

Now What? Let's Get Creative!

As we continue quarantine, there is a dichotomy in the workforce. Some people are overwhelmed while working from home, and others are struggling to pass the time productively. Regardless of whether you are looking for a stress release, a way to invigorate atrophied work-brain muscles, or techniques to stay both physically and mentally healthy, letting your creative juices flow appears to be just what the doctor ordered.

In her Forbes article [Here's How Creativity Actually Improves Your Health](#) *, Ashley Stahl points out that “engaging in creative behaviors (even just coloring in those trendy adult coloring books) improves brain function, mental health and physical health.” That may sound like a lofty claim, but in fact there's plenty of research to support it. Dr. Cathy Malchiodi describes some of this in her Psychology Today article [Creativity as a Wellness Practice](#) **. In it she points out “studies indicate that creative self-expression and exposure to the arts have wide-ranging effects on not only cognitive and psychosocial health, but also physical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, various forms of dementia and cancer.”

Dr. Maria Cohut further backs this up in her Medical News Today article [What Are the Health Benefits of Being Creative?](#) *** indicating a plethora of “research in the medical field has actually suggested that art — and, more specifically, *being creative* — is, in fact, quite useful for our mental and physical well-being.”

Still, for those people who count themselves among the creatively non-blessed, endeavoring to paint a still life or write a haiku may seem like a lost cause. But notice that no one says you have to be great (or even good) at the activity to derive the benefits from it. Don't get hung up on judging your creations—just CREATE! Because as Dr. Malchiodi emphasizes...

“...engagement in the arts as a viewer can have an impact, but if you really want to benefit from the arts for wellness, studies continue to show that your active participation is the best bet (Bolwerk et al, 2014).”

What are your creative interests (or what were they when you were younger)? Do you paint or draw? Craft? Write poetry or prose? Bake? Garden? Play an instrument or compose music? Or are you one of those people who tells yourself you're not creative? “I can't draw... I have no artistic talent,” that sort of thing. The truth is you may be right, although we all tend to be our own worst critics. But either way, it kind of doesn't matter. That's because the act of creating something—of activating those artistic proclivities whatever they may be—brings psychological benefits to you, no matter how brilliant or sucky your end-product turns out.

So, give yourself permission to play a little. Challenge yourself to try something—one new thing—that is creative this week. We've got some ideas below to help get you started. Remember, you don't have to be good at a creative endeavor to garner the positives it brings. But you do have to try something. And as an added benefit, it's always fascinating to find out which of your coworkers has an undisclosed artistic passion that you might otherwise never know about.

Have a great week. If you need ideas, communications, tools or other support, Jenn and Ron are here to help you. Thanks! Now go create something already!

Need some ideas?

If you're not a baking enthusiast but still want to try a new dessert/treat recipe (either with or without child assistance), here are some easy recipes that have only 5 ingredients (or less!):
<https://www.brit.co/easy-desserts-with-5-ingredients-or-less/>

If you want to try your hand at some poetry, the traditional Japanese Haiku might be a good place to start (plus, they're short!):
<https://writingcooperative.com/how-to-write-haiku-fa5fe7792661>

If you're not skilled at drawing but want to try something colorful and arty, here are downloadable coloring pages for adults:
<https://www.justcolor.net>

If you want to try something easy and crafty but don't know where to start, here are some suggestions:
<https://listotic.com/25-genius-craft-ideas/>

If you're still not sure what creative thing to do, start here for a ton of ideas:
<https://www.google.com>

Want to read more?

* <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleystahl/2018/07/25/heres-how-creativity-actually-improves-your-health/#7e60059613a6>

** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/arts-and-health/201512/creativity-wellness-practice>

*** <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/320947>