

Re-Creation for Mental Well Being

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*“To practice any art, no matter how well or badly,
is a way to make your soul grow. So do it.”~ Kurt Vonnegut*

I no longer find it a coincidence that when I ask some of my clients what they do for fun and recreation, my question is often met with an uneasy silence. Then it's usually followed by a smile and maybe a head nod of acknowledgement. Other times the question is answered with statements about exercising, spending time with friends and family or reading and watching TV.

Our days are filled with obligatory activity like getting up and going to work, picking the kids up at school, taking them to their activities, doing the grocery shopping, preparing the meals, and taking care of our homes. And then we think that when we engage in exercise or spend some quiet time reading or watching a movie that we are doing something to care for ourselves. While these may be worthy activities, there is something lacking from them. No doubt exercise improves our physical health, but what about our mental well-being. Well, exercise has been shown to help reduce feelings of depression and anxiety. It is also obligatory if we are going to maintain our physical health. But is there anything else we should be *ACTIVELY* doing to improve our emotional health?

Children have a lot to teach us about what more we can do to improve our mental well-being. They spend a great deal of time in play, and creating projects, and “making things.” But as we grow older much of our time gets taken up with fulfilling our obligations of working and caring for our families.

The act of engaging in re-creation is essential to our emotional well-being. But in particular our re-creational activities will have much more benefit to us if there is *creation* in our re-creation. It's not a mistake that the word “create” is found in the word recreation. The act of creating something with our efforts is emotionally rewarding. Creativity gives us the chance to develop new skills, problem solving capabilities, competence and confidence. It allows us to engage in an activity that is entirely non-obligatory. We don't *have* to do it. Instead we *choose* to do it.

There are any number of ways we can express a creative outlet. From painting, to drawing, to woodworking, to pottery, to knitting, to making music, to writing poetry, to tying flies for fishing, to building a model railroad layout, you name it, there are a multitude of ways for you to express yourself creatively. The point is to engage in some non-obligatory act of creating something that is enjoyable.

A good place to start is to consider what you enjoyed doing as a child. Perhaps you've outgrown those interests, but for emotional well-being find something. Wikipedia defines a hobby as “an activity, interest, enthusiasm, or amateur pastime that is undertaken for pleasure or relaxation, typically done during one's [leisure](#) time.” Google “List of Hobbies” for some possible recreational creative activities to consider. There are so many possibilities and it does not necessarily have to involve a lot of money, or too much time. Doing something for yourself and your emotional well-being is better than doing nothing.

And one last thought: The day will come when you no longer have children to care for, and you will retire. How will you spend your time then? Will your days be filled with emptiness and boredom? By developing a recreational creative outlet now, you will be practicing for retirement. You will allow yourself to develop interests that will be fulfilling and provide hours of comfort and enjoyment. These are keys to emotional well-being. Get started NOW!