

Neural Diversity: A Clinician's Guide to Hobbies & Cognitive Maintenance

The 54% data, hobby categories, a weekly balance tracker, and the neural diversity framework.

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THE EVIDENCE

54 %

Hobby engagement reduced the risk of persistently low cognitive function trajectory by 54% (OR=0.46)
The influence of hobby engagement on cognitive function among older adults. Neurology International. 2025. PMC12736032.

93,000

Study participants showing hobby engagement associated with better health, more happiness, fewer depression symptoms, and higher life satisfaction.
Having a hobby tied to happiness and well-being. Harvard Health. 2024.

HOBBY CATEGORIES

■ Creative

- Drawing, painting, photography
- Writing, journaling
- Music (playing or composing)
- Woodworking, furniture restoration
- Cooking a new cuisine, baking

■ Physical

- Running, cycling, swimming
- Martial arts, yoga
- Hiking, rock climbing
- Weightlifting, CrossFit
- Pickleball, tennis

■ Intellectual:

Reading fiction (not clinical) · Chess, strategy games · Learning a new language · Astronomy, history, philosophy
· Coding for fun

■ Social:

Board game groups · Book clubs · Community theater · Volunteering outside healthcare · Faith community involvement

WEEKLY NEURAL DIVERSITY TRACKER

You need something in your life that has nothing to do with dying. Track it.

WEEK	HOBBY / ACTIVITY	TIME SPENT	HOW IT FELT
Week 1	_____	_____	_____
Week 2	_____	_____	_____
Week 3	_____	_____	_____
Week 4	_____	_____	_____
Week 5	_____	_____	_____
Week 6	_____	_____	_____
Week 7	_____	_____	_____
Week 8	_____	_____	_____

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