

The Big Impact of a Small Hobby

(Excerpts from John Donohue's article from The New York Times on May 1, 2020)

When I would tell people that drawing saved my life, I thought I was being hyperbolic. Then the coronavirus hit. Drawing had helped me survive another very dark period of my life, earlier. Could it now be helping me to stay healthy?

I know it is keeping me sane, as it did five years ago when I was out of work. I had been an editor at The New Yorker for more than two decades. The internet changed my job slowly and then quickly, and then I was out. But there I was, tears running down my cheeks in a darkened office on West End Avenue.

I liked to cook and was comfortable spending time in the kitchen, so I started drawing my dish rack every night. I now have more than a thousand renditions of my dish rack. Sometimes, especially during the lockdown, depending on how stressful things are, I draw it two or three times a day. These days, if I'm irritable at home and getting on my wife's nerves — which is still a constant risk, for my recent personal growth has been matched by my children running smack into their teenage years — she'll say to me, "Do you want to go do some drawing?" or "Have you done your dish rack yet, dear?"

I knew that drawing could change my mood. When I started doing it on a regular basis, I discovered it could change my life. It may now be keeping me out of the hospital, or more.

Sharing about his hobbies by Si-Qian from China:

"Unlike the person in your story, I didn't lose my job to the fast developing internet technology. I'm good at the tech part. But I lost my own business and company to the pandemic. Like the person in the story, my hobbies have helped me and calmed me down. I have a parrot and he sings. I play my saxophone to him. It's a trade. Haha! Music is so wonderful. I don't need to know German to appreciate Mozart's serenade. I take my saxophone outdoors to play too!"