

## Summer is Here!

For many people in the U.S., the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday marks the real beginning of summer. School is out, beaches are busy, gardens are in full bloom, and the days are long. Summer often seems like a time of leisure, even if we are working every day.



Leisure time is when we can decide what we want to do, when our time is not already committed. The English word “leisure” comes from the Latin word “licere,” which means “to be allowed.” So, to have leisure pretty much means that you can give yourself permission to do what pleases you.

## Hobbies

In the June issue of *Words of Wellness*, we introduced hobbies as a way to strengthen many dimensions of wellness. A hobby is a leisure-time activity that someone pursues over time, with a sense of passion and commitment, while building knowledge and skill. This leads some experts to call hobbies “serious leisure.” Hobbies can be a great way of releasing stress and frustration.

Hobbies include collecting themed items and objects, engaging in creative and artistic pursuits, playing sports, or pursuing other amusements. Hobbies provide numerous health and wellness benefits, from lowering blood pressure to improved confidence. Not only are they enjoyable, but they may delay or prevent cognitive decline like memory loss, especially hobbies that involve learning new skills and solving challenging problems.

Hobbies that require some level of physical activity also create chemical changes in our body that help reduce stress. Hobbies like swimming, yoga, knitting, or martial arts can help reduce anxiety. Hobbies build confidence because being good at something and learning something new is very rewarding. However even if your hobby does not require physical activity you can still benefit.

Hobbies that require you to be physical active or exercise help can help with depression and anxiety give your body confidence. Hobbies can prevent bored and even help people stay in shape. People are more likely to lose weight or stay fit when they take up a physical hobby, which can be both rewarding and fun.



## July Hobbies: Get Outside!

*By William Latin*

I surveyed some people to discover the hobbies that many people pursue during nice weather. The hobbies they reported included swimming outdoors, barbecuing, playing sports such as tennis or volleyball and basketball. These hobbies help many of the wellness dimensions. Team sports are a great way to meet new people and to socialize. These sports also require a degree of strategy and planning that stimulates your intellectual wellness. While indoor swimming pools and tennis centers can be expensive in some areas, many areas have free local swimming areas or tennis courts for residents. For people who live in a rural area, there may be free swimming and other outdoor activities at a state park or other public recreation area. Check your town, county, or state websites for more information.

Physical wellness hobbies are great things to do but remember that summer weather means that you should take care of yourself and try not to overheat. Sunscreen is a must if you're outside. In some areas, you also should use an insect repellent to avoid getting bites from mosquitoes, chiggers, or ticks.

If you are more into mental challenges than physical challenges, see if there is a local chess club that meets in a park. See if you can find a free outdoor concert in your area.

To beat the heat, consider air-conditioned activities such as an indoor recreation activity or even swimming indoors. Many parks and recreation departments offer classes in the summer (and all year round) to help you explore new hobbies like dancing or cooking.

Think about the summer hobbies you enjoyed in the past or would like to try!

## BBQ

*By William Latin*

Many people we talk to report that barbecuing is a favorite summer hobby that has many wellness benefits. I personally love to barbecue in the summer. Actually, I like to barbecue all year round. Winter, spring, summer or fall, all you have to do is...look outside and you will see...not Carole King but me grilling. Rain or shine, snow or sleet I'll be there.



I think that having a BBQ has many advantages, especially for your social wellness. Inviting people over for a BBQ is a great way to socialize. Many people I talk to enjoy being invited to a BBQ. It's fun, social and there is usually great food. You don't even need to grill hotdogs or hamburgers. If you want to try and eat healthier, try grilling vegetables! Barbecues add a great char filled flavor to any food. You can grill any kind of vegetable including, onions, peppers, tomatoes and even zucchini.

BBQ's are usually very casual and you can just kind of hang out and not worry about being so formal. If you don't have access to a grill of your own, you can actually use one in the park. A lot of public parks have coal grills and wood burning grills that are free to use. The park also generally will have picnic benches and other outdoor areas for you to host your party.

## PROUD 2B Well

We have a new project at Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey, Inc., called PROUD 2B Well. This project funded by SAMHSA is taking place at CSPNJ sponsored Community Wellness Centers (CWCs). PROUD 2B Well will increase members opportunities to access health and wellness education, support and resources. PROUD 2B Well includes two main components: collecting health information from members and using that information to provide health and wellness support.



