



WHY DO WE FISH?

Getting to the **HEART** of Fishing

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photos by the author

“We fish to remember, and we fish to forget. We fish when we’re happy, and when we’re sad. We fish to bond with friends and family, or to be alone. Whatever our motivation, no matter where we are on the success spectrum, fishing makes our lives better in ways we never could have imagined.” Robert U. Montgomery, Why We Fish: Reel Wisdom From Real Fishermen (2013).

February marks a reminder to wear red and raise awareness that heart disease is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States. As you begin your new fishing season in 2024, examine your own heart health and what keeps you coming back to the water year after year.

Last year, I had a heart scare. Not only did it force me to focus on my own heart health, but it also prompted me to start a blog called “Fly Pulse” to get to the heart of my own passion for fishing. I prompted the question “*Why do you fish?*” to my fishing friends. *Do any of these reasons ring true to your angling hobby and habits?*

Fishing provides time to unplug. Sometimes, the best medicine and therapy for your heart is to get away from work, distractions, technology and the busyness of life. Explore the boundless wonders that Pennsylvania’s watersheds have to offer with a therapeutic escape. Whether you enjoy time alone or with others, take efforts to disengage with the stressors of everyday life, reflect, and just be around nature and water.

Fishing allows for exercise. If you’re like most anglers, you retreat from the beaten path and explore settings away from others. This act takes us walking, hiking, biking, climbing and trail blazing through the woods of the Commonwealth and beyond. Whether you’re taking a solo trip or with others, give your heart the gift of physical activity on your next fishing adventure.

Fishing takes you to beautiful places. Before the internet, I researched the robust *Pennsylvania Atlas & Gazetteer* and Charles R. Meck’s familiar *Pennsylvania Trout Streams and Their Hatches* to find spots in Pennsylvania that were tough to find on my own. My research took me Brown Trout fishing near Poe Paddy State Park, native Brook Trout fly fishing on Kinzua tributaries, Smallmouth Bass fishing on the



Fishing takes you to new places.



Fishing allows us to spend time with family and friends.

Sinnemahoning Creek, bass fishing on Raystown Lake and many more amazing locales. Visiting old fishing spots and locating and exploring new water is invigorating.

Fishing offers challenges. Spending time pursuing your quarry sometimes takes problem solving, flexibility and a willingness to change under varying conditions. Every day brings a new opportunity to the water. Whether it's weather-related, high/low flows, finicky fish or pressured waters, fishing calls on your skills to adjust your fishing tackle and gear to match. Figuring nature out is a reward all on its own.

Fishing enables quality time with friends and family and creates memories. When we're fishing with others, the shared experience is what it's all about for me.

Whether casting on a lake during an evening sunset, experiencing a spontaneous hatch, seeing fish boiling at the surface, getting skunked together or the catch of a lifetime, we'll smile and remember these times.

I hope 2024 offers you time to reflect, time to reconnect and time to do what your heart desires. The next time your family or friends wonder why you're heading to the stream, let them know fishing is good for the heart. ☺



Sometimes, the best heart therapy is taking a walk in the woods to your favorite fishing spot.

February is American Heart Month! ❤️

Heart Health Tips:

- Balance calories with physical activity.
- Reach for a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Choose whole grains.
- Include healthy protein sources, mostly plants and seafood.
- Use liquid non-tropical plant oils.
- Choose minimally processed foods.
- Subtract added sugars.
- Cut down on salt.
- Limit alcohol.
- Keep this in mind wherever you eat.

Adapted from the American Heart Association

American Heart Association:



heart.org