

Creative activities promote day-to-day wellbeing

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Everyday creative activity may lead to an "upward spiral" of increased wellbeing and creativity in young adults, new research from New Zealand's University of Otago suggests.

In their study, Department of Psychology researchers asked 658 [university students](#) to keep a daily diary of their experiences and emotional states over 13 days.

After analysing the diaries the researchers, led by Dr Tamlin Conner, found a pattern of the participants feeling more enthusiasm and higher "flourishing" than usual following days when they were more creative.

Flourishing is a psychological concept that can be described as increasing positive growth in oneself.

While the current study did not specifically ask the university students to record the nature of their creative activity, the researchers had collected such information informally in an earlier study.

They found that the most common examples reported were songwriting; creative writing (poetry, short fiction); knitting and crochet; making new recipes; painting, drawing, and sketching; graphic and digital design; and musical performance.

Dr Conner says she and her team wanted to find out if engaging in everyday creative acts makes people feel better emotionally.

"There is growing recognition in psychology research that creativity is associated with emotional functioning. However, most of this work focuses on how emotions benefit or hamper creativity, not whether creativity benefits or hampers emotional wellbeing," Dr Conner says.

The researchers found that "positive affect" (PA) - which encompasses feelings such as pleasurable engagement, happiness, joy, excitement, and enthusiasm - on a particular day did not predict next-day creative activity.

"Our earlier research found that PA appears to increase creativity during the same day, but our latest findings show that there is no cross-day effect. Rather, it is creative activity on the previous day that predicts wellbeing the next," she says.

Even when controlling for next-day creative activity, the previous day's creativity significantly predicted energised PA and flourishing.

Dr Conner and her co-authors write that: "this finding suggests a particular kind of upward spiral for wellbeing and creativity - engaging in creative behavior leads to increases in wellbeing the next day, and this increased wellbeing is likely to facilitate creative activity on the same day.

They conclude that "overall, these findings support the emerging emphasis on everyday [creativity](#) as a means of cultivating positive psychological functioning".

More information: Tamlin S. Conner et al, Everyday creative activity as a path to flourishing, *The Journal of Positive Psychology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2016.1257049](https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1257049)

Provided by University of Otago

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