

3 Kinds of Hobbies That Can Help Us Thrive

Hobbies do much more than just fill your time. In many ways, they can shape who you are; they nurture parts of you that might otherwise go unnoticed or uncared for. Thus, when we only focus on one type of hobby, we can inadvertently leave other parts of ourselves - our minds, our bodies, or our sense of creativity - malnourished.

However, finding more hobbies that we not only enjoy but also excel at can be decidedly difficult. Fortunately, there are countless options - yet, based on psychological research, you only need three.

1. A Hobby That Keeps You in Shape

Likely, you're already well aware of the importance of exercise for physical well-being. From a psychological standpoint, however, it can be just as important - as research suggests it plays a critical role in reducing stress and preventing mood impairments, such as depression.

Yet, if you're not enthusiastic about exercise, knowing where to start - as well as sticking to a consistent routine - can be immensely challenging. This difficulty is only compounded by stereotypes regarding what "proper" exercise looks like; many people may believe that running and working out are the ideal, if not the only, way to begin a fitness-related hobby.

The reality, however, is that exercise doesn't have to mean hours at the gym or running marathons - unless, of course, you enjoy it. Rather, it can be as simple as getting your body moving and blood pumping in ways that bring you joy:

- **Swimming:** If you love the feeling of water, swimming is a fantastic option. It's gentle on your joints, yet it still works the entirety of your body. Above this, there's also something incredibly meditative about the rhythm of your strokes and the sound of water around you.
- **Walking:** Never underestimate the power of a good walk. It could be a stroll around your neighborhood, or it could be a hike through the woods - either way, walking is one of the easiest ways to stay active.
- **Dancing:** The beauty of dance is that there are so many ways to approach it - dance classes, clubbing with friends, or even just grooving in your living room. Better yet, it's a workout disguised as fun, and it's a phenomenal way to let go of stress.
- **Yoga:** Ignore any rhetoric you see that refers to yoga as "glorified stretching." In practice, it's possibly the best way to connect with your body in a way that feels nurturing and restorative.

2. A Hobby That Keeps You Creative

Many people are quick to tell themselves that they don't have a single creative bone in their body. They consider themselves poor writers, sloppy artists, or bad singers and assume that creative pursuits probably just aren't for them. However, creativity isn't at all about being "good" at something. Instead,

creativity should solely focus on expression, letting go of judgment, and enjoying the process of making something new.

Creative hobbies are like food for your soul. They're one of the best ways to process emotions that feel overwhelming, and they allow us the rare opportunity to find beauty in the mundane. And, fortunately, you don't have to be a renowned artist to reap its benefits. According to a 2024 study in *Frontiers in Psychology*, people who simply engage in creative hobbies report higher life satisfaction, greater happiness, and, most notably, a greater "sense that life is worthwhile:"

- Journaling or creative writing: Putting your thoughts on paper can be incredibly cathartic. You don't need to write a masterpiece - just jotting down your feelings, dreams, or little stories can be a wonderful outlet.
- Cooking or baking: The kitchen is likely one of the most expansive canvases for creative expression. Experiment with new recipes, decorate cakes, or try your hand at creating your own dishes. Cooking combines creativity with practicality - and, best of all, you get to eat your art.
- DIY projects, knitting, or crocheting: Practical craft projects are perfect for anyone who loves working with their hands. They're rhythmic and relaxing and leave you with something tangible to show for your efforts.

3. A Hobby That Keeps You Sharp

While physical and creative hobbies nurture your body and soul, intellectual hobbies keep your mind sharp, curious, and engaged with the world around you. Often, it's too easy to get caught up in the habit of mindlessly engaging with what's around you. In this way, finding a hobby that challenges your intellect can feel like rediscovering a part of yourself you didn't realize was missing.

However, starting something new - especially if it requires unforeseen focus - can feel awkward. Maybe you're worried you'll struggle to pick up a new skill or fear you'll get bored halfway through. Either way, the key is to remind yourself you don't have to master something overnight, nor that you need to compete with anyone else. Rather, rediscover the joy of learning, exploring new ideas, and stepping outside your mental comfort zone.

The benefits of such hobbies, unsurprisingly, are numerous. Intellectual hobbies can boost your problem-solving skills, strengthen your memory, and even improve your mental resilience. Moreover, 2023 research from *Frontiers in Psychology* suggests that regularly engaging in challenging mental activities can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline as we age. But, beyond this, these hobbies help you see the world - and yourself - in new ways, often with a sense of awe and wonder:

- Reading: Novels are the ultimate mental workout. Fiction transports you to different worlds, expands your empathy, and immerses you in compelling stories. Nonfiction, on the other hand, introduces you to fascinating topics - from history and science to self-help and personal growth. Every genre opens up endless avenues for learning.
- Logic puzzles and games: If you enjoy a good challenge, logic puzzles like crosswords, Sudoku, or riddles are a great way to keep your brain in top shape. Conversely, games like chess, Scrabble, or

strategy-based board games provide the same benefits while adding a layer of fun and social interaction. They're ideal for those who want to stretch their mental muscles without taking life too seriously.

- **Learning a new language:** Picking up a new language is analogous to a full-body workout for your brain. It challenges memory, improves problem-solving skills, and enhances your active listening skills. Above all, it opens doors to new cultures, connections, and even travel opportunities.