Hobbies for Anxiety

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Activities to Bust Anxiety

You used to go out with friends. You used to do things you enjoyed. Lately though, anxiety has added so much worry and apprehension to your life, you have not been doing much of anything. You don't go outside or do anything because you are avoiding anxiety triggers that might set you off, that you will fail, embarrass yourself or that you will get hurt just by trying. Instead, you stay inside; still worrying.

People in your life are always telling you the same thing: "You need to get out and do things more." The truth is that you agree, but it is easier said than done. Anxiety has made doing every activity more difficult. Anxiety has become so bad that you even forget the things you used to enjoy. Even if you found something to do, you think that you could never be consistent with it.

Overcoming Anxiety With Hobbies

This negative self-talk is anxiety wanting you to be more anxious. The "real you" knows that engaging in activities with people you care about or having a meaningful activity at home makes you feel better. Finding and engaging in hobbies is a great way for overcoming anxiety by providing a distraction, stretching your comfort zone and increasing time around supports. Here's how to get started with hobbies.

- **Set expectations**. When planning to start something new, establishing expectations is the best first step. Expectations will dictate the way you experience your attempts at a hobby. Whether it is a success or a failure depends on expectations. What do you want to accomplish from this hobby? How much time do you want to commit? Finding an appropriate balance of time is important. Too much and you risk using your hobby as a way to avoid your anxiety, too little and you will not benefit from your efforts.
- **Alone or together**. Identify your social needs. Are you isolating or feeling lonely often? Then consider a hobby done in a group setting to get you around people. Are you worrying often throughout the day? Then consider a hobby that you can do by yourself for varying lengths of time.

- **Choose the hobby.** Knitting, gardening, exercise, painting, journaling, volunteering, a cooking class, crosswords, model cars; the options are nearly endless. Search online for ideas you have never considered. Trying two or three at once will help your odds of success since there will be some level of trial and error involved. Search for hobbies that offer multiple layers of benefits. Crocheting is meditative, it increases levels of desirable neurotransmitters and it yields a tangible product. Sports teams provide psychological, physiological and social benefits. Artistic ventures like painting or sculpting are fantastic outlets for redirecting anxious energy while providing distractions. Refer back to your expectations to find direction and dismiss thoughts of "I'm no good at cooking." Try it anyway. You may surprise yourself.
- **Evaluate and modify.** Expect some level of failure at the onset of this endeavor. Find ways to evaluate the success or lack of success you are having with each hobby. Rather than give up, find ways to modify the activity to make it more beneficial. Seek feedback from supports, teachers or staff to improve the positive impact.

Conclusion

Anxiety wants all of your attention, but having leisure time is necessary to achieve a higher state of well-being. Trying new things, especially things you struggle with, gives you the power of overcoming anxiety. Who knows, you may have a talent waiting to be discovered.