

WORDS ABOUT WELLNESS

Today's "Words About Wellness" is brought to you by:

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Stress Relief Through Puzzles

In 1767, John Spilsbury was the initial inventor of what we have come to know as the jigsaw puzzle. It was initially utilized to help learn geography and piece together maps but has transformed from not only being used for educational purposes, but also for entertainment for all ages. Puzzles have transformed over the years from wood puzzle pieces to die-cut cardboard puzzle pieces, which has made it more economical and allowed for mass production of puzzles.

Puzzles may have many benefits for all users, including dexterity, memory, problem solving, happiness and cooperation. During this challenging COVID-19 pandemic, you may be looking for additional or novel ways to relieve stress and anxiety. Puzzles of all sorts--jigsaw, crossword and Sudoku puzzles to name a few are all excellent ways to hone our attention in on one task. Literature suggests that it "can put the mind into a meditation-like state" and has a positive effect on our mood.

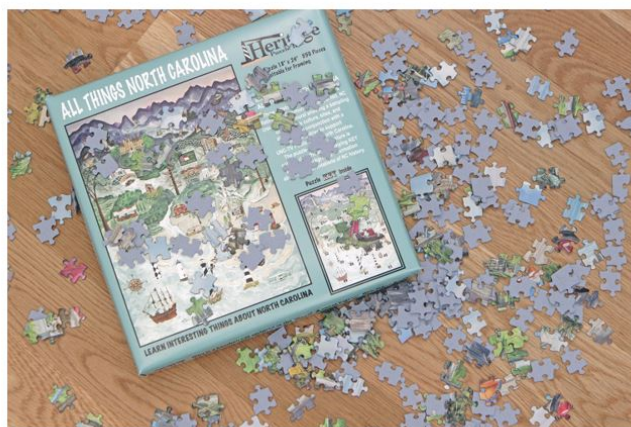
Why do puzzles help your mood?

The act of completing puzzle, no matter what kind, creates a positive reinforcement cycle of finding

solutions. The brain loves finding solutions and patterns. For example with jigsaw puzzles, you are selecting a puzzle piece, looking for where it might fit, and finding its proper place. Tackling it piece by piece and strategizing to complete it, creates a sense of accomplishment. Evidence suggests that finding puzzle pieces or doing any type of puzzles are small wins that can help release dopamine in your brain resulting in a positive mood (Bergland, 2011).



Other literature suggests that in our multi-tasking current way of life, it helps to focus your mind on a single task. Being able to hone in on one task that you can solve at least a piece or two can help to reduce stress and anxiety and provide a source of relaxation. Many universities have set up puzzle stations within their libraries or resource centers to provide a source of stress relief for students studying for midterms and finals.



With people practicing social and physical distancing during this time, we can set up these same resources within our homes as a great way to stay connected with your family and rejuvenate.

Resources:

"Five Benefits of Jigsaw Puzzles." *MasterPieces, Inc., Having Fun One Piece at a Time*. 16 July 2019, www.masterpiecesinc.com/in-the-news/five-benefits-of-jigsaw-puzzles/.

Clarke, K. "Play the Stress Away." *Canadian Association Of Law Libraries Conference*. 17 May 2016, 1-33, <https://prism.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/handle/1880/111221/CALL%20Stress%20Less.pdf?sequence=1>

Bergland, C. "The Neuroscience of Perseverance: Dopamine Reinforces the Habit of Perseverance." *Psychology Today*. 26 Dec. 2011, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/theathletes-way/201112/the-neuroscience-perseverance>.