

Make:
technology on your time

Weekend
Projects



Make a Sympathy Doll



In 2003 and 2004 I had an art studio and I would paint giant color field paintings using a knife with thick layers of oil paint. These would take days to dry and so I started making dolls to fill the time. I made the first one, a cute sad bunny, and took it to an art opening that night sticking out of my pocket. Over the course of the evening, four strangers tried to buy it off of me! I didn't sell, but it got me started!

The sympathy doll idea is to make a doll that is so sad and pathetic that it inspires empathy and love from people. You really can't feel too bad around these dolls because you just know that no matter what, you don't have it *that* bad!



These dolls make great gifts! Nothing cheers someone up like a little soft, fuzzy, and cute bundle of misery. I've made hundreds of these dolls, but here's a small gallery of dolls that I've made for you to check out. <http://brepettis.com/dollfolder/index.htm>

It's the 5th anniversary of creative commons this week! I'm licensing Sympathy Dolls under the creative commons attribution license, so feel free to make them and sell them, just make sure to give attribution to me, Bre Pettis with a link to brepettis.com and you're good!

To get started you'll need some tools.

- Sewing machine. Borrow or buy one. You can do it by hand, but sewing machines are the ultimate power tool of the soft-things world. If you ever need to be impressed by a mechanical machine, open one up and look at all the goodies inside!
- Scissors. Don't use fancy fabric scissors on paper!
- Sharpie or Pencil or chalk for the outline.
- Chopstick (optional) helps poke stuffing into the arms and legs of your doll.
- Needle and Thread. Walk into any hotel lobby and they'll give you this for free.

You'll need some materials too!

- Fabric. I use wool trousers because I like the way wool is a bit flexible. I've also made these out of prom dresses and pretty much fabric I could get my hands on. Be creative!
- Stuffing. I used fancy stuffing this time and I like how soft it is. It's like snow though and it was really hard to pack it in. I'd stick with the cheapest thing you can find. I made my first doll by just stuffing it with fabric scraps and that worked just fine too!
- Felt. I used felt for the eyes since I didn't want to create a choking hazard. I used to use buttons and include a warning label stating not for use with children under 3, but after some thought I decided to play it safe and not do it with buttons.



Now it's time to make it!

Cut out your fabric. If you use a pant leg, just cut the pant leg off to the appropriate size, turn it inside out and you're ready to go. If you are using fabric, cut out two squares and pin them together.

Print out the pdf, cut out the design, trace it onto the fabric and sew it up! Leave the part where you would cut it's kidney out of it if it had a kidney open. Then stuff it! Make sure to fill it more than you think

you should, it's nice to have it be firm. Then sew it back up with an invisible stitch and the body is done.

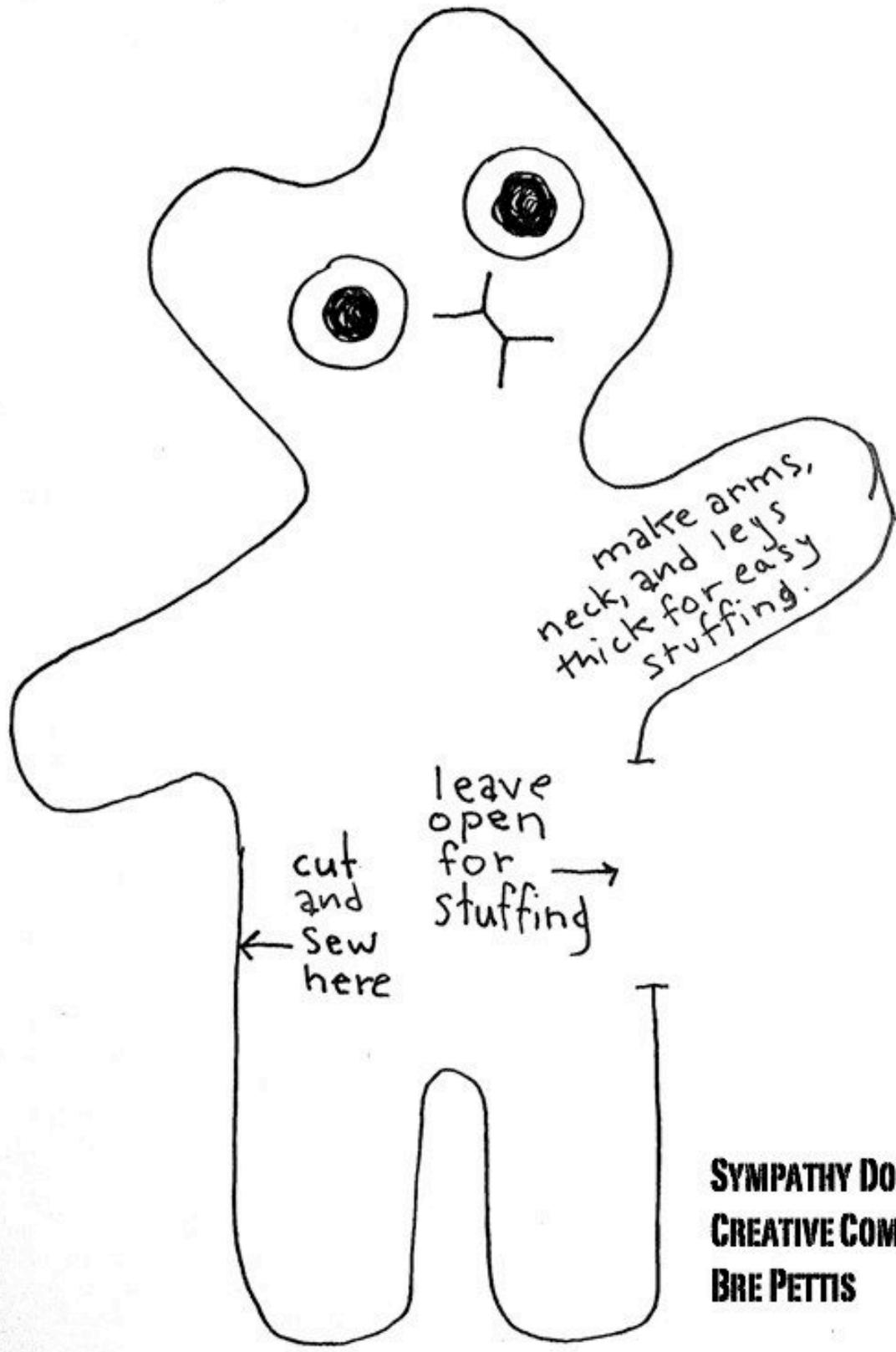
For eyes, cut out circles of felt and glue and sew them on. In the states, I found aleen's tacky fabric glue and I love that stuff because it's flexible and tacky!



I used pink thread to sew a little nose and mouth on!

Raid your junk drawer for stuff to decorate your sympathy doll, customize it!

When you are done, make sure to take pictures of it and upload them to the Craft: flickr pool at <http://flickr.com/groups/craft/pool>. Go ahead and tag them sympathy dolls! I can't wait to see what people do to customize their dolls.



make arms,
neck, and legs
thick for easy
stuffing.

cut
and
sew
here

leave
open
for
stuffing

SYMPATHY DOLL
CREATIVE COMMONS
BRE PETTIS



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