The idea for PROUD 2B Well came from our experience going to too many untimely funerals, and data that we collected in 2017 showed that most people in CSPNJ-sponsored supported services reported having at least one medical condition and more than 25% report having six or more. About half of the people reporting a medical condition also said they needed help managing that condition. Substance use, exposure to trauma and poverty are far too often risk factors that negatively impact members' wellbeing.

The PROUD 2B Well project involved training Regional Coordinators, Peer Mentors, Center Managers, working at the CWCs to collect information using two surveys—one focused on medical conditions and health risks, the other

focused on the person's feelings about their overall well-being.

After helping members complete the surveys, trained Peer Mentors, Managers and Coordinators will be able to follow-up to see what information and support members want. This information will be used offer wellness activities to CWC members. CWCs will be offering groups and classes on mindfulness, meditation, smoking cessation, nutrition, diabetes, and exercise.

Peer Mentors also will offer individualized health and wellness support. This may include helping members learn about a health condition and how best to manage it, as well as how to improve their physical wellness through healthy eating, physical activity, improved sleep, and stress management. Peer Mentors, Center managers, and Regional Coordinators will develop skills so they can locate and share information such as disease-related support groups, healthcare providers, free health fairs and clinics, and free or low-cost wellness resources and services. We hope this will help people live longer and we will attend many fewer untimely funerals.

Stay tuned to hear more as we roll out PROUD 2B Well over the next 3 years!

## The Summer Solstice

This year, the longest day in the northern hemisphere falls on June 21. It's also another reason to celebrate! Ancient spiritual traditions celebrated this day, often at special locations. You probably have heard of Stonehenge, where the sunset on the summer solstice aligns with part of the structure.

Native Americans also built structures that seem to track the sun and the moon. One of the largest, Chaco Canyon, is located in New Mexico, and is now a national park. The National Park Service emphasizes that they can't prove that the buildings at Chaco were constructed purposefully as part of early astronomy, but the summer solstice brings many visitors who are believers.

## Summer Eating

Eating fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season is good for both financial and physical wellness, because food that is in season often costs less. The US Department of Agriculture recommends shopping at local farmers' markets, which may take SNAP benefits. July and August are often the best months to get local fresh berries and cherries. These brightly colored fruits are easy to eat and delicious any time of day. They are also full of vitamins and antioxidants.

Antioxidants are compounds that seem to protect against inflammation in your body. If you eat foods high in antioxidants, they help protect against cognitive decline, stroke, cancer, and many other diseases. In general, it's best to get antioxidants from food, rather than supplements, since fresh fruits and vegetables have so many benefits, such as fiber and other important nutrients. Plus, berries are more fun to eat than a vitamin pill! While many food groups contain antioxidants, berries are at the top of the list, with about 10 times more antioxidants than other fruits and vegetables!



Check your local area to see if there are “pick your own” locations—you can often get a good price discount as well as some exercise. Picked too many? Freeze the extras! Wash and dry the best looking berries (take the leaves and “hulls” off the strawberries), put them in a single layer on a baking sheet, and put them in the freezer. Once frozen, store them in a zippered bag. Enjoy them frozen on a hot day. Try mixing the frozen berries into yogurt (plain or flavored) for a cool and healthy treat.

### References and Resources

Illustrations are listed online as free for reuse without attribution from pixabay.com

- The internet has a lot of information on the benefits of hobbies. One source is Pressman et al. (2009). Association of enjoyable leisure activities with psychological and physical well-being. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 71(7), 725-732.
- For more on “serious leisure,” see <https://www.seriousleisure.net/concepts.html>
- Check out this article from the University of Berkeley about tips for a healthier barbecue: <https://www.berkeleywellness.com/healthy-eating/food/slideshow/13-tips-healthier-barbecue>
- See the summer solstice sunset at Stonehenge here: <https://earthsky.org/earth/gallery-the-summer-solstice-as-seen-from-stonehenge>
- For a video on Chaco Canyon, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEoPXMstOxE>
- To find out what foods are fresh (and often least expensive) in each season, check out the list at: <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide>
- Interested in nutrition? The website [www.nutritionfacts.org](http://www.nutritionfacts.org) is a non-commercial, science-based public service. Their page on antioxidants and berries is: <https://nutritionfacts.org/topics/berries/>
- More on antioxidants: <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/antioxidants/introduction.htm#science>
- To freeze berries: <https://www.bhg.com/recipes/how-to/cooking-basics/how-to-choose-berries/>

