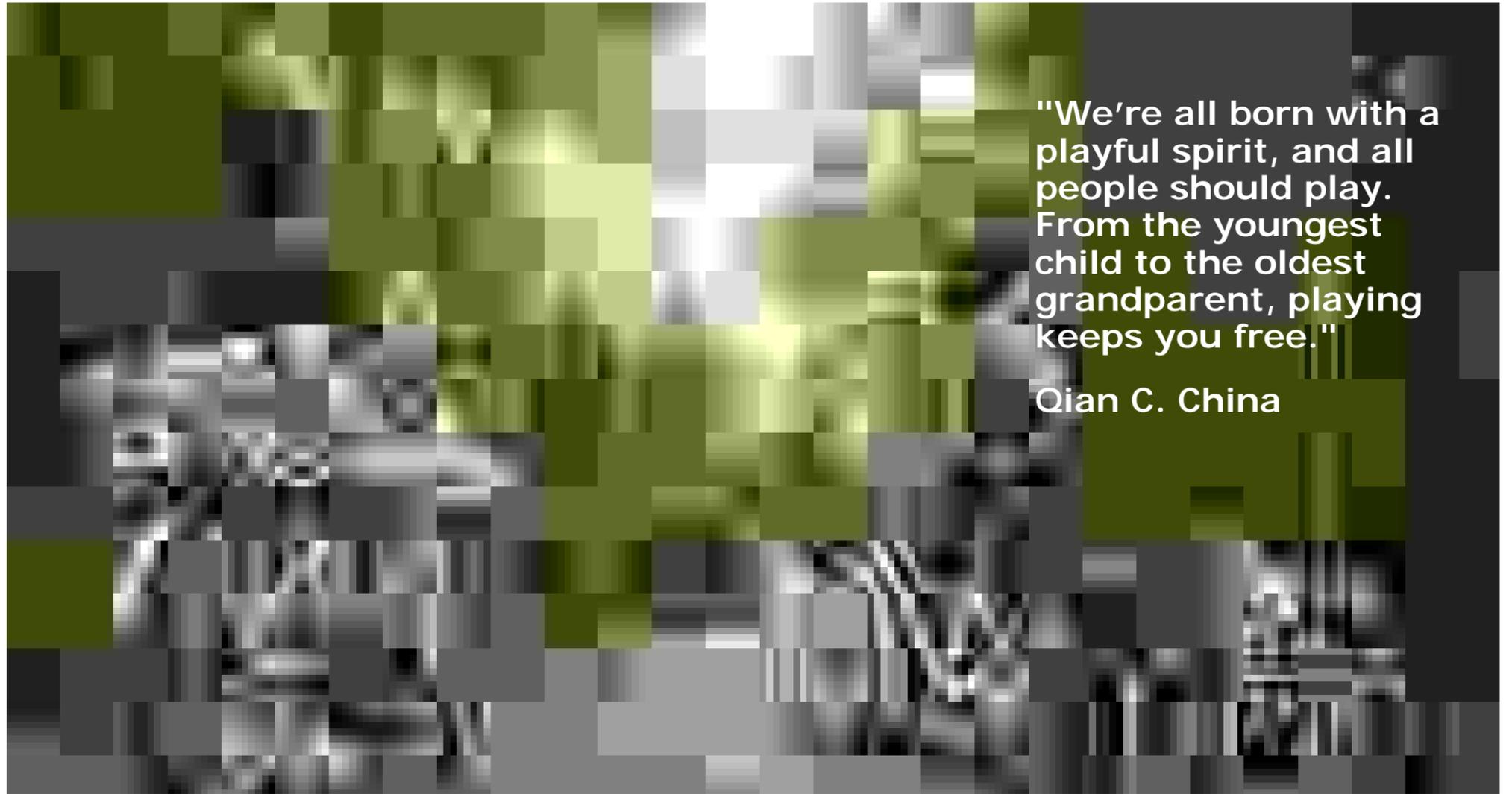


PLAY REPORT 2017

A spark of play everyday



LET'S PLAY



We believe that play is critical for a better everyday life at home

It makes us more creative. It connects us and helps us unwind from modern-day pressures. It fuels our development. Play makes the world bigger for children and grown-ups.

A PLAYFUL APPROACH TO LIFE SPARKS INFINITE possibilities. Play is so much more than toys and GAMES. IT'S A STATE OF MIND. IT IS A WAY OF FINDING fun and joy in everything we do, regardless of where we are or who we're with.

We already know that play is learning for life. Almost as soon as we are born we begin to play, and we continue to play for the rest of our lives. Play shapes who we are and makes us stronger, more creative and more active.

That's why at IKEA, play is pretty serious business. So serious, in fact, that we have

conducted some of the world's largest research studies on the Role of Play. The IKEA Play Report 2017, is our third Play report. We've spent 8 months connecting, on a regular basis, with more than 300 people in Germany, the US and China to explore how, and why, we play.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE'RE LOOKING AT PLAY FROM both a child and adult perspective to understand what motivates and hinders play, as well as how people across cultures think we will be playing in the future.

Our play research has shown us that part of our job in creating a better everyday life must be to spark even more playfulness into the home. And trust us, we take that responsibility pretty seriously!

Let's get exploring!

▲ "Play should be at the heart of everything we do! If you don't take life too seriously, great things happen! You stay healthy, relaxed and fun. People gravitate towards you and you have a positive INFLUENCE ON THE world around you."

Carol P. US

■ "We understand the world through playing. It's only through play that we're able to experiment, break the boundaries of what's normal AND CHANGE AND evolve ourselves."

Niklas A. Germany

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SUMMARY

The Play Report 2017 is our third Play report to date. The scope of our research has been broader than before, exploring the importance of play for adults as well as children. We've employed a qualitative approach – surveying 300+ individuals, ages 2-90 across China, Germany and the US – to explore the emotional aspects of playing in different contexts, the key drivers and inhibitors of play and emerging trends affecting the future of play.

Why do we play?

PEOPLE ACROSS CULTURES HAVE IDENTIFIED 5 KEY motivators that explain why we play. We call these Play Needs and while multiple Play NEEDS CAN BE SATISFIED THROUGH ONE ACTIVITY, EACH HAS A CLEAR EMOTIONAL BENEFIT AT ITS CORE.

Play to Repair:

Play helps people to rest, rebalance and ultimately repair physically and mentally.

Play to Connect:

Play enhances bonds and helps people to get closer to friends, family and loved ones.

Play to Escape:

Play offers moments of freedom away from everyday obligations, rules and routines.

Play to Explore:

Play serves as a tool to learn and develop outside the usual frame of reference.

Play to Express:

Play provides a platform to be creative, giving people permission to express a different version of themselves.

What is play?

By asking our online community to identify when an activity stops being playful and using the process of Via Negativa (explaining what something is by understanding what it's not) we have concluded that play is typically lighthearted (not serious), active (not passive), satisfying (not frustrating) and spontaneous (not obligated). This led us to a people-generated DEFINITION OF PLAY: 'Play, or being playful, is engaging in a lighthearted activity that is satisfying and spontaneous'.

How do we play together?

SOME OF THE MOST BENEFICIAL PLAY IS WHEN children and adults play together. By playing together, children and adults strengthen intergenerational relationships and learn from each other. Whilst every culture and family has their own play rituals and traditions, we HAVE IDENTIFIED SIX COMMON FORMS OF ADULT-CHILD INTERPLAY PLAY, INCLUDING:

Free-style Play:

Undirected play. It is free, spontaneous and unstructured. The child simply follows their own play urges, and the adult follows.

Build-It Play:

Constructive play. Children and adults play together using objects and toys to create something new, thinking creatively about how best to build it.

Mirror-Me Play:

Imitative play. Children mirror adult behaviour in a playful way by helping them out with adult tasks and turning these into a game.

What are the enablers and barriers to play?

Enablers to play include particularly playful spaces, environments and people, often including children. People also employ play hacks into their routines, to make chores and DIFFICULT CHALLENGES MORE PLAYFUL. THE BIGGEST barriers to play are work, stress and day-to-day responsibilities.

How is play evolving?

People believe that, although the 5 Play NEEDS IDENTIFIED WILL REMAIN, HOW, WHERE and WHEN people play will change considerably in the next 10 years. We've uncovered 7 play trends that could enlighten the future of play and how we, as a society, can play more TOGETHER. THESE INCLUDE IDEAS LIKE:

Return to Retro:

As technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, people will continue to rebel by turning to and celebrating nostalgic games from their childhood.

Multi-Sensory Play:

Play will become even more immersive and consuming. In the future, people will play IN ARTIFICIAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT ARE DESIGNED to engage all of their senses.

Blurring of Boundaries:

As life becomes faster and time becomes even more of a rare commodity, play will creep into all aspects of people's lives. From the workplace to the gym, people will look to play in traditionally non-playful spaces.

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

By using qualitative research methodologies, we strove to create a people-generated Play report, with a clear focus on understanding the human realities and emotions that fuel how and why people play every day, across all aspects of their lives.

For this year's Play report, we wanted to go broader than before, exploring the importance of play for adults as well as children.

In addition to desk research and literature reviews we used a new mix of qualitative research methodologies. We stretched ourselves to meet people wherever they are in life to gain a deep understanding of the emotional aspects of playing.

This study was conducted in Germany, the US and China to have representation from 3 continents. A diverse cross-section of people participated, from as young as 2 and as old as 90. New parents contributed, along with single city workers and retired grandparents, among many others. In total, we engaged with 352 people over the course of 8 months.

352
people
—
Over
8
months

We conducted 18 Play Visits, evenly spread over Germany, the US and China. During these visits, we met people while they did SOMETHING THAT THEY DEFINE AS PLAY. For example, they took us to the gym, to their workplace, we went bowling and did tai chi.

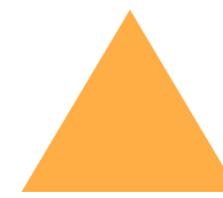
We interviewed 8 professionals with different perspectives on play, including a futurologist, CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST, PLAYFUL FITNESS instructor, psychotherapist, immersive theatre practitioner, magician, teacher, and tea ceremony instructor.

We brought 15 consumers together for a one-day workshop with our product developers, innovation leaders and managers to explore the key elements of play.

We hosted chats in online communities in:



Germany



USA



China

We spoke to 293 people in an online community for over 8 months, where people were asked to explore their own views, behaviours and experiences related to 'play' through a combination of tasks, including creative artwork, video diaries and group brainstorm.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our aim in this study was to build upon the insights we gained through our previous play research, by adding an exploration of the importance of play for adults to the study of children's play.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS WE SOUGHT TO ANSWER WERE:

WHAT IS PLAY?

WHY DO WE PLAY?

HOW DO WE PLAY?

HOW DO WE PLAY
ACROSS CULTURES?

WHAT ARE THE ENABLERS
AND BARRIERS TO PLAY?

HOW WILL WE PLAY
IN THE FUTURE?

WHAT IS PLAY?

"So in play we have the most serious, yet the most trivial activity through which our children learn. AND WE FIND IT HARD TO DEFINE. IT SLIPS AWAY from us as we try to grasp it."

ROY LANGMAID,
PSYCHOLOGIST



Play is a topic studied and explored by both academics and companies. Together with our online community, we set out to create a people-GENERATED DEFINITION OF PLAY.

UNDERSTANDING PLAY

A KEY CHALLENGE TO DEFINING PLAY IS THAT – FOR MANY PEOPLE – PLAY IS DICTATED BY AND DRIVEN by freedom of spirit, regardless of the form it takes. Ultimately, play is multi-faceted. It means different things to different people.

Therefore, instead of asking people what play is, we asked them when it ceases to exist or is translated into something entirely different.

THEY TOLD US:

Play rarely exists when an activity becomes too serious.

Play rarely exists when an activity becomes too passive.

Play rarely exists when an activity becomes too frustrating.

Play rarely exists when an activity becomes too obligated.

When looking at the implications of each statement, the process of Via Negativa (a way of describing something by saying what it's not) helps to provide some structure around play. The boundaries highlight that play can start and stop within the same activity.

Play is dictated by a state of mind, rather than a type of activity. This state of mind stretches across countries and cultures.

Play is rarely serious, then play is typically lighthearted.

Once an activity starts to become more serious it starts to lose its playfulness and becomes something else, for example, sport. Play, therefore, needs to be fun and conducted with a smile.

■ "THE SAME ACTIVITY CAN START AS PLAY, BUT QUICKLY TURN INTO SOMETHING COMPLETELY different! Take 5-side football, for EXAMPLE. A KICK-ABOUT WITH FRIENDS CAN BE PLAYFUL BUT ONCE WE START GETTING INTO TEAMS AND KEEPING SCORE, IT'S A LOT MORE SERIOUS. Play has turned into sport."
RIGOBERT T. GERMANY

—
"The minute we start to evaluate it, MEASURE IT, TRAIN FOR IT, IT BECOMES MORE serious."
ROY LANGMAID, PSYCHOLOGIST

—
"PLAY CAN BECOME SERIOUS AT MOMENTS, but that's normally when play translates INTO FEEDBACK. FOR EXAMPLE, THINK ABOUT WHEN A CHILD PLAYS AND ACCIDENTALLY TOUCHES something hot, it's not going to be fun and THEY'RE GOING TO GET INSTANT FEEDBACK. THEY may then start to play again."
JASPER GREEN,
TEACHER

Play rarely exists when an activity becomes too:

**SERIOUS
PASSIVE
FRUSTRATING
OBLIGATED**





WE CONCLUDED

The four boundaries help to provide some structure around play, and help to build a people-GENERATED DEFINITION OF PLAY.

"Play, or being playful, is engaging in a light-hearted activity that is satisfying and spontaneous."

If play is rarely passive, then play is typically active:

Play only exists when the participants are engaging in the activity. This could take the shape of mental engagement (e.g., imagination) as well as tangible and physical engagement through the body. Ultimately, playing requires some level of physical or emotional focus.

▲ "I FIND WATCHING 'LORD OF THE Rings' playful! My imagination goes into overdrive. However, WHEN I'M TIRED AND FLICKING THROUGH CHANNELS, IT'S THE FURTHEST thing from play; I'm bored and UN-ENGAGED, SIMPLY FILLING TIME."
ADAN T. US

—
"Play IS ALWAYS ACTIVE. YOU HAVE TO BE ENGAGED. ONCE YOU ARE ENGAGED YOU ARE CONNECTING TO YOUR SENSES AND CONNECTING TO your emotions."
YESIM KUNTER,
PLAY FUTUROLOGIST

—
"Play IS ACTIVE BUT THAT DOESN'T mean it has to be behaviourally AND PHYSICALLY ACTIVE. YOU COULD be sitting and playing in your head, for example."
JASPER GREEN, TEACHER

If play is rarely frustrating, then play is typically satisfying:

Play is rarely associated with a feeling of anger or annoyance. In contrast, at least some level of satisfaction and enjoyment should be derived during, and potentially after, a playful activity.

● "Come to think of it, when you're playing a game with your kids and you or they start to get frustrated for whatever reason, the play immediately stops right THERE AND THEN. YOU CAN NEVER BE playing while annoyed or angry at the same time."
YING W. CHINA

If play is rarely obligated, then play is typically spontaneous:

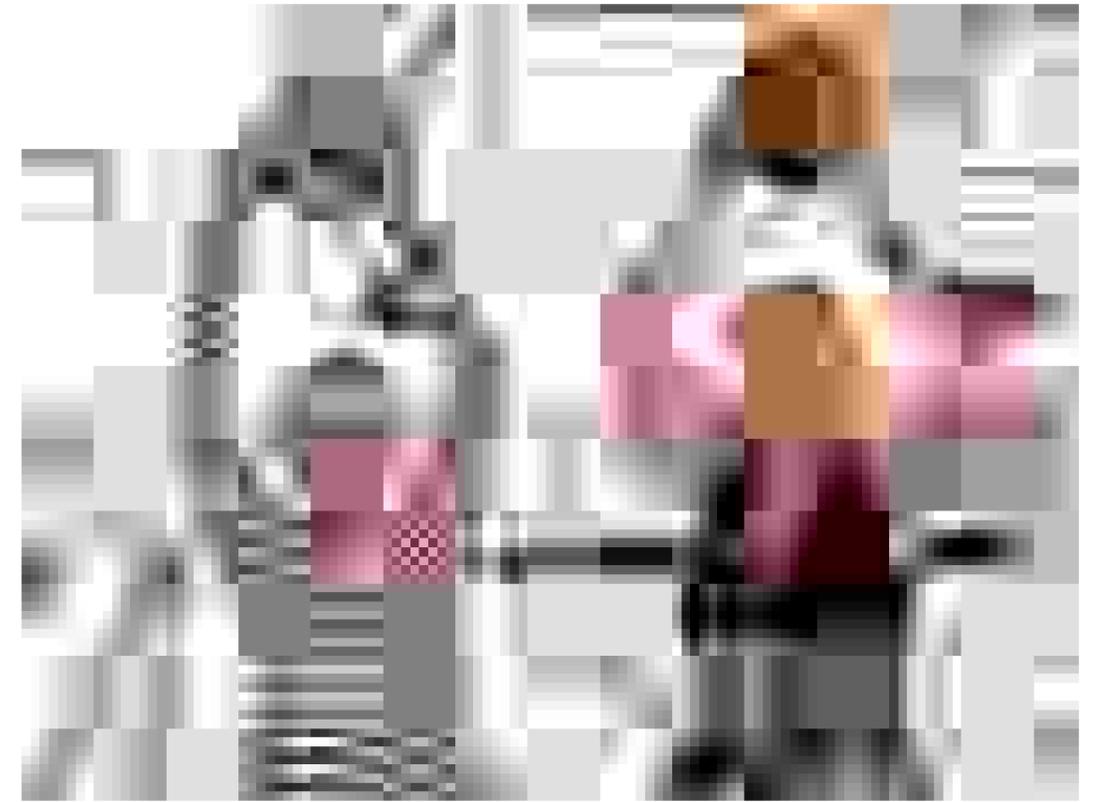
Once a playful activity becomes goal-orientated and/or part of meeting an obligation, it ceases to be playful. In contrast, play enables a break from routine, rules and structure.

▲ "Timesheets are a good example; people are now to attempting to make timesheets MORE FUN, TO IMPROVE COMPLETION THAT SPECIFIC TIME; THEY HAVE TO BE levels. However, while a different APPROACH MAY MAKE TIMESHEETS more engaging, I wouldn't CONSIDER IT PLAYING BECAUSE THERE IS A CLEAR END GOAL."
KARLA F. US

—
"The rules of play are in the minds of the players. They might be written down somewhere in a formal game, but in most games, they're not. They're made up as they go along."
ROY LANGMAID,
PSYCHOLOGIST

—
"Play does have rules but I think they're made in the moment at THAT SPECIFIC TIME; THEY HAVE TO BE spontaneous."
JASPER GREEN, TEACHER

WHY DO WE PLAY?



