

# Knitting brings calmness and structure to the lives of people with mental illness, shows study

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A study from the University of Gothenburg shows that knitting is beneficial for people living with mental health issues. Knitting is

described as a way of bringing a sense of calm and giving life structure.

Interest in [knitting](#) has soared in recent years, and the trend shows no signs of tailing off. In Sweden, Hand-knitted garments were dubbed Christmas present of the year as recently as 2022. The study reinforces the picture emerging from other research that knitting is an activity that can improve health and quality of life.

## **A way of coping with life**

The results of the study are [published](#) in the *Journal of Occupational Science*. Its first author is Joanna Nordstrand, who works as an occupational therapist and is studying for her Ph.D. at the University of Gothenburg.

"Knitters have a creative leisure interest that can also help them to cope with life and so improve their mental health. I'm convinced that this is part of the reason why so many people have taken up knitting these days," says Joanna Nordstrand, who enjoys picking up her needles and yarn in her free time, too.

The study explores what people with mental health problems say in their own words about what knitting means for their health. 600 posts were collected from the international online fiber arts forum Ravelry, where knitters discuss their hobby with other knitters. The posts were analyzed using established iterative content analysis methods.

## **Calm, context, and structure**

The results show three clear ways in which knitting supports improved health. Knitting is found to enable people to unwind. As a hobby, it also offers an identity as a knitter and a low-stakes social context. Knitting

can also bring structure to people's lives, which improves their [mental health](#).

In general, the knitters studied felt that their knitting was a highly appreciated occupation that improved their short and long-term health. Some of the knitters also noticed a change in their mental processes, saying that when they were knitting, their thinking became clearer and easier to manage.

Joanna Nordstrand's fellow researchers behind the study agree with her statement:

"The aim of the [occupational therapist](#) is to get people's lives working. There's potential in needles and yarn that the health system shouldn't ignore."

**More information:** Joanna Nordstrand et al, Promoting health through yarncraft: Experiences of an online knitting group living with mental illness, *Journal of Occupational Science* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/14427591.2023.2292281](#)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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