GRAFTFULNES

Mend Yourself by Making Things

Rosemary Davidson and Arzu Tahsin

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Originally published in Great Britain in 2018 by Quercus Editions Ltd.

FIRST U.S. EDITION

Illustrations by Amber Anderson

Title page illustrations by Bodor Tivadar/Shutterstock, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Davidson, Rosemary, author. | Tahsin, Arzu, author. Title: Craftfulness: mend yourself by making

things / Rosemary Davidson and
Arzu Tahsin.

Description: First edition. | New York : Harper Wave, [2019] |

"Originally published as Craftfulness in Great Britain in 2018 by Quercus Editions Ltd."

Identifiers: LCCN 2018034447 | ISBN 9780062883544 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Handicraft--Psychological aspects. | Self-actualization (Psychology) | BISAC: SELF-HELP / Personal

(Psychology) | BISAC: SELF-HELP / Personal Growth / Happiness. | SELF-HELP

/ Motivational & Inspirational. \mid CRAFTS & HOBBIES / General.

Classification: LCC TT14 .D38 2019 | DDC 745.5--dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018034447

19 20 21 22 23 LSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

THE PROJECT:

A weave for hanging on your walls

YOU WILL NEED

For the mini loom:

6 in x 12 in (15 cm x 30 cm) wood block (or an empty wooden picture frame)

Ruler

Black marker pen and a pencil Just under 1 in (25 mm) coppered hardboard panel pins

For weaving:

Hammer

Wool or cotton yarn Scissors

Masking tape Large needle

Emery board

THE BASICS

A *loom* is a device which interlaces threads to make fabric or a tapestry. The *warp* is the long threads which are stretched into place before the *weft* is introduced, and held taut. The weft is the yarn which is drawn horizontally, over and under, over and under the warp threads to create a weaving.

Very simply, the thread weaves in and out of the long strands. Different weaving techniques can be combined to make unique patterns of your choice, but here, we will focus on the building of a simple loom and the *plain weave*.

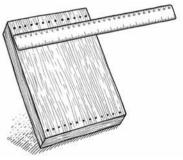
THE METHOD

You can make your loom from any material substantial enough to withstand nails being hammered into it. I tend to source small blocks of wood from skips and offcuts from DIY projects, or old picture frames. I've also used some very thick cardboard tubing cut down into smaller hoops to make small circular looms.

The bigger your loom, the larger the finished weave. Weaving on much smaller blocks is admittedly a little more fiddly, but produces equally stunning mini tapestries.

The wooden block I'm using here is 6 in x 12 in (15 cm x 30 cm).

1. Using a ruler and pencil, begin by drawing a straight line about 0.5 in (1 cm) inside the top and bottom edges, as shown. Next, mark intervals of about 0.5 in (1 cm) along both lines. Start at about 0.5 in (1 cm) in from the edge, as shown.



2. The nails I use are small panel pins – they need to have a head large enough so the yarn won't easily slip over and off the loom. Your local builders' merchant/hardware store will supply these in different sizes if you don't have them to hand. For this project I'm using just under 1 in (25 mm) coppered hardboard pins. Using your marks as a guide, gently hammer in the panel pins about 0.5 in (1 cm) apart. They don't need to go in too deep, but enough so they feel secure. Take care to keep the nails straight as you tap them in. For this size of

loom 13 pins will be used at either end.

- 3. Attach the warp threads: The warp thread is the yarn we lay vertically which will be interwoven with rows of the weft thread. First, attach your thread or wool to the nails on the loom to form the warp threads. I use a reasonably long length of a strong yarn for the warp as it needs to withstand the tension of being woven with the cross threads, i.e., the weft (you don't need to measure out the warp thread, it can just unravel from your ball). Again, if you don't have oddments of wool and cotton thread at home these are available at most craft stores.
- 4. Starting with the first nail, wrap the yarn around twice, leaving a long strand of just over 2.5 in (7 cm). Use a piece of masking tape to attach the spare yarn to the back of the wood block.
- 5. Then stretch the first warp yarn and loop it twice around the corresponding first nail at the bottom end you want to create some tension in the warp yarn. Pull the yarn back to the top and loop twice around the second nail. Repeat until the block is completely threaded. Take care to keep

the tension as you wind your wool up and down the length of the block. When you

reach the last nail, wrap the yarn around it twice and again secure a tail of just over 2.5 in (7 cm) to the back of the block with the masking tape.

