

Learn to play every day

Reconnecting with childhood memories lights up the brain, supporting your immune system and mental health

SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

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AS AN early childhood educator I know how important play is to a young child.

Play begins early, when mother and baby lock eyes and baby smiles, triggering spontaneous reciprocal smiling, cooing and joyful exchanges.

Playful interactions in childhood support children's sense of belonging, their learning and development.

Many things constitute play.

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Play is daydreaming, comedy, art, books, games, flirting, designing, silly walks and goofing around.

Play connects us to humour, games, fantasy, silliness, laughter, and other people.

Think back to the most clear, joyful playful image you have – perhaps with favourite toys, a holiday, celebration, or family activity and connect it with your life now.

Enrich your life by paying attention to play.



PHOTO: THINK STOCK

Play is important throughout our life and into adulthood.

Stuart Brown, founder and president of the National Institute for Play www.nifplay.org, reminds us that play grows our talents and character across our lifetime.

Play is something that is deeply embedded in our natures and it contributes to our mood, to our sense of optimism and to our hope for the future.

Play is really important for children, but play is not just something kids need to do.

Brown outlines that when our lives are embedded in playfulness, we are also connected to empathy,

cooperation, sharing and altruism.

Brown's research highlights that the suppression of play also suppresses compassion and the ability to connect with people.

He says 'the opposite of play isn't work, but depression'.

Brown has interviewed thousands of people about their relationships with play and has found a strong correlation between playful activity and success.

His book *Play* describes the impact play has in people's lives.

Play offers serious benefits for us and for others.

Play brings joy.

Play is vital for relationships.

Play helps us to have fun, to be spontaneous and creative.

Play supports our ability to problem solve, be creative thinkers, be curious and explore ideas and possibilities.

It also supports our immune system and mental health.

Neuroscience is showing that play is extremely important to be learning and creating.

When we play our brain lights up.

Give yourself permission to play every day.

Be playful in your interactions with others.

Daydream.