

Same old weekend plans



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moments

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Published February 25, 2021

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It's easy to fall into a routine with weekends – especially after a real tough week of work and home life. And there's nothing wrong with going for brunch with friends, a few hours of shopping or a family gathering.

But sometimes it's great to shake things up a bit. In fact, according to Harvard Medical School, trying something new can help protect against cognitive decline and depression, while promoting new connections between brain cells.

So this weekend, why not seek out a different activity – something you've always wanted to try, or even something completely new. You never know – you might find a real vocation. And at the very least you'll be stimulating your mind and body and getting a great new story to tell your friends.

Here are nine great ideas to whet your appetite.

1. Try meditation

We could all do with moments of calm in our lives, and the health benefits of meditation are well-documented, from better sleep to lower levels of anxiety. You don't even need to set aside huge chunks of time – as little as ten minutes of meditation a day can make a huge difference. Apps like Headspace, Calm and Aura will all help you to get started.



2. Get hands on with pottery

When you need to relax, but you still love to achieve, look for a pottery class nearby and try your hand at pot-throwing. The act of throwing a pot (once you've mastered it) is deeply meditative – and you get to make pots and bowls for your home too. Be warned though – it's addictive. Could this be a new side hustle?

3. Take a (new) walk

If all the steps you take in a day are from the house to the car, and from car to the office or stores, it's time to get your stride on. It's the simplest, cheapest form of exercise, but the benefits are indisputable, from muscle building and cardiac health to increased creativity and improved mental health. Want to boost those benefits even further? Stimulate your senses by trying a new route. It doesn't matter whether you live in a city or deep in the countryside – just make the most of any walking spots near you.

4. Write a poem

Don't think poetry is for you? Think again. It's a form that has been used therapeutically for centuries – indeed the Yale medical school reading list continues to include poetry. Abandon any thoughts about what other people would think of your words, or worrying about rhymes and verses – this poetry is just for you. You can use it as a way to deal with your own issues, as an act of appreciation for a beautiful day, or as a way of visualising a positive future. Next stop: open mic?

5. Cook up a new cuisine

Whether you're a keen cook or you're more used to pinging a ready meal in the microwave, cooking with new ingredients can be daunting. But when you lay out that feast for family and friends, rich with Indian spices evoking a Goan beach, or buttery French food that's fit for a Parisian, that sense of achievement will make you forget any fear you had. And why not finish off with one of our **recipes using DOVE® Chocolate for dessert?**

6. Book a concert or a play

You don't need to wait for your favorite artist to visit the nearest arena. Most towns have thriving music and theatre scenes with all sorts of different genres. So look up what's happening near you and try something you'd never have considered normally – whether that's a classical concert, a local band or a classic play at your local playhouse.



7. Carve a spoon

If you've ever wanted to try woodworking, check out your local area for spoon carving classes. The easiest way to try woodworking, it's a deeply satisfying technique involving whittling, carving and refining a blank piece of wood into a kitchen spoon or spatula that you can keep and use forever. And there's a whole community of spoon carvers around the world to connect with on Instagram.

8. Spend a night at a museum

Loved the classic film? There are museums and zoos all over America that offer night-time visits and sleepovers to give you a whole new view of our heritage and animals. From the original – New York's American Museum of Natural History – to San Diego's Roar & Snore Safari, kids will love it, but it's just as exciting for grown-ups!

9. Join a local group

There's a group out there for pretty much every interest, from art to coding, and there is nothing like physically hanging out – something we've come to appreciate more than ever. If meeting new people makes you anxious, you know the saying: 'Fake it till you make it!' Just plaster on a smile, remember they're as nervous as you are, and think about how great you'll feel when you've got past this obstacle!

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