

# HOW A NEW HOBBY CAN BOOST YOUR MOOD

Did you know that something as simple as starting a new hobby, even learning to play a new game, can really boost your mood? It's true!

One study from the [Society of Behavioral Medicine](#) suggests participating in a hobby that you're into leads to fewer negative emotions and less stress. It even found lower heart rates when we engage in our hobbies.

"If you feel stuck in a rut, A hobby can be a great thing. It can be helpful to change things up," says Tom Waldecker, Director of the Faculty and Staff Consultation Office (FASCCO). "But the trick can be finding something that ignites your interest. Two suggestions are start with a list, and talk to people who are passionate."

## WRITE A LIST OF POTENTIAL HOBBIES

When looking for a new activity that sparks joy, it can be helpful to consider many options. Start by making a list of things you've always wanted to try. In fact, the very act of making a list is an exploration that is beneficial in itself, so to help you start the list, add "writing or journaling" to get started.

"Writing your thoughts is a creative act," adds Waldecker. "Just start writing! Focus on the act and not the content of what you write, even if it's 15 minutes. This consistency can help unlock your creativity. You may even find that writing becomes your hobby."

Now that you have your first option to explore, here are more suggestions to help fill out your list:

- Learn a New Game - Simple board games, classics like chess, card games and more can stimulate creativity, focus, and visual memory.
- Doodle and Draw - Just take a pen or better yet a pencil and go! Keep your pencil on the page continuously for five minutes and see what happens! Check out [UMMA's tip for Contour Drawing](#). It could open up your love for virtual arts.
- Simply Switch it Up - Pick a new location to sit for lunch or a break. Choose somewhere different each day to get a different

perspective. It could help generate new thoughts and break old patterns. Need some ideas of interesting locations? Check out the comprehensive [list of outdoor sculptures on campus](#).

- Get Active - Explore [free well-being programs](#) from MHealthy (like Active U Autumn). [Pick up pickleball with the School of Kinesiology](#). [Explore a trail at the Arb](#). [Take an Outdoor Adventure with Rec Sports](#). Physical Activity lightens the mood and can help you create more social connections.
- Consider Affinity Groups - Think book clubs, photography groups, and early-career networking clubs. [LSA has an employee affinity group listing](#) and you can also connect with people on the [umichWORKS Slack workspace for faculty and staff](#).

## NEXT TALK TO PASSIONATE PEOPLE

Once you've identified your (hopefully lengthy) list, look for people who are already passionate about the activity. Their enthusiasm can boost your curiosity, helping you identify what activities to focus on.

You may also learn details like time commitment, potential costs, and tips on what to do and what to avoid when starting out. It's also a great chance to build social connections. Most people love talking about their hobbies! Here are some starter prompts that you can ask.

- What do you do for enjoyment?
- What do you like best about it?
- What are some tips for someone looking to get started?

## NOW, GO OUT THERE AND HOBBY!

Thinking about hobbies is great. Talking with other people about them is even better. But the best is when you find your new favorite thing. Maybe you decide that you are going to learn how to row, and spend every weekend on the Huron River. Or maybe finding a new lunch spot is more your speed. Either way, the important thing is to pick something new and give it a try.

## NEED MORE SUPPORT? WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

If you'd like to learn more about mental health services or are interested in support, counselors are available at no charge to you for confidential services. If you work on an academic campus, reach out to the Faculty and Staff Counseling and Consultation Office (FASCCO) at 734-936-8660 or via email at [fascco@umich.edu](mailto:fascco@umich.edu).



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