Lots of theories exist related to why we play. Some track the roots of human play to the importance of promoting harmony and balance within hunter-gatherer societies; others focus on highlighting the role of play in providing stimulus for both motor and cognitive development, especially for children.

Roy Langmaid, a leading psychologist, argues that Object Relations Theory offers a clear, rationale for how and why humans play, from both a child and adult perspective. In simple terms, Object Relations Theory attempts to explain how people interact with the world through a mixture of unconscious needs and lived experiences. The theory argues that people's interactions with the world around them are driven by a combination of four innate desires.

PLAY

DESIRE FOR DISCOVERY, LEISURE, RECREATION

COMFORT

DESIRE FOR RETREAT AND RECOVERY

POWER

DESIRE FOR STATUS

PROCREATION

DESIRE FOR LEGACY OF IDEAS AND CREATIVITY

"THE RELATIONSHIPS WE HAVE WITH OBJECTS ARE THE SO OF WHO WE ARE. WE ALL START AS CHILDREN, SEEKING CO and then we start to develop our relational world through play. As we grow towards being an adult, we BEGIN TO DEVELOP POWER AND CREATIVITY AS MORE AD expressions, but that doesn't mean we stop playing!"

ROY LANGMAID, PSYCHOLOGIST

Desires for play and comfort help children to make sense of the world as they grow and develop. We seek comfort as babies, and as soon as we're able, we start to play.

Later, as people achieve maturity, the acquisition of power and creativity becomes more important, and we seek to access them. We do so by modelling and associating ourselves with people, places and things that confer power or creativity.

Interestingly, Roy explains that as our search for power and creativity begins in adulthood, people don't just stop playing and seeking comfort. Instead, people start to use play in a more progressive way. For example, play can actually provide a springboard to help people achieve their desires for power and creativity.

This theory is supported by the people we've met during our Play Visits and in our online community. People across cultures primarily talk about how play helps them to seek comfort. In these instances, play is used as a tool to repair and to escape from the stresses and pressures of everyday life.

However, people also talk about play in the context of developing themselves or enhancing a moment. In these instances, play is used as a tool to help people in their search FOR POWER AND CREATIVITY – FROM PLAYING TO EXPLORE YOURSELF AND the world around you, to playing to feel liberated and free to express creativity.

"I DEFINITELY THINK PLAY is fundamental, when you're young, as a tool for making sense of the world, the nature of the PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT and the nature of the people and the laws that govern it."
JASPER GREEN,
TEACHER

Play can be mapped in lots of different ways, however the people we met during our Play Visits and in our online community consistently talked about HOW PLAY ANSWERS FIVE KEY NEEDS.



Importantly, these Play Needs are rarely isolated motivations and often a moment of play or playful activity is driven by a combination of needs being met simultaneously. These needs align with the conclusion argued by Object Relations Theory, that play helps to answer a series of evolving desires as people grow up.

01
PLAY TO
REPAIR

02
PLAY TO
CONNECT

03
PLAY TO
ESCAPE

04
PLAY TO
EXPLORE

05
PLAY TO
EXPRESS

01

REPAIR

Across cultures,
many people are
working longer and
harder, with less and
less leisure time.

WHEN THE DISTRACTIONS FROM THE WORLD AROUND US INCREASE, OUR NEED OF FINDING TIME TO RELAX AND UNWIND ALSO ESCALATES.

While our need to repair can be answered through a variety of passive activities, from resting to meditating, play also has a universal role in helping us to repair.

The people we spoke to often connected this play need with their childhood, and played to seek comfort and security in anxious, DIFFICULT OR UNCERTAIN TIMES.

