

Fidget Quilts – Windy Benigno (1/7/2019)

A request for fidget (or fiddle) quilts was received from Nancy who works at Bellevue Medical Center. She would like just 4 quilts to start out so she can figure out what works best and then requests will likely expand to the main campus. Patients may have Alzheimer's, other types of dementia, traumatic brain injury, etc. and patients may be young or elderly. There are many additional examples of Fidget Quilts on Pinterest and Google. Below are my notes on things Nancy and I discussed, followed by excerpts from different sites I researched.

- Nancy would like to start with **4 quilts**.
- Once the patient touches the quilt, it belongs to that patient.
- Size small, placemat size - **18"x18" to 20"x20" or 18"x20" placemat**
- **Flannel** on the back would help them stay in place
- Use items that have texture and movement
- There are more women than men
- Washable
- Use whatever we think would be good for fidgeting, they'll clip off what doesn't work well and let us know.

I did some research online and found the following info. We can work with Nancy at Bellevue Med to figure out what works best for different patients. The info below is just to get you thinking!

- Excerpts below from Central Virginia Modern Quilt Guild: <https://cvamodernquiltguild.com/2017/03/09/fidget-quilt-tutorial/>

Instructions

The purpose of the quilts is to keep residents' hands busy and their minds active and calm through sensory stimulation. That said, there are some elements to avoid and things to include when making your quilts.

Things to Avoid

1. **Please do not include any rough textures.** As we age, our skin becomes thinner and more sensitive to rough textures, and sometimes these textures can damage hands. So avoid anything rough, sharp, scratchy, or with jagged or pointed edges.
2. **Avoid mirrors or anything reflective.** Often Alzheimer's and dementia patients don't recognize themselves and seeing a stranger staring back at them can be alarming.
3. Please avoid activities that require fine motor skills: buttoning, lacing, and similar activities. Fine motor skills deteriorate with these diseases and these activities are very frustrating for residents.
4. Make sure your mat is safe: nothing breakable, everything is secured and cannot be pulled off. No choking hazards.
5. We are trying to calm busy minds, so please **avoid chaotic patterned fabric and color combinations**. I know high contrast colors are an element of modern quilting, but consider this an opportunity to practice low volume color combinations, analogous and harmonious color combinations. **Bright colors are fine.**

Things to Include

1. **Make sure it is washable. Not just the fabric but any other elements attached to it.**
2. It should have 10-14 non-rough textures that provide easy sensory input. Soft, fluffy, bumpy, yarn, felt, quilting textures, buttons, bric a brac, zippers, ric rac, pockets, fake fur, felt, fleece, flannel, lace, fringe, etc.

3. Everything should be secured onto the quilt; **machine sewing things on is best**. If hand sewing buttons make sure they are secure.

4. Design your quilt so that it is well organized and orderly—we are avoiding chaos and bringing order and calmness.

5. Please add a blank label on the back so that the name of the recipient can be written on it.

6. Please attach a strap that can Velcro closed or be tied closed. This will be used to secure the quilt to a chair arm, wheelchair, walker, bedrail, etc to prevent it from falling on the floor (see the instructions).

7. We are making these for men and women. Choose either gender neutral fabric/colors or you can make it highly gendered with novelty prints and gendered colors.

8. Fun! If you have fun making it, they will have fun using it.

Try Some New Things

These are small quilts and we are going for texture. So this is a great opportunity to practice your free motion quilting, new quilting patterns, new blocks, new batting fibers, embroidery or machine embroidery and applique. Use the Fidget Quilts to learn something new, try something new, or to practice some skills.

Embellishments

Any soft, fuzzy, tactile fabric: fleece, flannel, fake fur, felt, minky scraps, lace, etc whatever you have in your stash or scraps. Even small pieces of batting are ok

A variety of trims: braids, brocade, dingle balls, tassels, ric rac, ribbon, yarn, etc

A variety of accessories: buttons, beads, pockets, etc

Any fabric to cut into shapes and machine applique on

If your machine does decorative stitches, consider adding these to the quilt too for an easy embellishment

Hand embroidery is fine too

- Excerpts from With Heart and Hands: <https://www.with-heart-and-hands.com/2015/08/making-fidget-quilts-for-alzheimers.html>

Ideas and suggestions for kitting up fidget quilts.

...red and orange are the BEST not the worst colors to include in a Dementia quilt...they are in fact the colors that we are able to see as our vision dims or colors, edges, and patterns begin to blur into one another! So use red, orange, bright fuchsia mixed in with your calming colors!!!

- Excerpts from Vision Aware: <http://www.visionaware.org/info/for-seniors/health-and-aging/vision-loss-and-the-challenges-of-aging/alzheimer%27s-disease/how-alzheimer%E2%80%99s-disease-affects-vision-and-perception/12345>

In Alzheimer's dementia, there are five main areas of visual deficit that can cause mistakes in perceptions: motion detection, peripheral vision, depth perception, color perception, and contrast sensitivity.

Reduced ability to detect motion. Some people are unable to detect movement. They perceive the world as a series of still photos, rather than an ongoing video like most people see.

Depth perception. ... distinguishing between a three-dimensional object and a flat picture. They may reach to pick up the flowers on a floral fabric

Reduced peripheral vision.

Color perception. Though colors often diminish with age, persons with Alzheimer's seem to have a greater deficit and will have difficulty recognizing colors, especially in the blue-violet range.

Contrast sensitivity. Not just color, but detecting gradients of color also is reduced in persons with Alzheimer's. They will have trouble picking out objects that are surrounded by similar colors. For example, a person may have difficulty finding the toilet in a bathroom where the floor, walls and toilet are all white.

- Tutorial from Man Sewing for adding certain embellishments (although I don't think his fidget mat is colorful enough!): <https://mansewing.com/2017/07/fidget-quilt/>

- Excerpts from: Patchwork Posse <https://www.patchworkposse.com/fidget-quilts/>

Precise piecing and stitching aren't necessary so it makes it a perfect project to practice new stitches...

Don't overthink this. Keep it simple. They are supposed to be busy, but don't make it sooo busy it's overwhelming. Examples from the website:

