

Feeling Good Again

Creativity, Laughter & Play

We can all benefit from an effort to not take life so seriously. Did you know that we can actually make an intellectual decision to laugh, play, create or be silly? When we decide this we participate in an attitude shift, one with a lighter approach to life in general.

Often play doesn't come naturally. In the beginning we may be a little stiff. Some of us may not even really understand what play is. Play is not an activity, game, or contest. Play is a posture toward the self, others, and life activities. This posture enhances all of what we do and generally creates joy, serenity, peace, and healthy excitement. Play is often a way of maintaining a child-like perception of the world, colors, movement, and life's possibilities. It is an adult awareness of newness, nuances, idiosyncrasies, and complexities that create a never-ending fascination and humor with life. So why not decide to play?

We all can learn to play or increase our forms of play through creativity, activity and expression. Play is originally the work of children. But guess what? We do not lose this need for play even as adults. In play we embrace the newness, imagination, and creativity of childhood integrated with the ability, experience, and wisdom of adulthood. Play does not lie so much in what we do as in our attitude with which we do it. Some people can participate in sports and skills of varying kinds but have no sense of play in their participation. They can be too serious about the skills and too competitive.

Play happens from the spirit and includes the body. Play coming from the spirit would be sensitive to the spirit of others. Therefore, if healthy, we do not hurt other people with our play and humor. If our teasing and humor are at the cost of someone else's feelings, it is no longer play. Play, in general, is affirming in its nature. It must affirm our spirituality and our relationship to one another. Play must be safe. The essence of safe play is that it will not cause harm to the self, the environment, or to others. Like a healthy relationship to the self, a playful spirit is built from within. Working toward building a playful spirit will contribute greatly to a sense of wellbeing.

Did you also know that everyone is an artist? We all possess creative potential and it is only by telling ourselves that we don't that we limit ourselves. I invite you to bring your inner artist 'out of the box' for a bit of airing! Art is not only drawing. Art is many forms of expression. You define it and create it! Imagine what you would like to learn and start learning it. Just start creating! A good book to help you is "The Artist's Way" by Julia Cameron. Cameron's book is full of inspiring quotes, affirmations and fun ideas facilitating that extra nudge into your creativity! It may also be helpful to find a friend or group/class to participate with. Fun and creativity may actually be a catalyst in foraging new friendships. Having people to create and play with will only further contribute to your refreshed outlook on life and an increase in how good you feel.

The recovery aspects of creativity and play are interesting. The truth is, we are all children at some level and the earth is a large playground - a blank canvas. People in other countries spend focused

hours working for food and shelter but generally have the rest of time for play, relaxation, and learning. There is room for the playful and creative spirit and it is expected. Americans work too hard. We even work at playing and creating.

A playful spirit is part of a sense of humor and comes from a light heart. A light heart comes from not taking oneself too seriously. Play is letting go. Play helps us to learn to let go. Music is part of play and is the universal language. We can listen to music, we can feel music, and we can move to music. Music is part of body balance. Music is also part of recreation and play. It offers a time of calm and relaxation. So if you do participate in music, *play* your instrument. Don't be self-conscious and take it too seriously. If you do not play music play and I-pod or DVD player and enjoy it!

Laugh. Don't forget to laugh! Giggle. Do you know that laughter and giggling is the glue that bonds people together? It could bond the very people you are participating with now. It bonds families and friendships. It also has healing power. Humor is a posture toward life that makes possible our playful attitude. Humor shortcuts shame, heals the body, lifts the spirit, facilitates change, dissolves grief, diffuses hopelessness and destroys secrecy. A sense of humor is not the ability to tell jokes or be funny, but rather the ability to laugh at jokes and notice what is funny which can be most things!

So make sure you build in laughter, play and time to be creative. If done with the right attitude, this time can be something you enjoy and look forward to. It will depend on how seriously you're taking your self-care time. So go ahead - laugh, play and be creative! It will definitely have you feeling good!

Group Exercises:

1. Everyone lay on the floor. Put your head on top of another group member's belly. Repeat until all heads are resting on a belly. Whoever has something funny to say, say it. See what happens.
2. Stand in a circle. The first person will start to laugh. See if the rest of you will catch it. If the laughter starts to die down, someone increase their laughter or make a funny face. Enjoy the fun!