Abstract

The pace of life in modern society can be hectic and unrelenting. Many people are constantly faced with the complex demands of living a fast-paced lifestyle that characterizes modern life in Canada; whether that be negotiating traffic lights, being bombarded by advertising or staying connected to others via cell phones. It is therefore not surprising that people often feel emotionally and physically depleted and seek out ways to relax and rejuvenate mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

There are many forms of recreational and therapeutic activities that people engage in during their day to day lives in order to relax and recuperate from the grind of modern life. Some activities are physical in nature, such as yoga, baseball, jogging or hiking in the woods. Some are more creative, such as painting, writing or singing. While other therapeutic hobbies are closer to being chores, like baking or gardening. There are a myriad of activities that people find relaxing; however, an activity that one person finds relaxing another person may find onerous or frustrating.

Woodcarving is a creative and often cultural activity that is sought by many as a means of recreation and relaxation. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of research that has explored the potentially therapeutic benefits of working with crafts, especially woodcarving. The goal of this study was to use qualitative phenomenological methods to ascertain the common therapeutic benefits participants derived from engaging in woodcarving and to ascertain the shared benefits of the woodcarving experience.

The findings of this research established that there were six common therapeutic benefits of woodcarving that were shared by all the participants to some degree. For some participants woodcarving can be a very spiritual and meditative practice, for others it is simply a way to relax and create something aesthetically pleasing with their own two hands. To our knowledge, this study is the first to highlight the therapeutic and life-enhancing benefits of woodcarving. It is my hope that this paper may generate interest in this field of study so that in the future more research may be focused upon the therapeutic benefits of woodcarving and other crafts.