

## Directions for Fidget Quilts

### *What is a fidget quilt and who might want one?*

These are small quilts that fit in the lap and offer sensory or tactile stimulation. They are made from various textures and colors of cloth to which buttons, zippers, beads, ribbons, braids, and other items have been attached so that the recipient's hands can "fidget" with them. A number of quilters and guilds have taken this project on for elderly dementia or Alzheimer's patients. I have a friend who recently visited her mother in a dementia unit, and she said she was quite occupied with a fidget quilt. These quilts may also be provided to children on the spectrum of Autism or who suffer from ADHD, and while we could easily include the latter category, for our first efforts, we have two institutions who are eager to receive these quilts for folks in their Memory Units.

### *How Do I Make a Fidget Quilt?*

There is no standardized way to make this project! If you google "fidget quilts" you will see many options. For the sake of uniformity, we are providing a guideline for you to follow. But please note that we welcome your creative modifications and/or additions. Our goal is to fill a community need while having fun doing it.

Step number one is not, ironically, a fabric pull—that is probably the easy part—but rather a hunt to find interesting things to attach to each square of fabric. Have an old button box? Maybe start there. Have a sewing drawer filled with orphaned, but interesting decorative bits and pieces? Have some zippers? Your rule of thumb is this: anything that can be securely attached to a six inch square that offers some tactile stimulation.

### *Instructions:*

From scraps or yardage, cut 6 ½ inch squares. You will need six of these to make one fidget quilt. You may choose to make only one or create all six. Each block is fabricated separately and then later joined with five others to form a completed project. The next part—the fun part!—is where you should let your imagination guide you. You can applique shapes onto a block, use textured fabric, place zippers, buttons, ribbon, netting, and any other items you have on hand that might make the finished piece more tactically interesting. If you are stumped, Pinterest is an excellent place to find ideas. If you can only make one block, bring it to the January Retreat and give it to Janet. Alternatively, you can mail it to either of us or leave it for Janet at The Old Country Store in a bag with her name on it. She will pick it up on a day when she is working in the store.

Once you have finished 6 blocks, sew them together in two rows of three each, using ¼ inch seams. Please make sure you reinforce any items that could come apart and/or fall off with several lines of stitching. These quilts will be tugged and pulled, and we need to keep safety in mind as we assemble these projects.

Next you will need to make two handles, one for each side. You can use strapping for bags, webbing and/or decorative ribbon if it is sturdy. Cut two 12 inch pieces. Stitch them to the *right* side of the fidget quilt, and angled so that they will fold in on that side and not hang out over the edges when you sew the perimeter seam.

When you have the top completed, choose a coordinating fabric for the backing—quilting cotton is fine, but flannel or some other soft or textured fabric will work even better because of its tactile nature. Fuse or baste a lightweight batting to the wrong side of your backing piece (this is a good way to get rid of batting scraps!).

Now place the right side of the quilt top to the right side of the backing and pin or use clips to keep the whole sandwich together while you sew. Don't forget to fold your handles into the center so that they are not caught in the perimeter seam you will sew next. Sew around the perimeter using a 1/4 inch seam, remembering to leave a 3 inch opening to flip the project right side out.

Be careful to sew around the corners twice to reinforce them, and then for ease of turning, trim any excess fabric at the corners. At this point, you can pull the handles out, manipulate the fabric and corners so that they are straight and crisp. Press the edges, then top stitch around the perimeter. This will simultaneously finish off the piece nicely while securing the opening you used to turn it right side out. Add some quilting by sewing around each of the six blocks. Secure, secure, secure! And then double check that each piece can't come off.

A harmonious color pallet for the six blocks and/or a theme (e.g., animals, fishing, etc.) is nice but not required. A scrappy look can be just as interesting. Have fun and remember this project serves a need. Thanks for your participation!

If you have any questions or problems, please feel free call and/or write to either of us:

Pat Leiter (302-588-0233)

Janet Wright Starner (610-762-8845) Janet.starner@gmail.com



Resources:

- <https://nancysnotions.com/fidget-quilts-for-dementia-patients/>
- <https://www.with-heart-and-hands.com/p/making-alzheimers-fidget-quilts.html>
- <https://www.pinterest.com/grandmaninna/alzheimers-fidget-quilts/>