



Creative Aging Sculpture from Scratch

In Creative Aging, art-making projects are designed to emphasize the tactility of working with different art mediums and creative decision-making. Such projects build self-confidence and foster a sense of play for people living with dementia. This activity is designed for a care partner to encourage creative exploration and experimentation and for both the person living with dementia and the care partner to discuss and make art.

Soft, colorful clay can easily be created from scratch using items found at home. This project takes us through the process of making soft clay in several colors and using it to form small relief and three-dimensional pieces. Grab a friend and let's get started!

You will need...

- Cornstarch (1 cup per batch of clay)
- Hair conditioner (1 cup per batch of clay - nothing fancy with a smell you don't mind)
- Food coloring (assorted colors)
- Optional: Mixed media materials, such as craft wire, wood scraps, beads, buttons, paint or markers

Steps:

1. In a large mixing bowl, measure out 1 cup of cornstarch.
2. Slowly add and blend in approximately 1 cup of hair conditioner (a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time) until the cornstarch is absorbed, and the clay feels silky and soft.
 - a. The clay will be sticky - you can dust your hands with cornstarch to help with this or use a spatula to mix the clay rather than your hands. The clay should be very soft and have a nice texture for you to mix by hand.
3. Divide the clay into four pieces. Roll into four balls of clay.
4. Put a few drops of food coloring onto each ball and then knead and fold the color into each ball.
 - a. Note that food coloring will stain your hands, so have paper towels or wipes handy to clean your hands in between colors.
 - b. Food coloring comes off easily with wet wipes or soap and water.
5. Now your clay is ready to use and will stay pliable for a couple of hours, drying hard overnight.
6. Form clay into objects or press it onto colored tag board or another firm surface to create designs. You can embellish with beads, buttons, sticks, wire, or anything you can think to stick in the clay. You can also draw into the surface of the clay with a toothpick, if desired, to create details and texture.
7. Optional: Once the clay is dry, you can paint the surface with acrylic paint or decorate with markers. You can also glaze the finished pieces with polymer gloss to retain the color of the clay.