes in the photos. After this, choose one photo and mount it on the top half of the card.

Look at the card together and think about what feelings are related to the photo. Write down the feeling on the bottom half of the card. You can make several cards or one card depending on time and interest. Sometimes the cards trigger stories and memories that are helpful to recall and give you both more connection.

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If you are working with a group or a “mini” group of two or three people, introduce the activity and spread the assortment of photos on the table. Ask each person to look through as many photos as they want, and choose one. Then go around the table and ask each person to share why they chose the photo and describe it to the group. Tape or glue the photo to the top half of each card. After carefully looking at the card and photo again, ask each person to think about what feeling this brings up for them. Write the feeling on the bottom half of the card. After this is done, everyone shares their cards with the photo and the feeling. Make sure each resident takes his or her card back to their room with them.



## SIMPLE NATURE POEMS TO COLLECT AND KEEP

**Purpose:** To collect examples of simple haiku nature poems.

You will need: medium size envelopes that you can make by folding the corners of a square piece of paper up to the middle of the paper, or bringing in envelopes, 4x6 inches in size.

Have ready an assortment of simple nature haiku poems, multiple copies, for you and your resident to read together and select (see poem selections on pages 13-17).

Read together all the different poems. Your resident can then decide which ones she wants to keep and put into her envelope. She can decorate the envelope if she wants, and add more poems later. This is also a good time to talk about your resident's experiences of nature, and what she has liked to do over the years.

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If you are doing this activity in a group, hand out all the poems and have everyone sift through them. Read all the different ones aloud, and then ask each person to select four. Each person then shares the four they have chosen. You can compare who has chosen the same ones, who had different ones, and so forth. Ask about the content and themes to see what people enjoy most and may want to write about in the future.

Make sure each person has the four poems they have chosen in the envelope to take with them.





# NATURE POEM BOOKMARKS

**Purpose:** To explore the smaller details of nature and how we relate to them.

You will need: A selection of small photos all about the same subject. The subject should be related to the season. For example: flowers for spring and summer; autumn leaves for fall, snowflakes for winter, seashells for summer, and so forth. Cut card stock long-wise to make large bookmarks; have tape, glue stick, and markers ready for cutting and pasting.

As with the Nature Collage Card activity, each person sorts through the photos and finds the one that they like best. If this is an individual activity, share together what you both like and describe in detail what you have chosen. Then tape or glue the photo on the bookmark card stock, and on the back put a few words to convey a thought or feeling about the photo. The resident can make more than one bookmark if she wants to give them to staff, other residents, or visitors.

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If you are working with a group, each person in the group can sort through the photos and choose which one they want for their bookmark. After gluing or taping the photo to the bookmark card stock, they share the photo with the rest of the group. Turning the bookmark over they then write, perhaps with your help, a thought or feeling about the photo. If there is time group members are welcome to make more bookmarks for staff, other residents or visitors if you have enough photos and cards.



## LANDSCAPE WORD - IMAGE

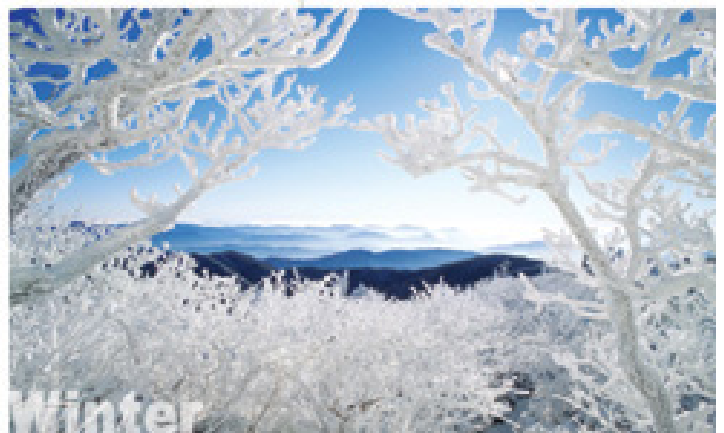
**Purpose: To see the world in season with greater clarity and detail.**

You will need: large photos of the season, most likely gleaned from calendars or seasonal nature magazines. Also full size card stock for mounting the photos. Tape, glue stick, and markers.

If you are working with one resident, show her the photos and together sort through, and each of you take one. Share why you have decided on the photo you have selected. Mount the photo on the card stock and take your time carefully examining the landscape. What might the resident see, hear, touch, taste, or smell if she were there in the photo? As she describes this, write down a few words directly onto the photograph. Make sure the photograph is mounted on the card stock, and her name is on it.

