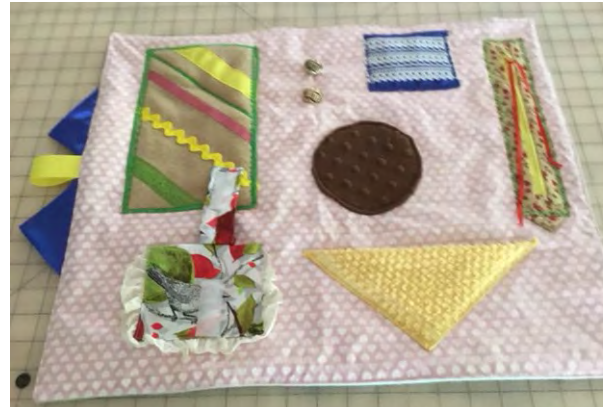


Fidget Activity Mat for Alzheimer's Patients 2019 State 4-H Fashion Revue Service project

This project is designed for the beginning to advanced 4-H Sewing or Quilting project member, project group, or club with some sewing experience. Enlist the help of an adult volunteer leader if you need assistance with the instructions. Ask sewers and quilters you may know if they have a "stash" of fabrics, trims, ribbons and zippers they no longer need or put out a request in the 4-H county newsletter or via social media. Partner with your friends or even a sewing or quilting guild to create one-of-a-kind mats that will truly make a difference. These are meant to be donated locally, but please let the State Fashion Revue Committee know how many are made.



Example of Fidget Mat

Fidget Activity Mats are lap quilts, the size of oversized placemats, with different textures to feel, and things to open and close to keep hands busy. These easy-to-sew activity mats help soothe the agitated fidgeting of people with dementia or autism. Plus, the mats help focus attention, stimulate senses, exercise hand muscles and entertain users. All you need are some items that can withstand hot water washing and drying in a dryer. Fidget Mats are best when lap-sized. You can get 4 mat tops from 1 yard of fabric if you begin with rectangles 18 x 22".

- ◆ Patients prefer soft fabrics but there needs to be some stability. Fabric that is relatable to their memory age group, things they might love or remember, are good.
- ◆ Bright colors are good somewhere in the quilt, but peaceful is needed, too. Red and orange are the colors that we are able to see when our vision dims. So use red, orange, and fuchsia mixed in with your calming colors.
- ◆ Add on ideas: smooth and rough ribbons, mesh, rickrack, folded prairie points, lace, decorative trims, etc.,

Materials list: makes 4 mats

- ◆ 1 yard solid weave cotton for tops
- ◆ 1 yard flannel for backing. These mats don't need to be warm. The flannel helps to keep the mat on the patients lap so it doesn't slide off.
- ◆ 1 yard stabilizer (batting, flannel, etc) for in between the layers. You want this to not be floppy, but not totally firm.
- ◆ 7" or longer zipper. A longer zipper may be used, just cut off the extra length.
- ◆ Scrap textured fabrics - terry, satin, lace, minty, corduroy, etc.
- ◆ Ribbons, rings, buttons, beads, etc. Must be securely attached. Use your imagination!

Directions:

1. Cut the fabric for the top, the flannel backing, and the stabilizer all the same size.
2. Layer the mat top and backing right sides together.
3. Lay this on top of the batting or stabilizer.
4. Sew all the way around the outside, leaving a 3" opening for turning.
5. Trim the corners, turn right sides out and stitch 1/8" from the edge to secure the layers and close the opening.
6. Grab your scraps and lay them on top of the mat.
7. Pin the items in place and start stitching them down by hand or machine. Your stitching will go through all the layers to keep them more secure and quilt the layers together, making it wear through washings and use.

If you plan to make Fidget Mats yourself or with your 4-H group, ask the facility first to be sure you provide what they need. Facilities may have different rules. In some facilities buttons may be allowed, but not in others. In some, each resident will be given the fidget mat for their use alone, so they wouldn't get washed that often. In others, all fidget mats might be washed frequently, and the patients receive different ones each time they are brought out. Just check first so there are no misunderstandings. Facilities to contact in your town, city or county include nursing homes, adult day care centers, senior centers, long term care centers, assisted living center, memory care units, continuing care retirement community, and local hospitals.

Ideas:

- ◆ Dementia patients do repetitive motions with their hands so zippers become a great way to provide activity. Zipping and unzipping is tactile and provides sound, too. Sew some printed fabric to each side to make it larger, then top stitch the piece to the mat. Add ribbons to the zipper pull to give a better gripping area, plus it adds another texture to the mat.
- ◆ Alzheimer's patients love Velcro so make a flap from fabric and use Velcro to make it open and close. You could also put Velcro along both shorter sides of the mat creating a "book" out of the whole piece. You could even add handles so it can be toted around easily.
- ◆ Buttons and beads, especially large ones or uniquely shaped, are well received. If you use buttons, they must be large, able to withstand heated drying, and be well secured.
- ◆ The front of an old shirt with snap fasteners can be used, or put on some satin/grosgrain ribbon, large wooden beads, pockets from old jeans, etc.
- ◆ Choose trims that feel nice to touch. Pom Pom trims, a long panel of minky or satin-feeling fabric, work well.
- ◆ Things that make a slight clicking sound like round plastic rings (knitting stitch markers) are great. Try to avoid things that are really loud.
- ◆ Knit scraps, cording or shoelaces can be used for braiding or lacing. Make fabric loops that are securely attached.
- ◆ The trinkets and trims and activities attached to the mat provide a way for patients to keep their restless fingers busy. This can provide much-needed relief for both loved ones and their care givers.
- ◆ This project needs mats for men and women so look for things that can be used for either.

For more ideas on making your Fidget Mat see these sources:

- ◆ Alzheimer's Fidget Quilts (<http://sewinwilde.blogspot.com/Alzheimer's-fidget-quilt.html>)
- ◆ Nancy Zieman's Fidget Quilts
- ◆ Touchy Feely Quilt instructions for Dementia and Autistic Patients Tender Touch Quilt for Alzheimer's Patients and Children @ Sunshine Linus 2014



Basic mat layers



Add-ons before construction



Feely Circle



Washcloth triangle pocket



Adding edge pieces



Zipper steps



Finished Zipper

Finished mat

