

All of us probably need a little therapy sometimes. I can't imagine a person so satisfied and confident in belief or view that a little help is never required. How that help comes about, though, can take many forms.

I don't have a therapist. I don't think I need one. But, I do engage in activities that are definitely therapeutic. And, most of them involve what we might generalize as "hand work."

This doesn't mean "finger work", though, involving keyboards or electronic devices. It does mean true use of the hands to make things, repair stuff, invent new items, devise physical solutions, and much more.

Woodworking, knitting, painting, carving, metalworking, weaving—these are just a few of the ways people work with their hands to reach a tangible goal, and, along the way, it seems to me that all of these activities also are good for us in other ways.

The spinning wheel works like this for me. Even watching someone else spin wool into yarn is calming, almost mesmerizing. And, when the wool is in my own hands, and my foot is rhythmically working the treadle, I can feel the peace washing over me in an observable way. Spinning wool requires attention, care, and a retreat from hurrying. The whirr of the wheel quiets the mind, and drawing the fluffy wool into even, fine yarn gives the spinner an immediate reward. I don't need to make something of this wool, knitting or weaving the yarn into a rug, a sweater, or a pair of mittens to give me the satisfaction of a job well done. Just watching the strip of woolly white fleece change before my eyes into a bobbin of good yarn is immediate gratification. And later, when I do make something of that yarn, the satisfaction of doing a good job is on two levels. While I watch my progress with knitting needles or loom shuttle, I also have that memory of the peaceful movement of the spinning wheel as I turned fleece into usable yarn.