



10 Healthy Reasons to Knit - Self Care Programs

Intended Audience

For all members including people living with cancer, family members and significant caregivers.

Program Description

Members are treated to a warm circle of conversation and crafting in this weekly program that welcomes knitters of all varieties and skill levels. Participants are invited to work on projects of their own choosing, with assistance available on an as needed basis. Each session culminates with an optional group project; an afghan that is donated to a Wellspring Calgary member living with cancer. For many participants, the knitting process is meaningful and gratifying – a parallel to their steadfast pursuit of health and wellness, and the celebration of efforts well spent.

Benefits and Impact

Crafters have long raved about the therapeutic benefits of activities such as knitting; many reporting that its rhythmic movements are as soothing as meditation and the bountiful outcome can create a satisfying sense of pride and purpose. Studies indicate that knitting and other craft-related activities can delay the onset of dementia and help motor functions in people with diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's disease. Knitting is also known to relieve depression, reduce stress and anxiety, and help with processing feelings associated with grief and trauma. In a group setting knitting can build community, camaraderie and friendship.

What to Expect at a Session

Knitters are asked to arrive with their own 5 millimetre needles, and while yarn is provided, some prefer to work with their own supply. A volunteer is often on hand to assist newcomers, while the facilitator provides guidance, shares tips and offers thoughtful insights. The hour passes quickly as the pursuit of knitting mixes with laughter and meaningful conversation. Some may choose to work on their own projects while others opt to contribute squares for the collaborative afghan.

Participant Comments

"Where did the hour go?"

"Wellspring feels like home and this group feels like family."

"Projects are rewarding and conversation is robust!"

What the Research Says:

In a recent study, Collier (2011) examined the benefits and therapeutic value of creating textile handcrafts. Textile handcraft activities include knitting, sewing, crocheting, weaving, and embroidering. Survey responses from 821 women with varying degrees of crafting experience and skill level were collected and analyzed. Participants reported that creating handcrafts allowed them to appreciate the artistry and aesthetics of the different fibers and materials they used. Furthermore, the act of creating and producing a unique item was described as a means of tangible self-expression that could be shown and gifted to others. Participants also reported that creating textiles helped them to psychologically cope with illness as they were able to spend time on themselves and re-direct their focus and attention to the act of creating the handcraft (Collier AF. 2011. The Well-Being of Women Who Create Textiles: Implications for Art Therapy. *Art Therapy*, 28(3): 104-112).

Program Frequency:

1 hour per week
1 program per session

Optimum class size: 20

Related Programs:

Open Studio and other
Expressive Arts programs

