

Share Your Well-Being Boosting Passion

Well-Being Week in Law 2024 | Friday, May 10

How legal professionals invest their non-work time and energy can have a big impact on their mental health and work engagement. But many feel so busy and tired from work, that their non-work activities dwindle. The aim of this program is to provide inspiration, guidance, and resources to try out new, well-being-boosting activities outside work.

Session leaders will:

- Share activities they do to disconnect from work, revitalize their energy, stave off burnout, and feed their soul.
- Explain how they fit their passion into their busy lives.
- Provide tips and resources for trying out the activity.

Linking Nonwork Passions to Well-Being

Nearly all the *Share Your Passion* sessions involve some form of creativity. Creativity supports mental health and fuller, happier lives and can help stressed-out lawyers relax, recover from stress, and rejuvenate.

Everyday Creativity

The positive effects of creativity aren't tied to specific activities or to any special talent. It's the [creative process](#) that appears to be most important for our well-being and positive psychological development (Silvia et al., 2014). For example, a [2018 study](#) found that people who identified themselves as "Makers" tended to be happier and more likely to have indicators of psychological health, such as less rumination and excessive self-focus (Collier & Wayment, 2018). This study involved everyday creativity like domestic activities (e.g., baking, cooking, gardening, scrapbooking) and arts and crafts (photography, quilting, drawing, painting, sewing, jewelry-making, knitting, crochet, ceramics, computer graphics).

Pathways Between Creativity & Well-Being

Creativity connects to well-being through multiple pathways:

- Sparks positive emotions.
- Generates the mental state of flow.
- Connects us with other people and aids a sense of belonging.
- Enables self-expression.
- Promotes a sense of meaning.
- Helps us relax and detach from work.
- Provides positive challenge & experiences of mastery and accomplishment.
- Builds mindfulness and self-awareness.

SESSION #5: KNITTING

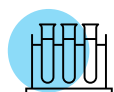


DESCRIPTION

60 Minutes: Friday, May 10, 1:00 pm ET-2:00 pm ET

Speakers: Cheryl Solomon, Jessie Spressart

Cheryl and Jessie are passionate about knitting and inspiring others to learn how. They'll explain how and why they incorporate knitting into their own busy lives—including its meditative and creative qualities and easy portability. They'll provide resources and videos to help you get started learning to knit, developing new knitting skills, and refreshing your skills when needed. They will guide you toward beginner projects, give tips and tools for getting started, identify common mistakes, and discuss how easy it is to fit knitting into your life. A demonstration will be included using the [Beginner Coaster Pattern](#), so bring your yarn and knitting needles.



SCIENCE

Link Between Knitting & Well-Being

Studies assessing crafts and well-being often have focused on textile handcrafts like knitting, crocheting, beadwork, lacemaking, needlework, paper making, book-crafts, rug making, sewing, quilting, spinning, and weaving. All hold potential for boosting well-being and experienced a resurgence during the [COVID pandemic](#) (Smith, 2020).

Knitting in particular has been the focus of [multiple studies](#) (Kaimal et al., 2016) finding that it helps people feel [less stressed](#), [less anxiety](#), and [calmer and happier](#) (Clave-Brule et al., 2009; Utsche, 2007; Riley et al., 2013). For people experiencing mental health disorders, knitting communities can facilitate better [mental health](#) by enabling them to unwind, contributing to a positive knitting identity embedded in a social community of other knitters, and providing structure in their lives (Nordstrand et al., 2024). Repetitive activities like knitting may be best for relaxation. Activities like planning a new textile project or quilting typically require more engagement, leading to a greater [sense of rejuvenation](#) (Collier & von Károlyi, 2014).



TIPS & RESOURCES

- Start with a small project, such as the [Beginner Coaster pattern](#) (it's a free pattern with video links in the pattern). The pattern tells you the size of needle and thickness of yarn to get.
- [Knitting FAQs](#): This page explains a lot of the basics around needle sizes and yarn, how to choose materials, and how to make sure that you end up with a finished object that you are happy with.
- [Beginner Knitting Videos](#): This is a series of videos teaching beginner knitting skills that are short and arranged in roughly the order you will need them as you learn to knit.

- [Ravelry](#): This is a free website with thousands of knitting patterns, discussion boards, and a place to keep track of your projects and view others' for inspiration.



SPEAKER BIOS

CHERYL SOLOMON

Cheryl Solomon has practiced in BigLaw and as the General Counsel of both a multinational company and a mission-driven company. She currently advises companies as their outside general counsel. She began knitting in college and has always used it as a tool to manage stress (and be creative); she's passionate about encouraging more people to start knitting. After leaving her last full-time role, she started Row House (rowhouseyarn.com) to create an online platform for ethically sourced yarn and to provide people with tools to help them learn to knit. Row House has many free resources to aid beginners, as well as yarn, kits, needles, notions and more. Row House's knitting skills videos on YouTube have been viewed more than 330k times.

JESSIE SPRESSART

Jessie Spressart is the Founder and Managing Director of Optia Consulting. She brings more than fifteen years of experience in talent management and law firm professional development to her coaching and consulting practice. Jessie founded Optia with the mission to help law firms improve well-being through solutions designed to capitalize on the strengths of each generation in the workforce today. Optia provides consulting and training on management and leadership skills, mental health, and well-being in the workplace.

To practice what she preaches, Jessie engages in various hobbies to support her well-being. Knitting is a favorite: She taught herself to knit while in grad school to help give her mind a break from her studies. You might also catch her deep in reading, quilting, or baking for fun.

References

- Clave-Brule, M., Mazloun, A., Park, R. J., Harbottle, E. J., & Birmingham, C. L. (2009). Managing anxiety in eating disorders with knitting. *Eating and Weight Disorders-Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity*, 14, e1-e5.
- Collier, A. F., & Von Károlyi, C. (2014). Rejuvenation in the "making": Lingering mood repair in textile handcrafters. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 8(4), 475.
- Collier, A. F., & Wayment, H. A. (2018). Psychological benefits of the "maker" or do-it-yourself movement in young adults: A pathway towards subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 19, 1217-1239.
- Kaimal, G., Gonzaga, A. M., & Schwachter, V. (2017). Crafting, health and wellbeing: findings from the survey of public participation in the arts and considerations for art therapists. *Arts & Health*, 9(1), 81-90.
- Nordstrand, J., Birgitta Gunnarsson, A., & Häggblom-Kronlöf, G. (2024). Promoting health through yarncraft: Experiences of an online knitting group living with mental illness. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 1-12.

Riley, J., Corkhill, B., & Morris, C. (2013). The benefits of knitting for personal and social wellbeing in adulthood: Findings from an international survey. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 76(2), 50-57.

Silvia, P. J., Beaty, R. E., Nusbaum, E. C., Eddington, K. M., Levin-Aspenson, H., & Kwapil, T. R. (2014). Everyday creativity in daily life: An experience-sampling study of “little c” creativity. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 8(2), 183.

Smith, R. I. (2020). *Getting through a pandemic with old fashioned crafts*. The Atlantic.

Utsch, H. (2007). *Knitting and stress reduction*. Antioch University New England.

MATERIALS NOTE

These materials were prepared for Well-Being Week in Law 2024, an event of the Institution for Well-Being in Law. The science blurbs were prepared by Dr. Anne M. Brafford, JD, MAPP, PhD. The session leaders contributed to the Tips & Resources for their sessions. Others are welcome to use these materials with proper attribution.



MAY 6-10, 2024