



WHAT DID YOU GET UP TO AT THE WEEKEND?

Standard Monday at the office: come in, make a tea, chat about the weekend. What did we get up to? Somehow, bulk watching Game of Thrones with a bottle of wine doesn't seem quite the achievement it felt at the time. Our surprising lack of hobbies may be more significant than we thought. Quick, break out 90 Days to Perfect Arabic and that cushion you saved to re-cover.

Doing an activity you're passionate about could improve your health. In a test group observed by Maastricht University those with hobbies had fewer sick days. [Cary Cooper](#), professor of organisational psychology and health at Lancaster University agrees: "Finding activities we enjoy is critical to our wellbeing. In the UK we have the longest working hours in Europe, so often we want to go home and flake out in front of the TV. At the weekend we should try and do something that keeps us cognitively active, for instance learning a language or getting involved in politics, or being physically active, like playing tennis. It gives your mind something to focus on besides your day-to-day stresses."

In our highly connected world we can often put pressure on ourselves even when we're supposed to be having fun. A 2009 study in the Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology says women are more likely to be prone to perfectionist tendencies. Our one life drawing class was a prime example – seeing our friend quickly sketch an excellent likeness put our barely human-shaped scribble to shame. Professor Cooper explains why: "In our achievement-orientated society people often feel 'I'm not good enough' when they start an activity, but they need to realise hobbies are about more than the activity itself. You wouldn't expect to run a marathon without training."

Rachel Davies, founder of [Rachel's Kitchen](#), leads cookery classes and understands that people often lack confidence. "I've seen people get frustrated when they can't pick things up immediately and some find the adult learning situation odd to start with. The guidance and safe learning process of a class does help them through and often turns nervousness into excitement. Making something you can eat at the end gives people a real sense of achievement."

Meeting new people and having something in common is also one of the major benefits to taking up an organised class according to Professor Cooper: "Relationships at work can often be tactical but at classes or in sports teams you meet new people who you can be yourself with. It's really important for building a true support network, one you can rely on when you need to."

Davies agrees that the human aspect is important: "The main reason I started my classes was for the people. I love cooking and worked in restaurants but it's really rewarding to see



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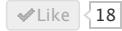
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people take what they've learnt and turn it into a passion."

So we're going back to drawing pencils and the blob-humans. But this time it won't be about being perfect.

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