

# “Quilting healed and gave me back my



“When I’m quilting, I am transported to my happy place,” says Carol

**Heart-shattering losses left Carol Ann Ferrari-Rogers overwhelmed by stress and anxiety...until she rediscovered a childhood hobby that restored a deep sense of calm and peace to her life**

Carol Ann Ferrari-Rogers had never felt such despair. A painful divorce had already taken a toll on her heart and spirit when, just a few years later, her daughter Michelle was in a car accident and passed away just before her 19th birthday. Devastated, Carol became overwhelmed by crippling anxiety and stress. She suffered panic attacks, loss of appetite and felt so weak she feared she could collapse at any moment. All the stress also compromised her immune system, causing her to catch every cold and passing virus.

Her doctor offered to write her a prescription for her anxiety; but, never one to take medication, Carol declined.

“Okay, but you need to do something to calm yourself,” her doctor said. Carol promised she’d think about it, and

on her way home, it hit her: *I know exactly what I need—my sewing machine!*

## A crafty solution

Carol had started sewing when she was 8 years old and fell in love with the craft. Not only was she good at it, but she found sewing to be a calming outlet growing up in a busy family of six.

Her hobby went on to help her cope during a bad marriage. Carol would retreat to her sewing room where she was able to catch her breath and relax as she created bright, colorful quilts.

Once divorced, Carol continued to quilt whenever she could find time while raising her two daughters. Recalling how happy and at peace she always felt sitting at her sewing machine, Carol decided it was where she needed to be.

Carol soon made quilting a regular part of her daily routine. And just as in the past,

**“Hand-based hobbies release dopamine in the brain, which heightens happiness”**

—Alton Barron, M.D.



Today, Carol owns her own quilt company and runs two quilting groups on Facebook

# my grief life!”

she found as she focused on her projects, she would stop dwelling on her emotional pain. Her mind and spirit calmed. Soon, her panic attacks eased. She regained her appetite—for food and for life.

Intrigued by the results, Carol did some reading about the benefits of crafting and learned that handwork, such as quilting, increases *dopamine* in the brain, which leads to feelings of joy and optimism.

With each quilt she made, Carol’s mood brightened, her stress eased and she became more hopeful. When she returned for a checkup several months later, her doctor was pleasantly surprised by her progress and agreed that no medication was necessary.

Carol continued quilting, and today the Coral Springs, Florida, 64-year-old has her own quilt company (CozinessQuilts.com) and runs two quilting groups on Facebook. She’s also the president of her local quilt guild, all giving her a deep sense of satisfaction and purpose. And while she will always miss Michelle greatly, Carol feels stronger than ever, both emotionally and physically, enabling her to once again truly enjoy life with her family.

“While quilting, I am in my meditative, happy place,” Carol says. “I’m able to see my life more clearly—to focus on all that is good.”

—Elisabeth Dunham



## The mood-boosting power of handcrafts

“When you use your hands meaningfully—by sewing, knitting or sculpting—you stimulate 60% of the neurons in the largest part of your brain, which releases *dopamine*, a hormone that helps you feel instantly calm and happy,” says Alton Barron, M.D., co-author of *The Creativity Cure*. Plus, engaging these neurons lowers levels of *cortisol* to tamp down anxiety.

In fact, British researchers collected data from 3,500 knitters, including how often they knitted and any health conditions they had. Their findings: 81% of those with depression diagnoses reported that knitting boosted their happiness—significantly higher results than antidepressants!

While creative projects like needlepoint and crocheting actively engage your hands for a boost in joy, Dr. Barron says other meaningful tasks—like tending to a garden or cooking—have the same effect. “Find any hand-based hobby that brings you pleasure. It can be something that you enjoyed as a child or reminds you of a loved one.”

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