- Hobbies

Pursue a new passion

TRYING SOMETHING NEW LATER IN LIFE CAN SEEM SCARY, BUT THE BENEFITS ARE ALMOST ENDLESS, SAYS

Western Daily Press · 8 Sep 2025 · 16 · SPIRITED: The cast of Netflix hit The Thursday Murder Club CAMILLA FOSTER

CURRENTLY winning over movie lovers, The Thursday Murder Club film currently on Netflix, beautifully illustrates how discovering a new passion can bring renewed energy and purpose to life.



Based on Richard Osman's international bestseller book of the same name, it follows four spirited retirees – Elizabeth (Helen Mirren), Ron (Pierce Brosnan), Ibrahim (Sir Ben Kingsley), and Joyce (Celia Imrie) – who spend their retirement solving cold case murders for fun.

Their thrilling new hobby highlights how transformative – physically and mentally – it can be to embrace something new in your golden years.

Here, Dr Anna Saunders, consultant clinical psychologist and director of clinical operations at the Chelsea Psychology Clinic, shares some of the key benefits of pursuing a new passion later in life.

Helps you create a new identity

Starting a new hobby in retirement can help you create a new sense of identity by adding new facets to your personality beyond your former professional roles.

"Often our identity is very tied up in our job, so it's important to think about how we step away from that in retirement and find new things to fill in and develop structure in our lives," says Dr Saunders. "I've read The Thursday Club Murder books and that is exactly what happens. They get a new life and a new sense of who they are with their passion."

Helps build structure and routine

"Work gives us structure, you have to wake up at a certain time and be in the office at a set time. So, in retirement having a new passion can bring that structure back into your day," says Dr Saunders.

"There's something about having an external structure and routine that gives you a sense of purpose. It means you have to engage in activities of daily living such as brushing your teeth, eating, washing. If there is no routine, all of these things can fall away.

"Having that structure allows you to feel competent and able, which helps you feel good about yourself."

Sparks excitement

"Doing something and being what we would call 'activated', rather than sitting at home doing nothing, is really important because when you do something you have the opportunity to experience an emotion," says Dr Saunders.

“That could be a positive emotion, especially if it’s a new passion, and you’re doing something you enjoy and it leads you to feel good, as opposed to sitting at home which wouldn’t.”

Keeps your brain active

Learning new skills can help boost your mind. “When you are learning something new, you are developing new pathways in your brain,” explains Dr Saunders. “The cells are firing together in a new pattern, which is the learning, and that’s what develops the neuroplasticity. “When you do something new for the first time, you’re making that

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pathway in your brain for the first time, and it can feel quite hard. But the more you do it, the easier it gets because that pathway becomes developed. So, as we get older, the more we build those new pathways, the more we keep all the parts of our brain active.”

Fosters connection

“We are inherently social animals, so it is great to have something that motivates you to get out of the house to make social connections,” says Dr Saunders. “It’s also important to do activities that aren’t just with people who are retired, but people of a variety of ages, so you can have some new input and stimulus.”

Increases your confidence and self-esteem

“Discovering a new passion or a hobby can have a huge impact on people’s self-esteem and confidence – it can light up a whole new aspect of their life,” recognises Dr Saunders. “There’s something really interesting about doing something that you hadn’t expected to, and about how it leaves you feeling about yourself.

“Seeing yourself as a person who has tried something new and it has worked, and you’ve liked it, says ‘I’m an OK person’. It says ‘I can learn and do something new’ and that can really boosts someone’s self-esteem.”

Can boost mood and improve mental health

“One of the things that happens when people are depressed is they

often stop doing things that once gave them pleasure or a sense of mastery,” reflects Dr Saunders. “So, one of the big parts of therapy for depression is behaviourally activating people and getting them to do things that make them feel good.”

Similarly, learning that you can cope with something and go into a new situation can help reduce feelings of anxiety.

“Anxiety often stops us from doing things, so it is often about, how do I support myself to take those small steps to be able to do it and find out that I’m going to be OK,” says Dr Saunders. “There’s all sorts of little things you can do to make sure that you can step over that line, like taking a friend or becoming familiar with a space. The more you step out towards the thing that makes you anxious, the less anxious you’re going to be.”

Can help you navigate and cope with grief

A new passion can significantly help with grief by providing a sense of purpose, an outlet for emotional expression, a healthy distraction from the pain, and a way to feel like you are moving forward.

“Grief often feels like, what’s the point in life when the other person is gone? However, hobbies and passions can bring meaning back to life and can give someone a reason to get up [in the morning],” says Dr Saunders. “Engaging in these activities and passions can really help people tolerate the process of grief passing through.

“If you do an activity with other older people who have also experienced grief, that can be particularly helpful as it creates a feeling of ‘we’re going to keep doing it together’.”