



Get creative for health and happiness

Remember going to your first music concert or buying your first album? Have you ever performed in front of a camera, on a stage, or helped out behind the scenes? Do you like to draw or paint or make and build creative things? Have you ever written a poem or told a story using words or animation? Do you like to sing or dance or play an instrument? Do you like going to the theatre or the movies? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you have participated in the arts!

Many people engage in the arts and other creative activities on a daily basis. While we often encourage children to get creative in school and in play, participating in the arts and doing something creative is good for our mental health and wellbeing, no matter what age we are.

How does being involved in the arts and other creative activities keep us mentally healthy?

We get enthralled by the arts; they make us laugh, cry, and view life differently. Getting involved in the arts is enjoyable, provides a sense of achievement, and is a distraction from everyday worries.¹⁻³ The therapeutic benefits of the arts are well known and are commonly used in health care settings to influence mood, to communicate and promote health, and as a therapy for treating illness.⁴⁻⁶ The arts even have a positive influence on survival, with those attending cultural events living longer than those who do not.⁷

How can I get more creativity into my life?

You can do something creative, or you can experience something creative and you can support other creative people by attending their events.

Do something creative

Do you want to play music or sing? Have you always wanted to tell stories or be an actor? Do you enjoy taking photos or want to make short films? Are you interested in animation or creative design? Do you like making things with your hands? Are you interested in lighting or sound production? You don't need to be Picasso or Mozart to get involved in the arts and be more creative. Start by thinking of creative activities you've always wanted to try, that you used to enjoy doing, or that you would like to get better at. Then find a course you can do, take lessons, teach yourself, or join a group.



Experience something creative

Do you enjoy the buzz of a festival? Why not attend an art gallery or exhibition, or go on a hunt for some public art? Have you ever seen a live theatre or dance performance? Read a novel, a short story, or some poetry. If you like listening to music, why not go see a live music performance? Stop and listen to buskers, rather than walking past. Why not attend a short film or animation screening? You can gain mental health benefits as an audience member, especially if you attend with friends! And there are plenty of arts events that are free to the public, so you don't always have to purchase a ticket to enjoy the arts.

It's as easy as A-B-C!

Keeping mentally healthy through being creative is just as important as staying physically healthy and it's as easy as A-B-C: **Act-Belong-Commit**.

act

create art by painting or making a sculpture, play music, read a book, write a poem or create a story, sing, dance, perform, knit a scarf, scrapbook your favourite photos...

belong

join a band, an arts and craft group, book club or drama club, or start your own group, participate in an open mic night, attend performances or galleries with a friend, join a social club that attends arts events, purchase season tickets to your favourite company's performances...

commit

enrol in an arts, dance, music, creative writing or drama course, volunteer for an arts organisation or festival, mount your own production, enter a creative competition, commit to rehearsals, learn how to use design, photo, video, or music editing software...

How to find arts activities and events in your area

- Look in your local community directory, visit the local library, or contact your local council for community groups, activities, events and courses in your area.
- Look in the arts section of your local or regional newspaper, search the internet or social media, or pick up a copy of your local street press for the latest arts news, reviews, upcoming events, courses, competitions, and other opportunities.
- Join the mailing list of your favourite artists, musicians, performers, or arts organisations or become a member of a professional association or organisation that represents your creative area of interest.
- Visit the act-belong-commit website to discover more ideas on how you can get involved in the arts and other creative activities in your area, or call us on (08) 9266 4648.

1. Anwar McHenry, J, Rural empowerment through the arts: the role of civic and social participation in the Mid West region of Western Australia. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 2011. 27: p. 245-253.

2. Shaw, P, What's art got to do with it? Briefing paper on the role of the arts in neighbourhood renewal. 2003, Arts Council England: London.

3. Boon, R and Plastow, J, Theatre and empowerment. Community drama on the world stage. 2004, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4. Staricoff, RL, Arts in Health: a review of the medical literature. 2004, Arts Council England.

5. Macnaughton, J, White, M, and Stacy, R, Researching the benefits of arts in health. *Health Education*, 2005. 105(5): p. 332-339.

6. Argyle, E and Bolton, G, Art in the community for potentially vulnerable mental health groups. *Health Education*, 2005. 105(5): p. 340-354.

7. Bygren, LO, Konlaan, BB, and Johansson, S-E, Unequal in death. Attendance at cultural events, reading books or periodicals, and making music or singing in a choir as determinants for survival: Swedish interview survey of living conditions. *British Medical Journal*, 1996. 313: p. 1577-1580.

