

# Happy, Healthy Hobbies

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## Educational Objectives

- Participants will understand how different hobbies support physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being.
- Participants will discover new hobbies to try.
- Participants will create a hobby goal based on personal need for enrichment in physical and/or emotional well-being.

## Benefits of Hobbies

Many hobbies are more than just fun, they can make us physically healthier and mentally stronger too. Hobbies are essential for keeping our minds sharp, bodies active, and moods positive. Research has shown that by engaging in interests you enjoy, you're more

likely to have lower stress levels, a lower heart rate, and a better mood. You're also more likely to engage with the world around you.

Hobbies are defined as enjoyable leisure activities that individuals voluntarily do when they are free from the demands of other responsibilities. Some hobbies or leisure activities may serve as “breathers” that provide a chance to take a break and generate positive emotions while reducing stress. Hobbies may also act as “restorers” that help to recover from stress through positive social interactions or relaxation that leads to increased positive emotions.

This lesson will explore various hobbies and how they can improve our physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being.

### How a Hobby Helps

**Physical:** Maintain mobility, strength, and coordination.

**Cognitive:** Keep the brain active and delay cognitive decline.

**Emotional:** Reduce loneliness, anxiety, and depression; and provide opportunities for social connection and purpose.



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## Physical Health

Hobbies can improve physical health by making us stronger and more flexible, reducing blood pressure and blood sugar, improving stamina, and boosting mood! The CDC states that people 65 and older need at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week. This can be split up however you like, but a common choice is 30 minutes per day, 5 days a week. It's important to practice activities that help strengthen muscles and improve balance. Always talk to your doctor before you start an exercise routine.

### Hobbies that help your physical health include:

- Dancing provides a great cardio workout while having fun. It's hard to be sad when you're are dancing!
- Walking helps to build stamina and connect with nature. Being outside can improve mood, allowing us to take in the beautiful world we live in. Look for walking groups in your community.
- Swimming is a full body, low impact activity. For those with arthritis, joint pain, and knee issues, swimming is a great way to build strength without putting pressure on joints and bones. Your local pool may have classes for water aerobics or swimming groups.
- Yoga strengthens our body, mind, and spirit. Simple stretches help with balance and flexibility while helping our mind slow down and focus on well-being. Join a class or try it out at home. No yoga mat needed! Online videos, chair yoga, and tai chi are also fun and effective options.
- Gardening involves digging, planting, and weeding, which helps with fine motor skills, dexterity, and improves mood when the harvest or blooms peak. Sharing the bounty of your garden with friends and neighbors fosters social connections.

## Cognitive Health

As we age, brain health becomes even more important. We should strive to keep our brains active to delay cognitive decline. Using our brains for different hobbies helps to stay alert, solve problems, and understand the world around us.

Hobbies that help with cognitive brain health include:

- Writing or journaling
- Photography
- Word searches, crosswords, and Sudoku puzzles
- Reading or listening to audiobooks
- Playing an instrument
- Drawing or painting
- Board games, card games, or games on a smartphone
- Knitting, crocheting, quilting, and sewing
- Scrapbooking or putting pictures in albums
- Adult coloring books
- Building your family tree
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Volunteering with an organization and taking on leadership roles

## Emotional Well-being

Engaging in social and productive activities you enjoy helps to maintain your well-being and independence as you age. Find hobbies that boost your emotional well-being with activities that are meaningful to you and benefit your mind and mood. Research has shown that adults who participate in hobbies and social activities are at a lower risk of developing health problems such as dementia, heart disease, and stroke. Studies have shown that happiness and having a sense of purpose are linked to living longer, and those who have that sense of purpose are more likely



to recover from difficult situations. Other studies show that mentally stimulating hobbies may have a positive effect on memory.

Being social and participating in group functions is very helpful to emotional well-being. Being lonely or isolated is not healthy, as it can increase feelings of depression and anxiety. Try participating in hobbies you find meaningful and create a sense of purpose in your daily life.

Here are a few examples:

- Join a book club.
- Participate in spiritual study groups.
- Have game nights with friends or at community events.
- Connect with family and friends.
- Travel with groups.
- Learn something new by taking a community class.
- Learn to play an instrument.
- Visit local museums.
- Be active in a local community or senior center.
- Volunteer in the community (clothing drive, food pantry, read aloud, teach a class, etc.).
- Help with community garden projects.

### Tips to Make Time for Hobbies

Not enough time in the day for hobbies? Consider these changes to help find and spend free time doing the things you love.

Rather than trying to find hobby time every day, try making time in a week or a month. Hobbies shouldn't cause stress by demanding your time. They should be something you choose to do and work to find extra time hidden in your schedule. Have game nights with friends or at community events.

- Take a step back and say no to some things or try to delegate some tasks to lighten your load and make space for hobbies.
- Tune in to how you're spending downtime. Scrolling on social media or watching TV can take up a lot of time. Consider how you might use that time to indulge in something you enjoy.
- Take 'micro breaks' during the day. These are short 5 to 10 minute breaks throughout the day to do something that brings you joy, like taking a walk outside, listening to your favorite podcast or music, reading a chapter or two of a good book, or visiting with others.
- Spend time with family and friends doing something active you love and can do together.

Hobbies are more than just something to pass the time. They are the key to improving our quality of life, and living healthier and happier. The right hobbies help keep our bodies strong and our minds happy. Find something you enjoy and do it often!

### Activity:

#### Hobby Match Up

Match common hobbies with the benefits they provide:

Hobby	Benefit
Chair Yoga ____	A. Cognitive
Book Club ____	B. Physical
Game Night ____	C. Emotional Well Being
Swimming ____	
Drawing ____	
Work at Food Pantry ____	
Walking Group ____	
Make Family Tree ____	



## Discussion Questions:

- What hobbies might be harder to do, and how can you try to do them?
- How can you motivate yourself to try a new hobby?
- What's one hobby you want to try?
- Name a friend or family member who may teach you a hobby or join you in trying a new hobby.

**Set a goal:** I will start (insert hobby), at least (insert number) times a week, to help me with (Physical or Cognitive or Emotional) wellness. I can do this hobby on (insert days of the week) at (insert time).

**My Hobby Goal:** I will start with \_\_\_\_\_, at least \_\_\_\_\_ times a week, to help me with \_\_\_\_\_ wellness. I can do this hobby on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

## Resources

National Institute on Aging. (n.d.). *Participating in activities you enjoy as you age*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/healthy-aging/participating-activities-you-enjoy-you-age>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, December 22). *Older adult activity: An overview*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/older-adults.html>

Pressman, S. D., Matthews, K. A., Cohen, S., Martire, L. M., Scheier, M., Baum, A., & Schulz, R. (2009). Association of enjoyable leisure activities with psychological and physical well-being. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 71 (7), 725–732. [https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0b013e3181ad7978&#8203;;contentReference\[oaicite:0\]{index=0}](https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0b013e3181ad7978&#8203;;contentReference[oaicite:0]{index=0})

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