Stress ReDUCKtion

Utica Public Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

Stress ReDUCKtion

Oct 2, 2026

$1-50

$
Byline

Ray Hart, Youth Services Librarian, Utica (N.Y.) Public Library

Stress ReDUCKtion is a craft program that offers children an opportunity for creative expression through decorating mini rubber ducks. The ducks can be decorated with paint markers and mini accessories such as hats, bows, and plastic instruments. This low-stakes craft allows participants to relax and de-stress while creating a fun decoration that shows off their individuality.

Advanced Planning

My goal for this program was to give participants a space to relax and a chance to express themselves while engaging in a fun craft. I hoped that the end product would be something that they would bring home and use as a decoration in their space. I started planning this program about two months in advance so that I could make marketing materials, order supplies and create some example ducks. I completed most of these tasks independently, but I received feedback on the marketing materials from my coworkers before distributing the final versions.

Marketing

I created a flyer for our youth services programming board in the library's entryway. Another version was featured in our Children's Room digital slideshow display. It was mentioned in our monthly newsletter, which is sent out to the library's listserv and available in print at the library. A promotion was also posted on the library's Instagram account a few days before the event.

Budgeting

I spent $50 on a set of 50 rubber ducks and a bunch of mini accessories, including hats, scarves, headphones, necklaces, glasses, inner tubes, and other assorted bits. However, I also used materials that we had on hand such as acrylic paint markers and double-sided tape. If I had to buy those supplies as well, my budget would've been closer to $65.

There are a couple of ways to cut costs from this program. I did not know the number of participants because it was a drop-in program and overbought as a result. In the future, I would cap the number of participants and buy accordingly. You could also make your own mini accessories rather than buying them.

Day-of-event Activity

On the day of the event, I set up two tables in our activity room. I laid out all of the ducks and accessories on one table so that participants could easily pick out items. I

put chairs around the other table and kept the double-sided tape and paint markers there. After participants picked out their materials, they took a seat and decorated their ducks. I also played lo-fi music in the background using my phone and the library's Bluetooth speaker. It only took me about 20 minutes to set up, and I was the only staff member required to run this hour-long program.

Program Execution

Five school-age children, each with an adult, attended the program for a total of 10 participants. There were some enthusiastic comments from other youth leading up to the program, so I expected a higher turnout, but those who attended had a lot of fun!

The acrylic paint markers dried on the ducks in just 2-3 minutes. So it was easy to paint designs on them. I encouraged the participants to test the markers on the bottom of the ducks first to get a feel for it. The mini accessories were attached to the ducks with double-sided tape.

Each participant's individuality really shone through in their designs. I loved to see how unique each duck turned out. The adults seemed to have just as much fun as the kids.

Advice

I would suggest simplifying the program name. Even though I love the pun, many people in our community are not native English speakers. The title could more clearly communicate what the program is about. Promoting the program as 'Duck Decorating' would make the concept more accessible to a wider audience.

I also reused my leftover supplies and hosted this program a second time, specifically for teens. They really enjoyed making their ducks into their favorite video game characters! So this craft has broad appeal for school-age children, tweens, and teens.

Lean into the whimsy and have fun!

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images

Image

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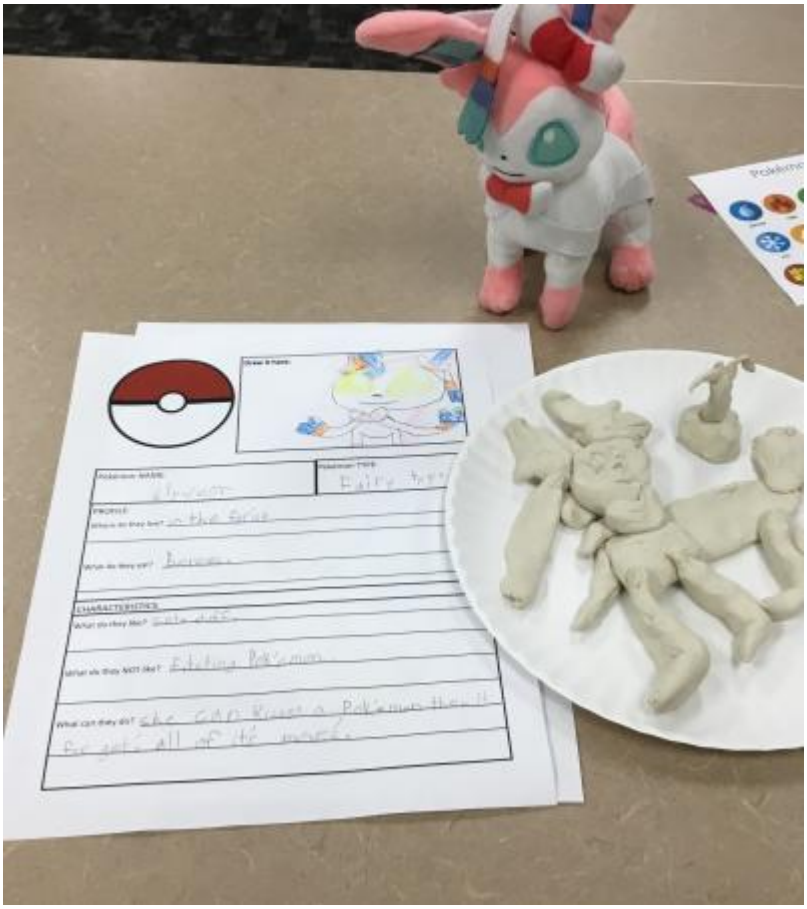
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Pokémon Creation Station

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
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Children (9 and under)+ | $
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Paper Squishy Pals

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
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Creepy Clay Crafting

Audiences:

Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)