- ▲ "I work hard all week long and feel that play is a way to get some of MY ENERGY BACK. I FEEL WORN AND taxed after a week of work, and time to play is time to relax and unwind and enjoy myself for a CHANGE."
KARLA F. US
- "LIFE SOMETIMES IS LIKE A SPRING; IF YOU PUSH IT OR STRETCH IT TOO hard, it will be broken. So it is important to play, to relax and HAVE SOME FUN ONCE IN A WHILE IN ORDER TO RECALIBRATE."
WEILIANG L. CHINA
- "You play alone, or together to SWITCH OFF, TO LET THE SOUL FREE, leave the everyday life behind."
SABINE B. GERMANY

Play to Repair manifests itself in two different ways:

CULTURAL NUANCES

Interesting cultural nuances emerged:



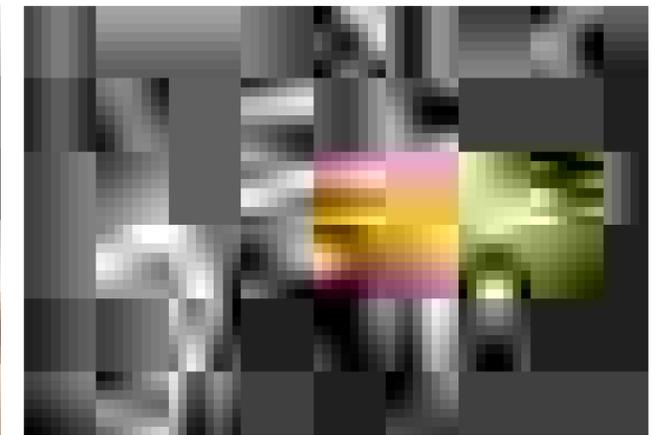
In the US, the trend towards 'mindfulness' is fuelling play through natural experiences. Mindfulness is a term used to describe an individual, having a more intentional sense of what's going on inside and outside them and in the US this was often done in a playful way.



In Germany, there is a trend towards familiarity through 'Thought Play', known as Gedankenspiel. Thought Play is used to describe the use of imagination to step outside the strains of the everyday; examples include immersing in a familiar BOOK, FILM OR MEMORY.



In China, play to repair is consistently highlighted as the most important play need. Many Chinese talk about a challenging work-life balance and use play through the comfort of familiarity in order to deal with it.



1 Firstly, people told us that they often turn to familiar activities when they're looking to repair and recalibrate, for example, by playing the games that they grew up playing as children.

■ "I am very relaxed when I play a puzzle on the iPad. I am always looking forward to it and enjoy it. This is a good feeling for me."

LUDUIG L. GERMANY

● "I REALLY LIKE READING OR LISTENING TO MUSIC. SO WHEN I HAVE FREE TIME, I CHOOSE A BOOK AND FIND A QUIET PLACE, AND I CAN READ THE book for the whole day. It makes me feel very relaxed, and I learn a lot and feel RECHARGED MENTALLY."

ZIJUAN L. CHINA

▲ "YOGA CLOTHES ARE COZIER, THEY'RE NOT LIKE TIGHT WORK CLOTHES. WHEN YOU GET INTO YOGA CLOTHES, IT'S LIKE CLIMBING OUT OF EVERYDAY routine and into a relaxed world, and it's still really playful in a way."

SHANNON U. US

2 Secondly, we consistently heard people adapting their environment to play in a more natural context.

This was especially important for people living in big cities and over-stimulating concrete jungles. From hiking and gardening to running in the park, if done playfully, people told us that a simple and natural setting helped them to relax, unwind and repair.

■ "Playing outside, whether I'm going for A RUN OR HAVING A PICNIC IN THE PARK, HELPS BRING ME BACK TO MY MORE ORIGINAL SELF (CHILDLIKE SELF). NATURE HAS THE POWER TO MAKE PEOPLE FEEL MORE CENTRED."

LORENA R. GERMANY

▲ "Activities to unwind for me are things like walking along the lake, hiking, gardening, spending time outside with my SON, GOING ON A PICNIC."

KARLA F. US

● "I need to be away from my work and RESET MYSELF ONCE IN A WHILE. RUNNING IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE ACTIVITIES AND I FORGET ABOUT everything when I run. After running, my PRESSURES (BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL) are relieved."

