



COMMUNITY
SERVICES GROUP

A Network of Services. A World of Possibilities.

Hobbies Prove Happier, Healthier Life

Eldercare Assessment & Resources

A Community Services Group Program

While planning for retirement, most people imagine the many exciting ways they will spend their newfound time. Travel, hobbies, creative pursuits and other activities all sound appealing to a person looking forward to retirement. Elders who engage in these leisure activities often find greater focus and enjoyment in their lives, but the best part of this investment is that it may also contribute to a longer, healthier and happier life.

Research shows older adults who engage in hobbies, recreation and creative arts experience numerous benefits in physical and mental well-being. Happiness, longevity, physical function and improved cognition have all been linked to rewarding activities that are social, productive and creative. Different hobbies offer a variety of benefits, but any leisure activity is better than no activity at all.

Meet new people

Social hobbies allow individuals to connect with others who have similar interests. Those who participate in square dancing, bird watching with a club or volunteering, for example, are able to meet other people, share interests and ideas, and learn from one another. People who engage in these kinds of activities are more likely to make new friends, expand their understanding by learning from others and enjoy the social support of the people they meet.

Improve health

Gardening, yoga and kayaking are examples of activities that offer opportunities for improved physical health and function through movement, stretching and exercise. Individuals who engage in exercise and physical health activities find that they are working their bodies while doing something they enjoy. The benefits are real, but the fun masks the work of the exercise.

Hobbies benefit others

Some prefer to devote their time to activities that feel productive and result in a product, such as knitting, woodworking and making crafts. When there is benefit to others, the individual receives the added reward of knowing that they helped someone through their own efforts. For example, one elderly woman dedicated her time to knitting caps for newborns. Not only did this activity help keep her

arthritic fingers flexible and provide her with a focus, but she also felt a sense of purpose knowing that she was contributing to the well-being of others.

Keeping your mind sharp

Hobbies also facilitate memory and thinking skills by promoting brain cell growth. Hobbies that require the individual to learn a new skill or are intellectually challenging are most likely to benefit brain function. Learning a computer game, taking a writing class or learning to ballroom dance can all result in positive effects on brain health.

Creative ways to enjoy life

Finally, researchers have looked at the role of creativity in healthy aging and found elders who engage in creative pursuits often report high levels of life satisfaction, energy and motivation. Painting, music and writing provide individuals with opportunities to think flexibly, challenge their worldview and express themselves. When elders who identify themselves as artists are asked about their creative activities, they describe a sense of meaning and purpose that helped them to successfully manage the challenges of aging.

So go ahead and pursue those hobbies that you dreamed of doing. Plant that garden. Take up painting. Learn to dance. Travel to new places. And, remember, as you create that beautiful work of art or meet exciting new people, you're ultimately contributing to a happier, healthier life.

For more information on hobbies and aging, contact Eldercare Assessment & Resources at 484.895.3720 or eldercare@csgonine.org.