

Reflections

You Need a Hobby!

“Do you know what I really like to do?” my friend Erin asked.

“What?”

“I love to watch kids play.”

Huh?

I didn't totally understand, but, yeah, that's Erin's favorite pastime. Watching kids play. She loves it.

Listening to her explain (unintentionally, I had uttered the “huh?” aloud), I realized that her offbeat diversion is a really good fit for her. Erin is a highly regarded children's speech therapist. Observing play helps her relate to her small patients more naturally. It helps her know how to put them at ease and what things they yearn to express if only they could.

So much goodness and potential for enrichment comes from Erin's seemingly unusual pastime. Hobbies have a way of enriching your life, work, and relationships. They give you something new to talk about, and they make life (or dare I say, you) more interesting. And they can be as unique as you are.

Is Watching TV Your Hobby?

Many of us tend to log screen time instead of indulging in some sort of engaging pastime. After a stressful day, nothing may seem *(continued)*

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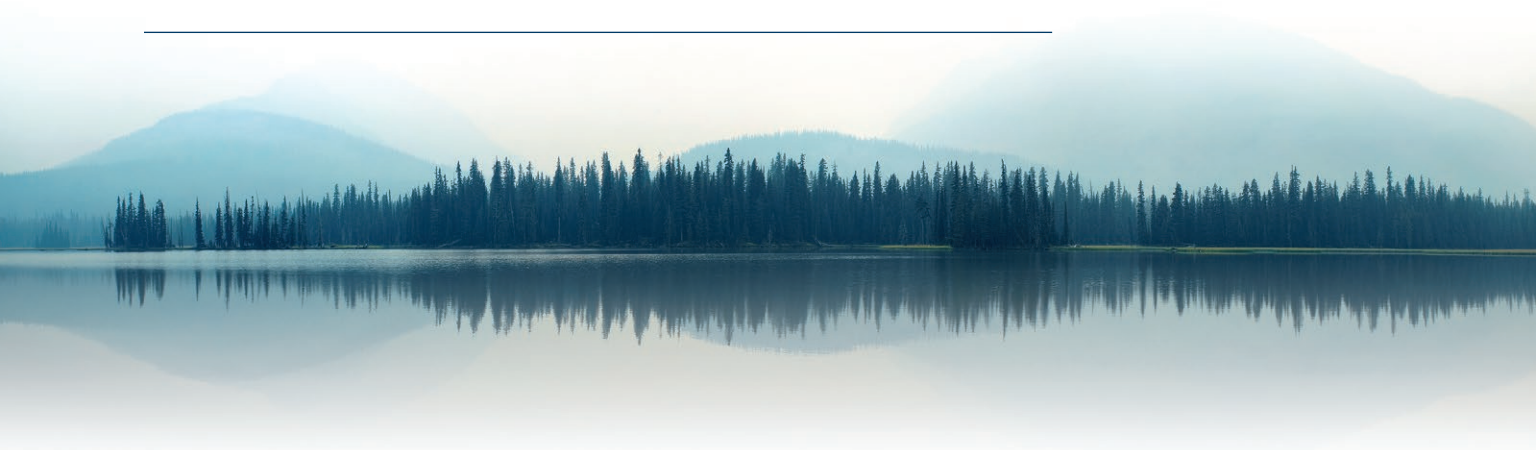
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Michele Deppe is a happy hobbyist in Seattle, Washington. She's learning how to sew animal shapes fashioned from felt.



more appealing than binge-watching television. But for most people, that's not exactly a cozy, family activity. Studies have found that splurging on television (watching about three episodes or more) is usually a solo activity. And it's probably not as relaxing as you'd think. Research published in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* reported poor sleep quality in binge watchers.

Additionally, too much screen time may cause us to feel jaded about life in general. Norman Doidge, psychiatrist and author of *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*, describes how our heart rate and brain try to keep up with the frantic images, the visual stimulation, and the loud, sudden noises on-screen.

"Because typical music videos, action sequences, and commercials trigger orienting responses at a rate of one per second, watching them puts us into continuous orienting response with no recovery," writes Doidge. "No wonder people report feeling drained from watching TV. Yet we acquire a taste for it and find slower changes boring." Maybe you can relate: Do you feel like life is overstimulating, yet boring?