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If this is a group, each person selects a photograph and shares why they choose it. After mounting the photograph, each person carefully examines it in terms of what she or he may see, hear, touch, taste and smell. As they share this, write down a few words of this description directly onto the photograph. Make sure each person's name is on the photograph and the photograph is brought with them back to their rooms.



## NATURE FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

**Purpose:** To directly explore and experience a seasonal object of nature.

You will need: Multiple objects of nature, whatever is available and within easy reach for you to collect and bring to the nursing home. Make the the objects are all the same type: all seashells; etc. Examples are stones, acorns, pinecones, twigs, pussy willows, sprigs of flowers or herbs, seashells, Autumn leaves, and so on.

You will also need card stock, cut half size, and markers.

Place all the objects in a bowl or plate and put in the center of a table.

Look over all the objects and each of you select what one you and the resident want to keep. Carefully examine the object. What memories and associations come to your resident? What might you add in terms of your own experience? Write down some of these associations on the card to keep with the object. Make sure your resident take the object and and card with them.

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If you are working with a group of residents, pass the bowl around and have each person, carefully select what object the want. Selecting is important and personal so make sure to relax and let this be a special time. Each person then talks about what memories or associations they may have to the object, such as visits to the beach or walks in the woods. Using the cards, write down these association in a few words. Make sure each resident takes the object and the card back to their rooms which them.





## THE SMELL OF NATURE

**Purpose: To heighten awareness of smell and the role it plays in our enjoyment and connection with the natural world.**

You will need: Natural objects with a strong and pleasant smell: cloves, cinnamon sticks, lemon rind, lavender, and so forth. Bring multiple of the same type of object. For example, a number of cinnamon sticks or sprigs of lavender. Have a bowl of these objects ready to select and examine. Also have small pieces of card stock, and markers.

Make sure that you and your resident have time to look through the object and select the one that you want. As you hold the object, and smell it, talk about any associations and memories you have with the object. For example: “This cinnamon stick reminds me of when I used to make apple pies for Thanksgiving.” Write these memories down on a card and if you want, write out a short story or poem to express the experience.

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If this is a group activity, place the bowl on the table at the beginning of the session. When you begin the activity pass around the bowl and ask each person to take one object. Then everyone talks about the smell and memories associated with the object. For example, “A sprig of lavender reminds me of my grandmother, which was her favorite scent.” This can be a very pleasant and fun discussion. Take a few notes on what each person is reporting and give these notes to them on a card. If they want, form some of the associations and observations into a poem. If not, taking the associations with them on the card, along with the object, works well too.



## DOGS, CATS, CANARIES

**Purpose: To stimulate enjoyable memories of household pets.**

You will need: photos of pet animals, and card stock or heavy paper cut to fit the size of each photo. These can be easily found in a calendar or magazine devoted to animal care. Clue sticks and markers.

Many nursing home residents enjoy animals and have had pet dogs, cats or birds. Once you get to know your resident ask him or her about this. Choose the type of pet your resident had and bring in a selection of photos of, for example, dogs, cats, or pet birds such as parakeets or canaries.

Cut out the photos, and, like the other activities listed above, place the photos in a bowl or on a plate, and give your resident time to select one photo and talk about why they like that particular picture. Allow time to talk about and share stories of favorite his or her favorite pet. Write down some key words from the story and write them on a card that can go with the photo.

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If you are working with a group, pass the bowl with the photos around and have each person select one they especially like. They may or may not have had a pet, but they may have a fondness for animals they want to share and discuss. After each person has chosen a photo, ask them to share the photo, why they chose it, and perhaps a story or association to the photo. Write these down on the cards as they talk, and clue the photo to the card. Make sure each resident takes his or her card back to their rooms with them.





## SPECIAL HOLIDAY CARDS

Holidays often hold special memories and meaning. Once you know your resident you will have a good idea about what holidays she has observed and which ones she likes to think about and remember; ones that have been fun for her and hold special memories and traditions. Examples of these are: Christmas, Thanksgiving, Passover, Easter, Rosh Hashanah, Ramadan, The Fourth of July, Labor Day, Memorial Day and Halloween. If you are not familiar with the holiday your resident most likes, ask her to describe it to you. She may take pleasure in telling you all about the traditions and activities surrounding the day or days of the holiday and season.