6. Now you're ready to start weaving! Here, you will weave four rows with one colour, as shown. First, measure out a yarn length of 35.5 in (90 cm) or approximately five widths of your block, plus 5.5 in (14 cm) to allow for just over 2.5 in (7 cm) tails at either side.

(If you are completing even numbers of rows (2, 4, 6, etc.) for each colour then your dangling thread will always end up on the same side. If you are completing odd rows (1, 3, 5, etc.), then allow for 5.5 in (14 cm) extra thread (just over 2.5 in (7 cm) on each side). These can be taped to the underside, as before, or left dangling. In this project, I use an ordinary sewing needle, but have taken the step of blunting the sharp tip so it doesn't keep catching on the thread. I did this with an emery board, but you can use sandpaper or a nail file.

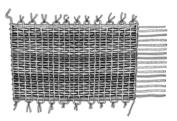
7. You will now weave in and out of the warp. Measure a space of about 1.5 in (3.5 cm) below the line of your nails: this is where the weaving will star

where the weaving will start. When your piece is finished, you will need to slip the loops over the nail heads, cut and tie them together. Guide the threaded needle through the yarn using an under and then over stitch: under the first stitch, over the second, under the third, over the fourth, and continue until you reach the end of the row. Now wrap the yarn around the last thread and guide your needle back along the row. This second row will be the reverse of the first, going under the first thread, over the second, and so on. Do not pull the yarn too tight as you make a new row, and take care to keep the warp threads straight.

8. As you progress it's important to gently nudge the rows together to ensure a tight weave – I do this using the needle.

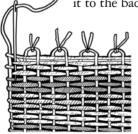
- 9. To change to a new yarn colour, simply unthread the first yarn from the needle and tape or leave loose just over 2.5 in (7 cm) of thread, as before. The loose ends can be sewn into the back of the weaving when you're finished. Thread your needle with the new yarn and continue as above for the next row, as shown. You can also change yarn by knotting new thread to the old.
- 10. By the third colour change, the dangling threads at the side of your block may become a little irksome, so simply tape them to the underside of the block.
- 11. Continue to weave, changing your yarn colour every four rows, as shown. When you reach the top of the loom, simply

peel off the pieces of tape and slip the loops off the nails. Snip in half the warp threads at the top and bottom of the loom and make double knots to secure the weave ends.



12. If you are not keen on the loose warp tassels, you can simply snip off excess yarn above the knot. Alternatively, the two long ends of thread at the top and bottom of your tapestry can be sewn through the

back rows. Thread the loose ends with your needle, pass it to the back of the weaving and thread it through a

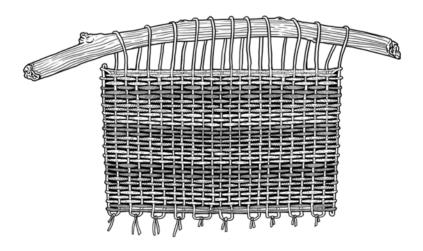


few rows, then snip off the excess yarn for a tidy finish. Repeat this step with the excess threads from the weft rows, threading the yarn onto your needle, and passing it through the back of the weaving, as shown.

HANGING THE WEAVE

It is a simple enough process to hang the weaving now that you have mastered building your own loom.

- 1. Select a twig or wooden baton that measures just under 1 in (2 cm) wider on each side than your piece.
- 2. With the wrong side facing, thread just over 35 in (90 cm) of yarn through the top of your weaving and over the stick and back into the weaving to secure the thread and then make a small stitch still in the wrong side of your weaving, to define the size of your first loop, and secure it.
- 3. Now continue to thread through the tapestry and over the stick until you come to the end, where you will finish with another double knot to the back of the piece. Cut away the excess thread.



