

"What do most Nobel Laureates, innovative entrepreneurs, artists and performers, well-adjusted children, happy couples and families, and the most successfully adapted mammals have in common? They play enthusiastically throughout their lives" (Stuart Brown, National Institute of Play, www.nifplay.org). "Play is simultaneously a source of relaxation and stimulation for the brain and body. A sure (and fun) way to develop your imagination, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and mental health is to play with your romantic partner, officemates, children, grandchildren, and friends" (play and health\Play, Creativity, and Learning Why Play Matters for Kids and Adults.mht). "Play is often described as a time when we feel most alive, yet we often take it for granted and may completely forget about it. But play isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. Play is as important to our physical and mental health as getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising. Play teaches us how to manage and transform our "negative" emotions and experiences. It supercharges learning, helps us relieve stress, and connects us to others and the world around us. Play can also make work more productive and pleasurable."

Some reasons why we play: to learn, create, pass time, for fun and joy, to feel challenged and to calm ourselves. The lifelong benefits of play, as written about by Gina Kemp, M.A., Melinda Smith, M.A., Bernie DeKoven, and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., August 2013): are that play

- § connects us to others,
- § fosters creativity, flexibility, and learning, (the "components of play include curiosity, discovery, novelty, risk-taking, trial and error, pretense, games, social etiquette, and other increasingly complex adaptive activities"),
- § is an antidote to loneliness, isolation, anxiety, and depression,
- § teaches us perseverance,
- § makes us happy,
- § "is one of the most effective tools for keeping relationships fresh and exciting",
- § helps us develop and improve our social skills,
- § teaches us how to cooperate with others, and
- § can heal emotional wounds.

U.S. News and World Report (March 9, 2009) listed a top ten list of ways play contributes to mental and physical health ([10 Reasons Play Can Make You Healthy, Happy, and More Productive](#)): Play has been scientifically proved to be good for the brain. Play teaches us to use our imaginations. Rough-and-tumble play teaches us how to cooperate and play fair. Play helps us learn to be friends. Sometimes the best way to learn a complicated subject is to play with it. Kids do better academically when they have recess. Physical play delays mental decline in old age. A little play can help solve big problems. Playing at work is not just useful; it's essential. When we get play right, all areas of our lives go better.

"Despite the power of play, somewhere between childhood and adulthood, many of us stop playing. We exchange play for work and responsibilities. When we do have some leisure time, we're more likely to zone out in front of the TV or computer than to engage in creative, brain-stimulating play. By giving ourselves permission to play with the joyful abandon of childhood, we can continue to reap its benefits throughout life." (play and health\Play, Creativity, and Learning Why Play Matters for Kids and Adults.mht).

Sources to consider:

www.helpguide.org/life/creative_play_fun_games.htm

www.ted.com/.../stuart_brown_says_play_is_more_than

[Play Science: The Patterns of Play](#) – Learn about the different ways human beings play, the roles these different patterns of play serve, and how we benefit from them. (National Institute for Play)

[The Value of Play I: The Definition of Play Provides Clues to Its Purposes](#) – Psychologist Peter Gray discusses the purpose and benefits of play. (Psychology Today)

[The Value of Play II: How Play Promotes Reasoning in Children and Adults](#) – Learn how playfulness can improve reasoning and problem-solving skills. (Psychology Today)

[Leisure Play Is Important for Human Collaboration](#) – Article describes how play teaches human beings to cooperate and curbs tendencies towards aggression and dominance. (PsychCentral)

National Institute for Play (www.nifplay.org)