As your resident tells you about favorite traditions, ask for detail. Ask about food, special dishes, music, and dancing and other celebrations, the place and time, and so on. Write down words and phrases that reflect what she describes. Share with her what you have listed and see if there is anything else to add. Once the two of you have done that, form the words and phrases into poems or short sayings and make them into a card for her to have or to give away. These short poems can be just word poems or could also include an image from a magazine that depicts the holiday: a table set with food, an ornament, or type of dress are easy examples.

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If you are working with a group of residents start with a holiday you know most or all of the group has observed and celebrated. Then ask the group to make a list of all the associations they have with that holiday or holiday season, and write them down. Read back what you have written and ask people for examples, especially focussing on the five senses: what they have heard, seen, tasted, smelled, felt or touched and so forth. This could also be a time of sharing some stories about holiday customs. Write down a few words on a card for each person, making sure that you write this together as part of his or her special holiday tradition. If you want you can as a group decorate the cards. Each person should leave with a card or card to keep or to give away.





## MAKE YOUR OWN HAIKU POETRY BOOK

Haiku poetry books are easy to make as haiku is small form of only a few words. These poems can easily fit into a paper folded book which can be decorated.

Have an assortment of haiku poems available, including those written together with you or with the group. Go through the poems, reading them aloud, and select six that the resident likes best. As you read through the six poems, think about a title that you would like to add. Fold a single piece of paper into six folds and write each poem on the folded page. Add the title and then decorate in whatever way you both want. Viola! A book is made.

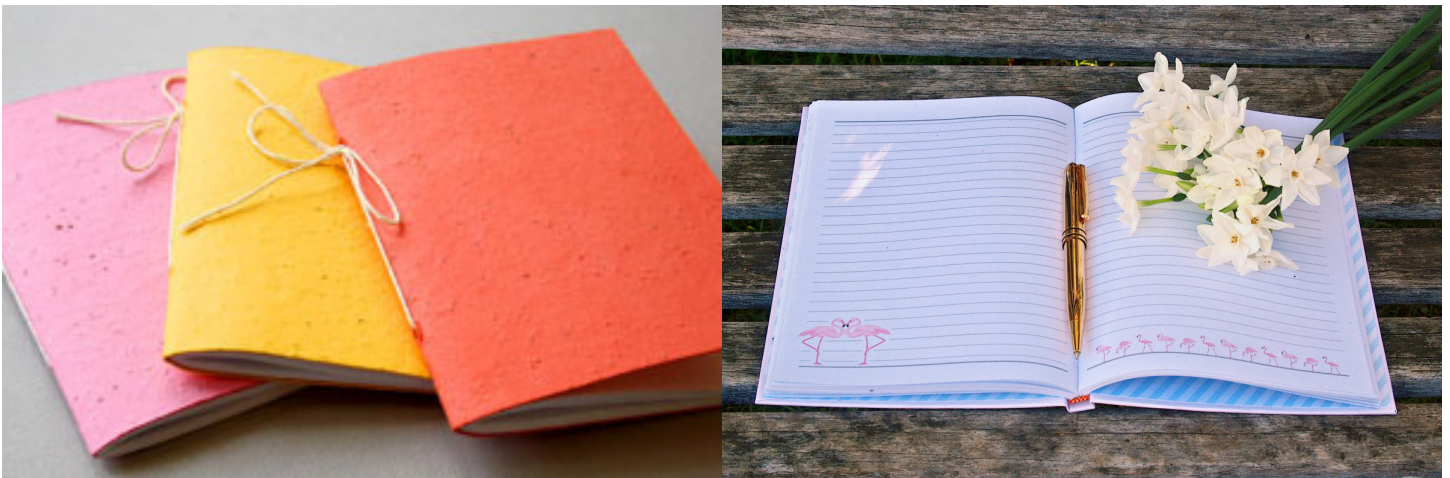
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This project can also be easily done in a group. Have all the poems ready to pass around. Each resident reads through the poems and selects six for his or her book. She or he then thinks about a title for the book. Have the folded pages ready so that, with help, each resident can write or dictate the six poems onto the pages for the book.

Note: you will need help with the project so make sure that a staff person or another helper is there to transcribe the poems along with you.

Once each book is made, residents can decorate the book, to take with them.

Be sure to keep the poems for posting someplace and also for individual folders.