Voilà! Your weaving is ready for hanging on your wall.

THE PROJECT: KNITTING A SIMPLE SCARF IN MOSS STITCH

Knitted in moss stitch, this pattern makes a generously wide and pleasingly snug reversible scarf. For a narrower scarf, just cast on an even number of fewer stitches. Moss stitch is produced by alternating one knit and one purl stitch within a row – knit one, purl one, knit one, purl one and so on. Then on the reverse side, the knit stitches are knitted, and the purl stitches are purled. A knit stitch will look like a flat 'V' on the right side, a purl stitch forms a sort of rounded bump on the right side, so it's easy to keep track by simply looking at your knitting, and to alternate the knit and purl stitches without getting muddled.

When your scarf reaches the desired length, cast off in pattern for a neat finished end.

YOU WILL NEED

3–4 1.5 oz (50 g) balls double knitting wool (depending on desired length)

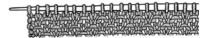
Pair size 0.2 in (4 mm or 4.5 mm) knitting needles (check the wool label instructions)

Scissors

Wool embroidery needle

THE METHOD

- 1. Cast on 40 stitches using the long tail cast on method.
- 2. First row knit one, purl one stitch to end.



- 3. Second row, do not knit the first stitch simply slip it on to the right-hand needle. Skipping the first stitch in every row gives a neat side-edge finish.
- 4. Continue to the end of the row in moss stitch, i.e., alternating knit and purl stitches.
- Continue to knit in rows until the scarf is the desired length, shorter for a neat little neck warmer, longer for a more sumptuous scarf that can be wound several times.
- 6. Cast off loosely and evenly in the moss stitch pattern slip first stitch, knit/purl second stitch and slip second stitch over first, continue to end. On the last stitch, cut the yarn and thread the loose end through the last stitch, pull gently to secure.



- 7. Tidy any loose lengths of cast on, cast off or joined yarn by threading on to the yarn needle and weave it through the wrong side of the scarf as neatly and invisibly as possible. Don't worry too much about small loose ends as these will shrink slightly and blend with the wool after washing.
- 8. Block the scarf, i.e., gently pull the fabric into shape lengthwise and widthwise, and steam with a cool iron.
- 9. Wear with pride.

THE PROJECT:

Making a stitched pamphlet book

To make a 3-hole stitched pamphlet book using paper you have at home is a simple and satisfying exercise and might even lead to a lifelong passion.

YOU WILL NEED

Paper (four sheets of A4, one A4 sheet of decorative paper for the cover)

Ruler

Pencil

Craft knife

Needle

Thread

Tablespoon*

Cutting mat

THE METHOD

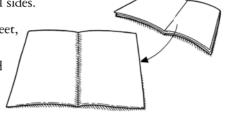
1. Fold in half the four sheets of A4 paper** (a mix of papers is great) to make eight pages of A5.

2. Using the back of the spoon, score each of these sheets along the fold to make sharp creases.

3. Insert the pages (*folios*) one into the other; this is called a *section* or a signature.

4. Using the ruler and craft knife, lay the section onto your cutting mat and, *carefully,* with fingers kept clear of the knife edge, remove 0.1 in (3 mm) of paper from top and bottom and side edges. The pages should now align evenly on all sides.

5. Remove the middle sheet, taking care to keep all the sheets in order, and lay it open on your workstation, spine fold down.



6. Along the spine fold, measure just over 1 in (3 cm) from each end and mark each point with your pencil. Measure the centre point between these points and mark this position as well.

7. Insert the sheet back into the middle of the section and set aside.

8. Fold and score the single decorative sheet and insert the signature.

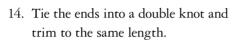
9. Holding open the pamphlet, spine fold down, onto the mat board, make a small hole at each of the marks that you have just made. The needle must puncture all the sheets.

