Running a craft group to develop friendships and communication

Who is this for?

People with a range of learning and communication disabilities

Purpose of the group

* Build friendships;
* Build self-confidence in own abilities;
* Have something nice that you’ve made to take home at the end.

Ideas for activities

You can find ideas for these activities browsing the internet: [instructables.com](http://www.instructables.com) is a very good site for finding ideas for a huge range of creative projects.

Things we have made in our group have included:

* Decorating stones with enamel paint and other craft materials;
* Decorating cups (starting off with a white mug);
* Peg dolls;
* Creating self-portraits starting from a black and white photocopy of each member of the group;
* Papier-mâché bowls and containers;
* Scrapbooking (also creates opportunities for communication around friends, family and events).

Using the activities

Typically you might explain the activity to the whole group, distribute the materials, and provide individual support where this is required. However, to increase the amount members get out of the group you could also try out the following:

* Encourage people to work in pairs so that they can help each other. You could:
	+ Pair more able ones with less able ones: the more able one may be able to provide more support, but also could take over a little – do too much for the less able one;
	+ Pair people together with similar level of abilities – in this case the support provided is likely to be more mutual;
	+ In either case you might need to show people how to support each other.
* Ways of supporting people in the group (either you to individuals in the group or between members of the group):
	+ Do as little as possible: the idea is that you give the minimum amount of support to enable the individual to do the activity;
	+ The range of things you could do are:
		- Hold an object while the person cuts it;
		- Cut something while the person holds it;
		- Try always to make sure that they have some involvement in the activity (other than watching!): for pairs of individuals working together, you may be able to create situations where together they can do something which they couldn’t do individually;
		- Give a choice – from two or more items – depending on their level, so at a higher level it could be “what would you like to make” with the choices not being in view, down to a couple of items in front of the person;
		- Wait – for some people it takes a long time to process what they want to do – give them time to do this – try not to jump in to “to get something done”;
		- Do as little correcting or “improving” as possible – whilst it’s nice to have something good to take home, the doing and the opportunities for communication and creating friendships is more important.

At the end of the activity

Can group members say:

“I did that” or

“I chose that” or

“I decided how that should look” or

“I helped *name of other person in the group* to do that.