

Why Do Knitting and Crochet Continue to Hook So Many Fans?

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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Yarn Crafter Shares 4 Unexpected Benefits

The idea of “DIY” is definitely in vogue, bringing an upswing in popularity of knitting and crocheting, and there’s no sign interest will wane anytime soon, says lifelong craftswoman Betty Hechtman.

“Pinterest and Etsy are two of the hottest websites online today, and they’re brimming with hand-knitted items, from socks and scarves to purses and pretty much anything that can be made from yarn,” says Hechtman, author of “Yarn to Go,” (www.BettyHechtman.com), the first in a new cozy mystery series scheduled for publication in July by Berkley Prime Crime Books.

“The hand-knitted caps and sweaters that might have embarrassed us as kids are now a hip expression of artistry,” she says. “Young adults appreciate originality and craftsmanship, and they’re an innovative bunch. They’re doing amazing things with yarn!”

Surprisingly, she notes, crocheting is even more popular than knitting. It’s No. 3 on the top 10 U.S. crafts list compiled by the Craft and Hobby Association, with 17.4 million devotees. Knitting comes in at No. 9 with 13 million needle fans.

“What’s interesting is people say they’re drawn to yarn crafts because of the creativity,” Hechtman says, citing a Craft Yarn Council survey of more than 5,000 knitters. “But once they get into it, they say they realize it also helps with stress.”

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That's just one of the unexpected benefits of time spent knitting and crocheting. Hechtman cites four more:

- **Knitting (and crochet) actually produce beneficial physical changes!** Spend enough time with your needles or a hook and yarn, and you can strengthen your immune system, lower your blood pressure, and change your brain chemistry to reduce stress hormones and increase the natural "happy" neurotransmitters, serotonin and dopamine. These findings were reported last year at an "academic study day" in England on the therapeutic benefits of knitting.

- **It won't leave you feeling groggy in the morning.** Having trouble sleeping? Instead of reaching for a pill, pick up a yarn project an hour or so before bedtime. The calming repetition of knitting or crocheting slows restless, racing thoughts and helps us transition from busy day to quiet, restful night.

- **Keep your hands out of trouble.** Are you trying to quit smoking and don't know what to do with yourself? How about biting your nails? Have you become obsessed with checking your social media? Crocheting or knitting keeps hands busy – and out of trouble – while you're traveling, waiting at the doctor's office or sitting at your kid's soccer game. And, unlike smoking, nail-biting and wasting time on Facebook, the result of knitting and crocheting is a positive one.

- **Make new friends.** An internet survey of 3,500 knitters found 90 percent made new friends through the craft. One of the beautiful aspects of yarn work is that you can do it alone or in a group. In fact, the opportunities to socialize seem to be driving the strong interest from young adults, who meet at bars, Starbucks and office lunchrooms for a good stitch session, according to the yarn council. People who are alone much of the time are more prone to depression and other mental health issues, getting together for a knit with friends is good for you!

About Betty Hechtman

Betty Hechtman is the author of "Yarn to Go," the first book in the Berkley Prime Crime Yarn

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Retreat mystery series, as well as the author of the best-selling Berkley Prime Crime Crochet mystery series. The eighth book, "For Better or Worsted," comes out in November. She has also written newspaper and magazine pieces, short stories and screenplays as well as a children's culinary mystery. She has a bachelor of fine arts degree and has been active in handicrafts since she was a small child. Hechtman divides her time between Los Angeles and Chicago.