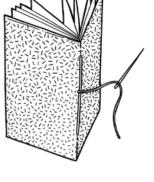
10. Thread the needle and, holding open the book with one hand, sew from outside of the cover up into the middle hole, leaving a tail of about 2 in (5 cm).***

11. Take the needle out through either of the holes at the end of the section to the outside of the cover.

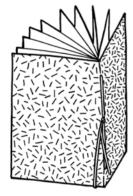
- Go back into the last hole at the other end of the section.
- 13. Take the needle back out through the central hole. You should now have two tails of thread together.

 They should lie either side of the long stitch on the outside of the cover.





15. Score along the spine to consolidate the crease.



You have made a book!

^{*}There are specialist tools which are inexpensive and well worth investing in should this be a craft you wish to pursue. They include a bone folder, waxed linen thread and a bodkin.

^{**}Most manufactured paper has a grain. This allows the paper to be folded or torn more easily in one direction. You want the grain of the paper to run parallel to the spine of the book. To determine the grain direction, try gently folding the paper from edge to edge both ways. You will find more resistance against the grain.

^{***}If you would prefer the knot to be on the inside of the pamphlet, start sewing from the inside of the section.

THE PROJECT:

make a clay pinch pot

This is the simplest and most instinctive way to make a small pot or bowl, and probably the first exercise of any student potter. Most Japanese Raku tea bowls were and still are made using this method, and although your first attempts may look a little, ahem, primitive, with some practice delicate and beautiful pots can be achieved in a very short time. According to the great father of British craft pottery, Bernard Leach, 'with practice, bowls about the size and shape of half a coconut, but thicker than a coconut shell, can be made in five or ten minutes without any scraping or cutting'.

Most art and craft shops will have a number of air-drying clays to choose from, so this is a simple enough exercise to try at home (I use Fimo modelling clay, which dries in 24 hours). These pinch bowls need to be made fast and instinctively and don't require over-thinking or over-manipulation.

The whole process should take no more than around ten minutes –

any longer and the clay will start to dry and split — if that happens, you can moisten your fingers slightly with water, but not too much or the clay will get too wet and soft to work with.

Tip: If your fingernails are long, you might want to trim them before attempting the pinch pot.

YOU WILL NEED

1 packet of air-drying clay
Cloth or tea towel
Acrylic paints
PVA glue or clear acrylic varnish
Paintbrush

THE METHOD

- 1. Take a small ball of clay, about the size of a tangerine, and round and smooth it in the palm of your left hand (or right if you are left-handed).
- 2. Hollow out a cavity in the centre of the ball with the thumb of your right hand.
- 3. With the clay gently cradled in your left palm, proceed to use your right hand's fingers to make the wall of the bowl thinner by squeezing and pressing gently against the thumb inside with a regular pressure as you work round the ball in a quiet, slow spiral movement.

 While working, I tend not to look at the work in my hands, but simply try to feel the width of the wall in my fingers and gradually get a feel for where the clay might need an extra gentle pinch to achieve an even wall width.
- 4. Within a few minutes you should have a small, fat bowl of about 2 in x 2 in (5 cm x 5 cm) in your hand. Start again to pinch evenly around the entire outer surface of the bowl with the tips of the fingers at the bottom; this

time, the squeezing needs to be closer and more even to achieve a smooth surface. At this stage the thickness of the bowl in the lower part should be no more than is finally required – but don't be tempted to try to make the wall too thin or the sides of the bowl will simply flop over and collapse. Try not to pinch or mark the soft clay with your fingernails.

- 5. As the bowl grows a little bigger and the walls thinner, continue to support it in the hollow of your left hand held at an angle while you continue to gradually squeeze or gently pinch the clay up the wall with a gathering movement of the fingers.
- 6. Gently place the finished little pot on its base on a piece of dry, clean cloth or a tea towel and leave to air dry according to packet instructions.
- 7. When completely dry, the pot can be decorated using acrylic paints, and covered with a clear varnish or PVA for a glazed gloss effect to finish.

