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Blood, Sweat, and Smiles: How to Rebound from a Tough Day

Everyday "little c" creativity, such as making and eating a healthy meal, makes you feel better the next day. Many studies have found a strong link between creativity and happiness.

Research shows that creativity has a direct effect on increasing positive affect (like happiness) the following day. When you are in a good mood, you are more inclined to be creative. During COVID, researchers Hansika Kapoor and James Kaufman elaborated on the ways that creativity has helped people find meaning during the pandemic. They cited journaling, enjoying works of art, and immersion into a creative "flow" state as beneficial ways to find coherence and improve well-being during the pandemic. From leaders creating new ways to get PPE to Bollywood actors helping itinerant workers get home from Mumbai, creativity has burgeoned in response to the constraints of a global pandemic.

In another study from Argentina, participants engaged in various creative activities during quarantine to search for joy, cope, or share with others. The creative activities generated positive emotions and helped them cope with the negative emotions in response to the pandemic.

The pandemic made us tap into our everyday creativity even if we did not know we were doing so. Many other studies have documented the correlation between creativity and positive states.

Creative activity has been shown to increase well-being in several groups, including nurses, older students, family caregivers of cancer patients, and a wider diversity of individuals in the US. University students who expressed creativity had significantly higher emotional, psychological, and social well-being. When a group of knitters responded to a survey, a significant effect was found between the frequency of knitting and feeling calm and happy, as well as cognitive function. Knitting in a group significantly improved perceived happiness and social connection. Creativity directly correlates to mood and our overall well-being. The mechanism of the effect of creativity on mood suggests that we love creativity because we love problem-solving. Making a meal, creating a customer journey map, choosing a screensaver, taking a photo of the sunset all involve problem-solving. Creators are better problem-solvers, and this makes us happy. One of my favorite things about the happy boost from creativity is that you do not even have to be good at your creative outlet of choice to get the creative benefits.

In 2020, Adam Grant prescribed "Finding Flow" as a cure for languishing. Engaging in a creative practice that is uniquely satisfying to the individual, will engage this flow state and lead to better well being and resilience.