

# The Emotional Benefits of Cooking

<https://www.southernliving.com/healthy-living/mind-body/cooking-therapy-mental-health>

By

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Whether you're drowning your sorrows in a pint of [Blue Bell ice cream](#) or eating your feelings at the Waffle House, there's no doubt that eating is therapeutic. As anyone who has found themselves beating eggs, whipping cream, and pounding out biscuit dough can attest, cooking can be pretty therapeutic, as well.

While any Southern grandma would probably scoff at the need for a study on the idea of cooking as therapy—because, of course, retreating to the kitchen to whip up fried chicken, collards, and cornbread is good for the soul—[one study](#) found that baking classes boosted confidence and increased concentration. Another study revealed that a little creativity and creation in the kitchen can make people happier. That study, published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, suggests that people who frequently take on small, creative projects like baking or cooking report feeling more relaxed and happier in their everyday lives.<sup>1</sup> The researchers followed 658 people for about two weeks and found that small, everyday projects in the kitchen made the group feel more enthusiastic about their pursuits the next day, food website [Munchies reports](#).

## Cooking Improves Emotional Wellbeing

Being creative for a little while each day made people feel like they were "flourishing"—a psychological term that describes the feeling of personal growth. "There is growing recognition in psychology research that creativity is associated with emotional functioning," Tamlin Conner, a psychologist with the University of Otago in New Zealand and lead author on the study [told The Telegraph](#).

Cooking can be so good for your emotional wellbeing that, as [The Wall Street Journal reports](#), therapists are now recommending cooking classes as a way to treat depression and anxiety, as well as [eating disorders, ADHD and addiction](#). According to the counselors who spoke to the *WSJ*, cooking can help "soothe stress, build self-esteem and curb negative thinking by focusing the mind on following a recipe."

[...]

## Cooking to Connect to Others

While cooking for yourself can offer plenty of soothing and potentially delicious perks, when you cook for other people there's an added benefit. Namely, cooking for others connects you to your community and helps you feel like you're providing a needed and useful service. While any form of altruism can make people feel happy and connected to others, cooking for others helps people fulfill needs and that is important. Culinary arts therapist Michal AviShai [told Huffington Post](#) that "giving to others fills us in so many ways. And even more so when it's cooking because feeding fulfills a survival need, and so our feeling of fulfillment comes not only from the good of the act of giving, but also the fact that we have 'helped' in some very primal way."

Through the combination of self-care, creative output, mindfulness, and a sense of control, cooking for yourself or others can be a huge boon to your mental wellbeing—although your grandmother probably already knew that.