How Hobbies Make You Happier and Healthier

There's evidence that fun diversions contribute to good health. One study showed that people who engage in hobbies enjoy better moods, feel more interested, and have less stress and lower heart rates—even hours after the recreation time.

Pastimes improve your social well-being too. In his book *Bowling Alone*, author Robert Putnam describes—alongside substantial research—how Americans have retreated into isolation. He writes that while people may still do things, like bowling, for example, they tend to do them alone. Instinctively, we

Here are some hobby ideas that might inspire you:

CREATIVE & CLASSIC

- ◆ **READING** improves your vocabulary and your mind; reduces stress
- ◆ **OWNING A PET** may lower blood pressure; sure to increase smiles
- ◆ **CRAFTING** eases stress, anxiety, and depression; decreases inflammation and chronic pain; increases happiness and protects the brain

ENRICHING & INSPIRING

- ◆ **COOKING** can jumpstart a healthier lifestyle through better nutrition; saves money; encourages bonding with family and friends over home-cooked meals
- ◆ **PODCASTING** allows you to share what you know on topics that you're passionate about
- ◆ **TREE SHAPING** connects you with nature: try bonsai, or check out Axel Erlandson's work for large-scale inspiration
- ◆ **WRITING** provides an outlet for your thoughts: try journaling, poetry, correspondence, memoirs

CHALLENGING & ADVENTUROUS

- ◆ **PLAYING AN INSTRUMENT** improves fine motor skills; raises IQ
- ◆ **LEARNING A LANGUAGE** makes you smarter; connects you to a new community
- ◆ **CHESS** engages both sides of the brain; develops strategic thinking
- ◆ **GEOCACHING** gets you out in nature, and who doesn't like a treasure hunt?

know we need to connect through common interests, but we are doing it less frequently.

Psychology professor and columnist Jaime Kurtz, Ph.D., writes, “Over a couple of generations, Americans have somehow misplaced their free time.” Many of us may retort, “What free time?” But the lesson here is that tasks tend to absorb as much time as you’re willing to give them. According to Kurtz, not many of us are legitimately super-busy; instead, we habitually waste time, creating the illusion of busyness.

Busyness can be difficult to put aside. Culturally, it seems to be a measure of status and significance. If you’re one of the people stuck in the habit of wasting time, hobbies can help break the dead-end routine. Active leisure can promote that feeling of losing yourself in doing, and that “flow” is one of the things worthy of putting on the schedule.

Choosing the Right Hobby for You

Research indicates that any healthy hobby that you enjoy is good for you, so choose based on appeal and the kind of experience you’d like to have.

As you hunt for a hobby, clues can be found in your childhood. What did you migrate toward as a tot? Do your favorite memories suggest an activity that you could take up again?

If a hobby initially sounded good but you find it harbors a dread factor, then dump it. You have plenty of things in life that you must do, so your hobby shouldn’t be overwhelming or boring. That said, it’s important to note that hobbies are like any other pursuit in life: you get out what you put in. Before you move on to something else, really give your hobby a chance through passionately engaging it and trying to learn something new. ■

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SHARP Corner

New SHARP member cards were mailed out in February

If you participate in the SHARP Dental/Vision/Hearing plan, or the Pre-Medicare and Non-Medicare plans, you should have recently received a new member ID card. The cards have a different look due to federal guidelines now in place. Need a replacement card? You can request one through the online portal at <https://www.webtpa.com/> or call WebTPA directly at 800-447-5002.

Need a free COVID-19 Test Kit?

Beginning January 19, 2022, each household in the United States may order four (4) free at-home COVID-19 test via the Federal government by going to <https://www.covidtests.gov/>. Additional information for persons under age 65 who participate in SHARP’s Express Scripts Commercial Rx plan is available at <https://express-scripts.com/covid-19/resource-center>.

Make sure we have your correct email address on file—WHY IT’S IMPORTANT

Numerous retirees received an email from Aon Retiree Health Exchange in January stating that Adventist Retirement changed your email address at Aon to something other than what you had provided to Aon directly. Our team sends a weekly file to Aon with your email/phone/address updates, and it will override any differing information you may give Aon in a call. Please be sure to notify us with your new information by email to SHARP@NADAdventist.org, or call us at 443-391-7338. This also ensures you receive current payroll information from our office.

Adventist Retirement

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