All About Fidget Aprons

Sometimes called activity or busy aprons, Fidget aprons are waist- or full-length chef’s aprons with attached trinkets, textured fabrics and other items that provide a busy distraction for individuals who suffer from dementia. Once the aprons are put on, the wearer finds hours of entertainment playing with the attached items, feeling the fabrics or just looking at the colorful embellishments and designs. Caretakers also appreciate the free time gained when their dementia clients become captivated with the apron artifacts.

This is a great project to do for community outreach! The aprons are greatly appreciated by local Alzheimer’s Associations, nursing homes, and any facilities or staffers who serve patients with dementia-related disorders.

Making Fidget Aprons

A few online resources sell ready-made Fidget aprons starting at $30. Constructing them is easy. You need a pattern (pg. 6), sturdy fabric and a supply of trinkets that can be sewn or securely “tethered” to the apron enough to withstand constant pulling. Purchased cook’s aprons can provide a start if you don’t want to make the apron base. Then add various trinkets for embellishments.

People who make the aprons from scratch enjoy the creative aspects of designing customized aprons for certain age groups or disorders. Applied fabric photos offer memory anchors for clients who still remember their relatives. Recycled items from favored garments like zippers, bells, buttons, leather ties, pockets, or patches can jog memories of past events. Fuzzy, textured fabrics like fur or minky knits offer tactile sensations for those who like to stroke soft or textured surfaces.

Personal items like keys, wooden beads, snaps, rings or neck ties add variety and interest. Bias bindings, tapes, laces or cording, and elastic can be used to tether the hanging or attached trinkets. The main concern is client safety. Avoid using items that can injure like sharp objects or items that can be removed and swallowed. Ensure items are securely attached.

Apron Tips

Remember that the wearer is usually looking down at the apron. Some have been designed with the embellishments appearing upside down to the average onlooker, but the wearers can look down and see the apron designs looking back at them.

Another apron tip involves attaching the neck straps. Sometimes they become loose or irritating if they’re tied in a bow or knot. Securing the strap to one side by sewing and then using Velcro® on the opposite side strap allows the apron to be shortened, lengthened or adjusted for a better fit.
Fidget Apron Sew-a-Thons

Making the aprons in large groups can be fun. It’s exciting to watch various creative designs generated by the participants. Tasks can be offered to people who don’t sew but want to help. Patterns can be cut out, trinkets can be packaged for each apron and sewing can be done either one-on-one or in assembly-line style. Aprons can be made from one heavier fabric and bound on the edges, or made from two thicknesses of fabric and turned pillowcase style after being sewn.

To prepare for a mass sewing effort, kits can be made to give the sewers a head start. Packaged kits can be assembled at any level, from just putting together fabrics and trinkets all the way to cutting out the patterns and pre-constructing the aprons for embellishment. Either way, the creative juices start to flow and groups discover they want to come back for more!

Participants find the effort rewarding when their aprons are so well received by local agencies, patients and caregivers.
Display of finished aprons.
More aprons on display and people enjoying the creative process.
Making Half Aprons

Sometimes the shorter, waist-wrapped apron works better, especially for fuller figures or for people threatened by putting things over their heads. In the picture below, the person on the left led a team effort to make fidget aprons for clients in a nearby nursing home. She is seen trying on the apron she made. On the right, the apron’s final owner wears it as he strolls with his walker.
Busy / Fidget Apron Pattern

For the basic apron, use a sturdy fabric.

APPLIQUÉ
Use textured fabric. Wearers love to touch & feel this item

Velcro tab
Hook Side Up

5” Velcro Strip on inside
Loop Side (softer) faces wearer

10” - may vary width

24”

Neck Strap - 27”

Pocket (lined)

6”

9”

Buttoned Flap
3”x 9”

Worry Beads

ZIPPER with Key Ring

VELCRO PULL with Key Ring 2”x 7”

This measurement varies. Estimate measurement from chin to waist.

Direct any questions about this publication to dajanson@cox.net. Feel free to reprint this as a handout for reference, training, instruction or education. — Debbie Janson, author. Nov 2011