

Fidget/Sensory Blanket Community Quilt Project

Moonlighter's – 2023

What is a Fidget/Sensory blanket? Fidget blankets are therapeutic quilts to which different items have been attached or sewn on. These items offer sensory stimulation that has a calming effect on Alzheimer's and dementia patients. The blankets alleviate boredom in the elderly and provide a means of performing repetitive behaviors that are often comforting and distracting.

Items should provide different types of textures and different functions such as the ability to fold, wrap, rub or click items together. Colorful items and items that release scents are also useful on blankets. The idea is to stimulate as many of the 5 senses as possible.

It is however important not to attach any items to the blanket that could be harmful, used to cause harm or are hazardous. Items that are used repetitively are prone to wear and tear and the blanket may need to be mended or replaced on a regular basis.

Moonlighters has been asked by a local assisted living facility to provide these for their memory care residents. My dad before he passed away a few months ago (November 2022) had dementia. It is a hard disease to watch but seeing the joy a fidget blanket brought to my dad and the other residents on his floor made me realize how much these blankets are needed and appreciated. We'd like to make as many as possible for local facilities. The fun part is you can use things from your stash and lefovers. The below instructions are taken from www.goldencarers.com and www.grayingwithgrace.com and below is the direct link to the tutorial. There are many tutorials out there. This one is just a starting point. I've also included four photos of ones that were made by CAQG members to jump start your creative ideas.

<https://www.goldencarers.com/how-to-make-sensory-blankets-for-dementia-care/5020/>

<https://www.grayingwithgrace.com/fidget-blankets-for-dementia/>

The size of your fidget blankets is up to you; the dimensions below make a lap mat as per the photo that can be tied at the waist or positioned on a table with velcro. The ones we have made vary in size from 22" square to approximately 22" x 16-18". Just something that fits nicely on a lap or a tabletop in front of the recipient.

What you need

Volunteers and sewing machines. Not all volunteers need to know how to sew; they can decorate, cut fabric, and separate items for personalised mats.

Decorations: Leftover wool, strings, buttons, zippers, buckles, bells, fabric in different textures, soft toys, squishy and squeaky items, key rings, beads, and more.

Stiff stabilizer, fusible on both sides. – 1 piece 24 X 19 inches or 56 X 47 cm

Fabric - 2 pieces (front and back) - 24 X 19 inches or 56 X 47 cm

Assembly

Lay first piece of fabric right side up on a table

Lay second piece of fabric, right side down (on top of first fabric)

Lay stabilizer on top of fabrics

Sew around and leave one side open

Turn fabric layers inside out

Now you have the interfacing between the two layers of the mat fabric

Finish mat's open side by folding inwards and sewing shut.

Iron the mat well to allow the interface to fuse

Sew all around the 4 sides of the mat once more to finish the base.

Decorating

Use your imagination; anything interesting and safe is suitable. Decorations should be securely attached to fabric for safety reasons.

For example: Sew on a zipper, attach buttons, make a button hole for large buttons with button flaps, sew in a bunch of wool strands (about 7 inches/18cm - to be braided); attach belt and buckle, sew in a fluffy piece of fabric and leather, attach pom-poms, squish toys, and more. Attach soft toys, sew in a little pocket, large colorful beads, key ring and attach it to mat.

If you have any questions, please contact me (email is best since I work full-time), Melinda Smith, melindaquilts38@gmail.com 434-960-2643. I'd be happy to deliver the blankets once they've been finished.







