

Play

Self-Care Topic for March, 2020

Use It Or Lose It

In our hectic, modern lives, many of us focus so heavily on work and family commitments that we never seem to have time for simple fun. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, we lost touch with playing. If we reserve leisure time, we're more likely to zone out in front of the TV or computer than engage in fun, rejuvenating play like we did as children. But play is not just essential for kids; it can be an important source of relaxation and stimulation for adults as well.

Benefits

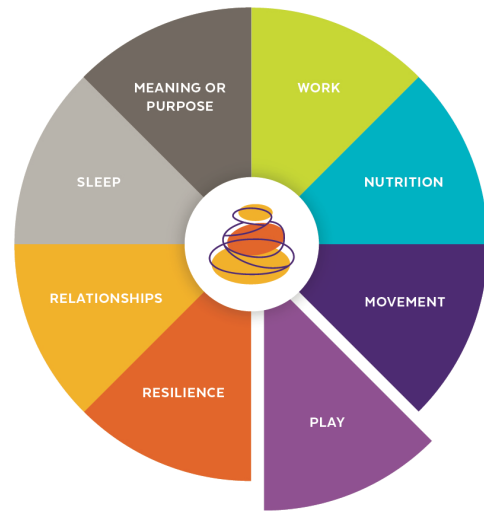
Playing with your romantic partner, friends, co-workers, pets, and children is a sure (and fun) way to fuel your imagination, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional well-being. Adult play is a time to forget about work and commitments, and to be social in an unstructured, creative way.

Build Play into Breaks

Don't postpone play to only after work or the weekend. Find creative ways to lift your spirits at work. A walk outside? A football to toss? Coloring pages in the break room?

Think Outside – No Box Needed!

Give the phone, TV, and tablet a break and take your play outside. Join Coach Cami on retreat to experience freedom and vitality in natural and beautiful settings. Scan to connect to upcoming retreat options.



Play Helps

- **Relieve Stress.** *Play is fun and can trigger the release of endorphins*
- **Improve Brain Function.** *Board games, puzzles, and other fun activities that challenge the brain can help prevent memory problems and improve brain function*
- **Stimulate the mind and boost creativity.** *Evidence on positive emotions supports the “upspiral” benefits that come from play time!*
- **Improve relationships and connections with others.** *Sharing meaningful time together, laughing and having fun, fosters empathy, compassion, trust, and intimacy with others. Play doesn't have to be competition. It can be a state of mind...let it lighten your mood, break the ice with strangers, and make new friends.*



We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.

-George Bernard Shaw

Take your play history...

The primary purpose of the play history is to get us back in touch with the joy that we have all experienced at some point in our lives. Find that joy from the past and you are halfway to learning how to create it again in your present life.

This is not a quiz or test. The play history is a journey through your past and present. One of its goals is to create a general mental picture of your play attitudes, and color them with emotion-laden scenes. Your current feelings about people, things, and activities are rooted in the emotions you previously experienced and forgot in the natural amnesia of early life.

Start this exercise by spending some time thinking about what you did as a child that really got you excited, that really gave you joy. Was it reading comic books? Building a tree house? Making stuff with Mom or Dad? Did you like doing this with other people, or in solitary? Or both? Were the things that really fueled you more mental or physical? Try to remember the feeling that you had and recapture it. As part of this remembrance, if visual images spring to your mind's eye, amplify them, let your associations to them flow. To what or whom do you attach your unalloyed feelings.

This may be difficult for some. But stick with it...understanding your unique play temperament is valuable to bringing vitality to this important dimension of well-being. This reflection can help you identify what you could do in your current life that might let you re-create that playful feeling. Reject judgmental or skeptical thoughts ...keeping an eye toward play and look for ways to accentuate joy.

When have you felt free to do and be what you choose? Is that a part of your life now? If not, why not? What do you think stands in the way of your achieving time of personal freedom?

Are you now able to feel that what engages you most fully is almost effortless? If not, can you recall when you were able to experience such times? Describe. Imagine settings that allow that sort of engagement.

Search your memory for those times in your life when you have been at your very best. (These are usually authentic play times and give clues as to where to go for current play experiences.)

What have been impediments to play in your life? How and why did some kinds of play disappear from your repertoire?

Have you discovered ways of reinitiating lost play that work for you now in your life?

Are you able to imagine and feel that the things you most desire and enjoy are really the things that you ought to have? Why so, or why not?

How free are you now to play with your partner or your family? Or do you treat them as an extension of a dutiful responsibility?

Taken from **Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul** by Stuart Brown, M.D.



This exploration doesn't require immediate practicality or reality. Free yourself from judgement or expectation and simply adventure with your imagination to reveal possible growth potential in this important dimension of well-being.