

Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

Play is very significant for the wellbeing of both children and adults. Psychiatrist Dr Stuart Brown claims that play is much more than just fun, suggesting nothing lights up the frontal lobe of the brain quite like play; he says the opposite of play is not work, it's depression.

He suggests that we've lost something from our culture because we now encourage the importance of play just for children – and young children at that. Dr Brown says that play is far more than preparation for the future; it has a biological place in our lives just like sleeping and dreaming.

② Watch animals play

If you watch animals, you will see that even in rough and tumble play, they follow certain patterns and have rules of the game. Although from a distance, animals may look like they are fighting, on closer examination it's often possible to see the hallmarks of play. For example, their claws are retracted, their fur is flat, they have soft eyes and gentle movements.

As an adult, it can be easy to begin something with the intention of being in the mode of play, and then this become overly competitive or aggressive. This undermines the benefits.

① Prioritise play

Changing your perception of play is important. If play spontaneously occurs through curiosity and impulsivity then try to resist the grown-up urge to return to your task list, clean the house or make a phone call. Children will often lead the way with play, so be open to going with the flow. If you don't have small children around you to play alongside, experiment with things you liked to play with when you were a child. Explore backwards to the clearest image of what filled you with joy. Try to make connections with how you live your life now and if necessary make changes to incorporate more opportunity for play.

③ Play before purpose

Dr Brown says we need to infuse our lives with play. If we are putting the purpose before the play, then we are probably not playing. Rather than scheduling time for play so that you can tick it off your to-do list, work out what you love and explore how it can become a big part of your life.

Sometimes, if we've been living a very purposeful and purpose driven life, we might have to sit with feelings of boredom or frustration before we find things to do 'just for fun'. If very difficult feelings arise, it can be good to talk these through with someone - a friend or a professional.

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