THE PROJECT:

Classic darn technique

The simplest way to understand this method of darning is to think of it as weaving – as in mini-loom weaving featured on p. 119. The aim is to replicate the original stitch or weave of your garment's knit or fabric as neatly and consistently as possible, so the yarn is simply woven over and under weft threads to fill the damaged hole.

YOU WILL NEED

Embroidery needle – match the size of needle to the fabric you are mending – a very fine wool requires a fine-pointed needle, larger knits will need a bigger blunt-ended needle

Yarn – in a weight to match your garment, either in a matching or a contrasting colour

Darning mushroom (or embroidery ring)

Scissors

Cotton tacking thread

THE METHOD

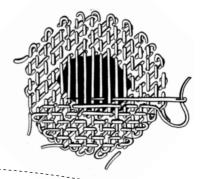
1. Working on the wrong side of the garment, place a darning mushroom (you can use anything with a rounded side – a light bulb, a lemon or plastic bowl) under the hole. For mending a hole in a flat piece of fabric, an embroidery ring will help to keep the garment taut and the darn flat.

2. Use cotton tacking thread to sew a circle of running stitch about 0.2 in (5 mm) away from the edge of your hole – this is to prevent the hole from stretching and unravelling while

you are mending it.

- 3. Secure your darning yarn by sewing two or three small, neat stitches on top of each other, in an undamaged part of fabric close to the hole.

 (On thicker woven fabrics, you might be able to do this without stitching all the way through to the right side.)
- 4. Sew vertical stitches across the hole starting and ending close to, but on the hole side of, your circle of running stitches, keeping the end stitch on either side with a little bit of slack so that it forms a slight loop, as shown this is to allow for shrinking of the woollen darning yarn. Don't be tempted to pull the stitches tight across the hole you are mending as this will cause a pucker in the fabric.
- 5. Next, weave a series of horizontal stitches perpendicular to your vertical stitches, working the thread over and under the vertical stitches to fill in the hole you are mending.



6. To finish, turn the mend over and pass the needle back to the wrong side, and weaving the thread into the back of the repair, make two or three small finishing stitches to secure. Snip the excess thread and there you have it!

DARNING KNITTED GARMENTS

With knitted garments and socks, the darning technique follows the instructions for the classic darn in the illustration on pages 167–8, but the second set of stitches used in the weave are made on the diagonal, as shown in the illustration. This is to allow for movement and stretch in the knitted yarn, similar to the concept of a fabric cut on the bias to fit.

A small hole can be filled neatly using a yarn in a lighter weight to the garment, as described already. But for areas of larger damage, where an elbow has completely worn bare or there is a large gaping hole, a neat invisible mend will be an impossibility. This is the perfect opportunity to make a feature of the visible darn.

Experiment with darning techniques to make a feature of the mends – use contrasting colours and a different type of yarn, play with embroidery stitches.

Here are the questions. If you are a seasoned crafter, or even new to a craft practice, you may enjoy answering them. Be *honest* and expansive, we won't be chasing you for your feedback, but we think you might find this a useful and very pleasing exercise – never underestimate how a creative and enjoyable craft activity can enrich your life and make you feel good.

- 1. What job do you do?
- 2. What is/are your craft/art activities?
- 3. What motivated your interest in this craft? What is your motivation now to keep at it?
- 4. How do you fit your craft into your life?
- 5. In as many or as few words as you like, tell us how you feel while you are making.
- 6. What, if any, are the wider benefits or lasting effects of having a craft practice?

References & Sources

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The Embroidery Stitch Bible, Betty Barnden.

The Creative Cure, Carrie Barron and Alton Barron.

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The Artist's Way, Julia Cameron.

How to Be a Craftivist, Sarah Corbett.

Happy, Fearne Cotton.

The Case for Working with Your Hands, Matthew Crawford.

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The Bookbinding Handbook, Sue Doggett.

Happiness by Design, Paul Dolan.

Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, Betty Edwards.

Arts in Health, Daisy Fancourt.

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Why We Make Things and Why it Matters, Peter Korn.

The Drawing Book, Tania Kovats (editor).

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The Happiness Project, Gretchen Rubin.

Option B, Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant.

The Craftsman, Richard Sennett.

Together, Richard Sennett.

A Field Guide to Getting Lost, Rebecca Solnit.

Playing and Reality, D. W. Winnicott.

INSPIRATIONAL WEBSITES

http://meetmeatthealbany.org.uk

Meet Me at the Albany is an all-day arts club for the over 60s, quite unlike anything that has come before. Based at The Albany, an arts centre in Deptford, south-east London, an all-year programme of weekly events creates opportunities for people to meet new friends and try out a whole range of new activities and experiences.

http://www.twistcollective.com

Independent online magazine focusing on knitting and the sister

https://www.selvedge.org

Selvedge magazine and source of inspiration for designers and devotees alike, the Selvedge brand has flourished not only into a spring-board for makers and artisans, but also a strong community of textile lovers, with workshops, fairs and its own store.

http://celiapym.com/

Celia Pym is an artist, specialising in knitting, darning and embroidery.

https://tomofholland.com

Tom van Deijnen is a self-taught textiles practitioner, based in Brighton, UK. He works mostly with wool and has workshops and holds events.

http://malepatternboldness.blogspot.co.uk

The site of blogger New Yorker Peter Lappin, who specialises in sewing. Includes projects, sew-alongs and tutorials.

http://www.textielmuseum.nl/en/current-expositions
This textile museum is based in the Netherlands and has
exhibitions and events.

https://www.thenewcraftsmen.com/handmade-craft-makers The New Craftsmen has a network of over 100 British makers and works to refine and redefine the value of craft through curating, commissioning and selling their work.

http://www.thisiscolossal.com/

Colossal is one of the largest visual art, design and culture blogs on the web. Celebrating the work of both established and emerging artists across a vast field of creative endeavours, featuring more than 5,000 articles on fine art, crafts, design, animation, photography, street art, illustration and architecture, it reaches an audience of 2–3 million every month.

http://fuckyeahbookarts.tumblr.com/

A blog for creative types interested in the (un)conventional world of book arts! Featuring artist's books, illustration, bookbinding, typography, sketchbooking, scrapbooking, printmaking, papermaking, altered books, how-to guides, zines, paper engineering and more, fuckyeahbookarts is wildly inspirational!

http://bigjumppress.com/home.html

An inspirational blog by Sarah Bryant, featuring her letterpress printed artist's books, prints, broadsides and handbound books.

http://thisisnthappiness.com/about

A brilliant tumbler account featuring 'art, photography, design & disappointment'.

http://tommykane.blogspot.co.uk/

Blog and wonderful drawings of New York-based creative director Tommy Kane.

http://www.wagonized.com/

Blog and wonderful drawings by Frances Belleville Van Stone.

http://www.theweavingloom.com/

Energetic, inspirational and very informative blog for the modern lap loom weaver.

http://lakesidepottery.com

Informative and easy-to-follow tutorials on general ceramic repairs and *Kintsugi* gold-mending technique from US-based Patty Storms and Morty Bachar.

SUPPLIERS & OUTLETS

KNITTING/WEAVING

http://www.woolsack.org/BWStockists

Lists of sources & stockists of British wool yarn, fabric, fibre for spinning & felting, fleece (including raw fleece), fashion garments, accessories and textiles for the home.

SEWING AND DARNING

https://www.selvedge.org/collections/ – Selvedge (see p. 177).

BOOKBINDING

http://store.bookbinding.co.uk/store/ – Shepherd's Bookbinders. Online and retail.

ART SUPPLIES and PRINTMAKING SUPPLIES

https://www.jacksonsart.com/ – Extremely wide range of materials available online.

http://intaglioprintmaker.com/ – The destination for serious printmakers.

MEET THE MAKERS - SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

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