

Two-Hour Weekly Art Sessions Boost Mental Health

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The University of Western Australia

With cost-of-living pressures rising within the community, UWA researchers have identified an accessible and inexpensive way to help improve mental health.

According to research by the Good Arts, Good Mental Health (GAGMH) project at the University of Western Australia, a 'dose' of just two hours per week, in any arts activity, can have an impact on your mental wellbeing.

To mark Mental Health Week, the project is launching the [GAGMH arts challenge](#), a 5-day program of accessible and inexpensive arts prompts to get people's creativity flowing, including listening to your favourite music, colouring, origami, photography and reading.

'Budgets are stretched at the moment, but arts engagement doesn't have to be expensive. We need to prioritise our mental well-being, and the fact is, you don't have to be good at art for the arts to be good for you,' says Dr Christina Davies, Director of the UWA Centre for Arts, Mental Health and Wellbeing, and lead researcher of the GAGMH project.

'There is [strong evidence](#) that taking part in arts activities positively impacts mental wellbeing. This includes happiness, joy, confidence, self-esteem, relaxation, and connection to others,' she states.

Over the past 12 months, the GAGMH team have worked with almost two thousand community members, with research confirming that people want to know more about the mental health benefits of arts engagement, especially free or low-cost options.

Dr Davies suggests checking your local government website for free or low-cost arts activities, attending music and artist events in your local area, trying the camera function on your smart phone to take photos of things that make you feel happy, and checking for free arts apps, everything from painting to playing the piano is available.

She also says that a great place to buy inexpensive art supplies is from your local shops including pencils, paint, paper and books.

'Borrowing a book from your local library is free, and most of us already have the music we love, so why not put together a positive playlist and listen to it on your way to work, school, or the shops,' she states.

For easy, everyday arts options during Mental Health Week people are encouraged to try the GAGMH arts challenge. You can download information and free resources, including colouring sheets, from the [challenge website](#) by googling "Good Arts Good Mental Health" and clicking on the downloadable resources button, or via @artshealthwa on Instagram and Twitter.

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