

## Peaceful Play Dough



Create your own version of homemade, scented play dough that is easy to make, lasts for weeks, and will be fun as well as relaxing to mold and squish.

When our bodies are flooded with intense emotions, it can be difficult to find appropriate ways to get these feelings out. In our work with children, we have found play dough to be a wonderful outlet for these feelings and as well as being therapeutic in other ways. When feeling angry, play dough can be pounded or torn apart. When feeling anxious, overwhelmed, afraid or incredibly sad, the sensory aspect of the play dough can help to soothe children as they become aware of their physical bodies in the present moment and can help distract them from difficult thoughts and feelings. Play dough can also be shaped in ways that depict how children are feeling or in ways that represent or remind them of the person who died.

By adding essential oils or other fragrances, this homemade play dough is made even more calming. Lavender, tea tree, eucalyptus and other essential oils can often be found at local grocery and drug stores. However, you can add instead baking extracts and flavorings or spices that you may already have at home. These baking and cooking ingredients though not traditionally thought of as soothing, can also help to stimulate a child's senses, ground them, and may call to mind pleasant memories that help to move children away from their current state of mind. Try extract and flavorings such as vanilla, almond, hazelnut, lemon, orange or others. Or try adding dried spices such as cinnamon, ginger, rosemary, or others to your play dough.

An additional note on ingredients, this recipe calls for cream of tartar. Cream of tartar makes the play dough more elastic, pliable, and smooth. However, it is not essential. Without it, the play dough will be more grainy but will still hold together well.

This homemade play dough takes just a few minutes to make and can last up to two weeks in your refrigerator.

Happy creating!

## *Ingredients:*

- ¼ cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon oil vegetable oil
- Food coloring
- 2-10 drops of essential oil; 1 teaspoon baking extract or flavoring; or 1 tablespoon dried spice

## *Directions:*

1. Mix the dry ingredients (salt, cream of tartar, flour and if using, add spices) in a small pan.
2. Separately, mix the wet ingredients (water, oil, food coloring and if using, add essential oil, extract or flavoring). Mixing the food coloring (as much as you would like) into the water first before adding to the dry ingredients makes blending easier.
3. Stir in the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and heat to medium.
4. Continue stirring over medium heat for about 3-5 minutes until the dough becomes a cohesive ball.
5. Remove from heat and let cool before using. The dough will be hot!



The play dough on the left is made using lavender and purple food coloring, the ball on the right is made with vanilla extract and pink food coloring.