



What have juggling, hula hooping and knitting got in common?

Are you the kind of person who allows plenty of time to get to appointments and departure points like the train station, bus stop and airport?

Do you ever find your self waiting ... waiting to pick-up someone else or to be collected, sitting around watching others play sport, waiting for others to 'do their thing', waiting for that important return phone call, or sitting in waiting rooms?

Do you travel early to avoid peak hour traffic but find yourself dangling with spare time until the office or venue opens up?

In this spare time, even if it is just a handful of minutes, what do you do? How do you fill in the downtime?

For some people, a handful of minutes is time enough to cruise the pantry or fridge, grab a cup of tea or coffee and biscuit, or rummage through the grocery shopping bags to find a nibble.

Although a handful of minutes may not be enough to do something too productive, it is enough time to do damage to your dietary intake.

If anything to do with food is your hobby - reading and creating recipes, sampling foods and wines, experiencing new restaurants and coffee shops, eating to fill in down time - now is right time to find something else as well.

If you've ever jested the 'sight of food makes me fat' you may be onto something important. For the person who is already overweight, simply looking at pictures of food (such as in recipes, advertising, and food picture-sharing internet sites) stimulates that person's desire to seek food and consume more. Get that same person looking at pictures of scenery and the desire to seek food is not stimulated.

Waiting time and downtime do not equal dining or refreshment time. Distract yourself away from food and drinks in your waiting time and downtime. Aim to fill your down time with things that have nothing to do with food:

1. Pick up a portable hobby or new interest
2. Squeeze in some fitness, flexibility and fun

Fill your time with something other than food and drinks.

That brings me to hula hooping, juggling and knitting.

I found myself doing a lot of waiting recently and spotted the opportunity to find some new interests that I could pick up and put down quickly.

A few minutes is not enough to read or write an important article yet it is time enough to juggle. Learner juggling requires 100% focus (at least that's what I have found) and a load of bending, squatting and chasing to pick up dropped balls. Juggle balls fit in my handbag and travel everywhere with me. I made my own squishy balls from cotton pouches filled with dry rice; you could too.

Sometimes the brain and body need a break from the usual routine. Rather than take a break from the ordinary to put the kettle on, how about a few minutes of hooping? Not so portable as juggling balls but heaps of fun with fitness and flexibility thrown in. Practice in the safety of your garden and then start hooping at the school pick-up zone or while watching others play sport; you may set off a craze or find others begging to have a turn with your hoop. How long since you have hooped?

When waiting space or venue doesn't allow for juggling or hooping, look for something portable and purposeful. I pull out a knitting project. The beauty of a handcraft is you have something pleasing to show off at the end.

Notice that none of these three interests are very compatible with eating or drinking?

None of them are passive interests either.

They all require input and effort from me to make them happen. This is in contrast to more passive interests like watching TV or reading, both of which are often and easily associated with eating and drinking.

What fresh interests will you use in waiting time? Play a harmonica or ukulele? Take up origami or skip rope? Whittle, sketch, crochet? Play cards? Strengthen your balance? I'd love to find out what your interests are.

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