*Have Fun!*

# HAIKU POEMS FOR ACTIVITIES AND TO MAKE INTO CARDS

## SUMMER

summer evening  
breathing the air  
breathing the moonlight

all through town  
the single sound  
of crickets

summer afternoon  
watching the clouds drift  
into wind

touching it  
touched by it  
purple iris

wild flowers  
the garden plants  
itself

here and there  
in the cracked pavement  
clover blossoms

summer solitude  
the trees  
wave back

summer afternoon  
dust  
in a slant of light

alone at home  
just me  
and this ladybug

on both sides  
of the stone wall  
wild roses

wild daisies  
the domesticated bees  
miss one

summer evening  
so many stars  
so many crickets

seaside chapel  
between hymns  
sound of the sea

ancient shrine  
now a pile of stones  
summer sky

firefly  
by daylight  
just some bug

just for today: day lily

## AUTUMN

late Autumn  
the canary's cage  
left open

migrating geese  
the old dog barks  
in her sleep

path covered with leaves  
still  
a path

start of school  
even the pumpkins  
look busy

rush hour  
the smooth brow  
of the street musician

outside the closed window  
a cricket's insistent  
chirp

just outside the jewelry store  
the gold  
of fall chrysanthemums

flight of the raven  
its tail feather  
in my hand

autumn rain  
mountains  
or mountain mist?

after the ball game  
the grass  
its stillness

meditation center  
the migrating geese  
have landed

empty bookshelf  
two spider webs  
touch

dawn rain  
the warm curve  
of my coffee cup

downstream  
where fallen leaves  
come together

larger than  
the rest  
multicolored leaf

autumn leaf  
a flash of light  
as it falls

mountain hike  
keeping up  
with myself



## WINTER

bare birch tree  
its upturned branches  
reflect the light

the quiet  
inside the quiet  
first snow

basement apartment  
watching the snowfall  
from the bottom up

a falling snowflake  
the wind  
lifts it

dark night  
one small candle  
lights the room

the grandmother  
I never knew  
falling snow, still falling

blizzard  
my thoughts  
pile up

no snow  
the mountains white  
with moonlight

the smell  
of hot cocoa  
grandmother's hand

cold days  
and colder  
warm mittens

snowstorm  
a pine cone opens  
in my hand

without a  
sound -  
winter sunset

almost invisible  
in the storm  
snow angels

no tracks  
no trails  
this fresh snow

listening  
for the quiet  
first snow

snowbound  
more frost flowers on the window  
than there really are

first snow  
all the roof tops  
take shape

snow moon  
a circle of breath  
on the window

warm  
beside the fire  
me and my pillow

above the  
snow clouds  
blue sky

## SPRING

deep inside the tulip  
the smell  
of spring

spring wind  
scent of an unknown  
flower

the silence  
between thunderclaps  
even louder

beach walk  
my footprints  
where land begins

lasts even longer  
faded  
cherry blossom

a call home  
the sound of spring peepers  
over the phone

how different  
the sound of spring rain  
new apartment

no path  
one stone leads  
to another

April flirtation  
the soft touch  
of our umbrellas

apple blossom time  
the trees covered  
with white

planting the garden  
old bulbs  
and new bulbs

Oh daffodil  
if only  
you had a scent!

walking  
to and from the car  
the smell of lilacs

I can pet you  
like a cat,  
pussy willow!

suddenly  
and without warning  
first ladybug

there's my napkin!  
in the  
robin's nest

no need  
for a night light  
spring moon

everywhere  
baby leaves  
curling into branches

flowers and wildflowers to come....spring rain

## ALL SEASON HAIKU

somewhere  
in the Milky Way  
first light

no windows  
the philodendron grows  
toward the ceiling

one toe, and then another  
into the stream  
clear water

cools my hand  
as I warm it  
stone

clouds above clouds  
above clouds  
blue sky

seashell  
the sound of the sea  
on my table

between worries  
the coo-coo  
of the mourning dove

candle light service  
outside  
a single star

dry riverbed  
it too  
leads to the sea

midnight  
face to face  
with the moon

for 450 million years  
just being itself  
horseshoe crab

dark night  
on the horizon  
a single star

open sea  
miles and miles  
of sky

clouds  
inside of clouds  
inside of clouds

awake and asleep  
the same  
sun

the mist  
hiding the trees  
hiding the mist

Sunday meditation  
matching my breath  
to church bells

crescent moon  
so many other moons  
unnamed

moon viewing  
no one answers  
the phone