

# KNITTING AND STITCHING TEACH KEY LIFE SKILLS

Teachers are beginning to use knitting and stitching in the classroom. There have been reports of cross stitching being used to successfully change violent and disruptive behaviour in special schools. One head teacher said **“The effect is instantaneous, overwhelming calm”**.



Some teachers in mainstream schools and colleges are using knitting to enable them to teach pupils with ADHD and kinesthetic learners (those who need to fiddle or tap while they take in information). Knitting appears to occupy the brain sufficiently to lessen or stop hyperactive or disruptive behaviour whilst at the same time enabling the pupil to take in information and to learn. One teacher told us **“It opens up a window for learning”**.

Others are using knitting groups to open up channels of communication with difficult students. These teachers report members of groups, who may have been initially aggressive towards each other, beginning to communicate and talk. They report improvements in performance in school work and social integration since taking up knitting. In addition, self esteem is raised in those who may have previously lived with constant criticism.

One story tells of an English Literature teacher in the 1960s who encouraged his whole class to knit while he read them stories and plays. The story teller told of how she remembered what he had read and was able to recall the information later. She also remembers his lessons as the most enjoyable she had.

Many others have also told us that knitting has improved their

memory. It's known that multi-sensorial events are remembered more readily, so perhaps this is an explanation. Others believe that being a bilateral exercise, knitting could be enhancing the connectivity between the right and left cerebral hemispheres, which may lead to an improvement in memory.

The bilateral movements required in knitting could also be an explanation as to why those with dyslexia and dyspraxia have found improvement in their conditions since taking up knitting. In addition they have found that knitting also helps them to organise their thought processes and have found this skill to be transferrable to other areas of life.

Knitting and stitching teach key life skills, such as **PATIENCE**, **PERSEVERENCE** and **COMMUNICATION**. Many stories also tell of how knitting in particular teaches that mistakes can be undone, that it's not a catastrophic event to make a mistake and that goals can be reached despite a few detours along the way. Indeed, the end product may be considerably 'richer' if a bit of exploration is done on the way! They also raise self esteem, so along with the calming properties they can be extremely useful tools in the classroom.

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