SHAN L. CHINA

02

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People are increasingly living more of their lives online and the ability to deeply connect with one another is limited by constant distractions in the modern-day lifestyle.

PLAY CREATES SPACE IN OUR BUSY LIVES TO SLOW DOWN AND GET CLOSER TO FRIENDS, FAMILY AND LOVED ONES. PLAYING WITH LOVED ONES ENHANCES BONDS AND CAN MAKE AN ACTIVITY MORE ENJOYABLE.

- "Playing games has always been VERY IMPORTANT FOR ME TO CONNECT with other people and to develop further."
PETRA P. GERMANY
- "I like sharing play with my friends AND FAMILY BECAUSE THAT MAKES me feel happier when I am with them."
KEGIN Z. CHINA
- ▲ "I'M A TEACHER, SO I SEE THE DIFFERENT WAYS THAT MY CHILDREN play and I play, but that they all INVOLVE MAKING A CONNECTION WITH others."
LISA W. US

Play to Connect manifests itself in two types of play:

Stretching across both progressive and regressive motivations. The people in our online community told us that connecting through play can be intimate and comforting (regressive). It can also be stimulating and a catalyst for forming new connections (progressive).

CULTURAL NUANCES

Interesting cultural nuances emerged:



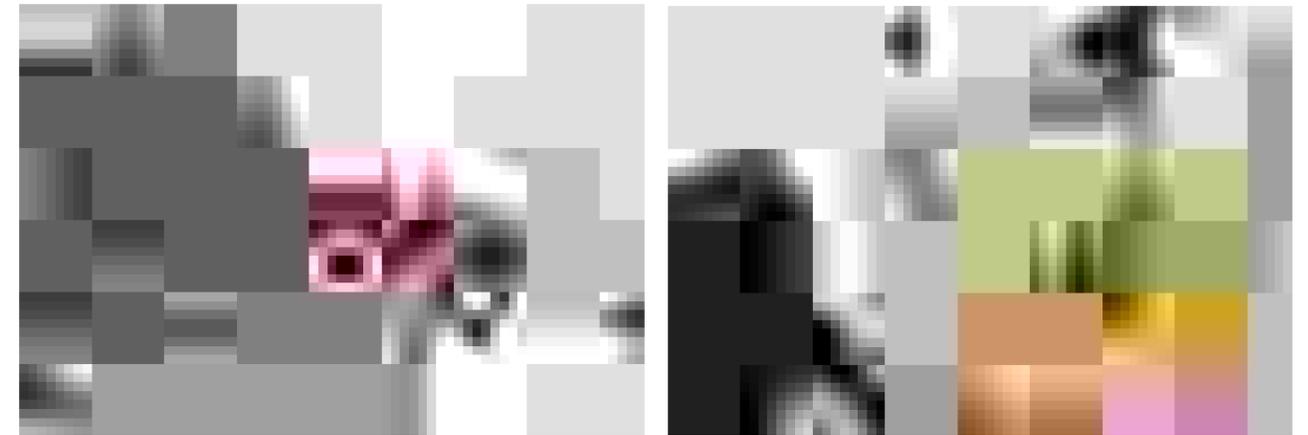
In the US, there is an emphasis on creating real connections by unplugging from technology and the digital world, often talked about as 'reducing screen time'. Families across the US tell us how they worry about not spending enough time together; and parents often see technology as the most SIGNIFICANT BARRIER TO INTIMATE family-time.



In Germany, there is a trend towards connecting through traditional activities, especially arts and crafts, often labelled as 'retro'. For example, group pottery and knitting are seen as particularly playful activities for the younger generations. Such activities bring people together and facilitate 'real' connections.



In China, people highlight the importance of intimate bonding through play. They tell us that frequently playing together as a family is important, and family activities often include board games and picnics. Outside of the family context, social stimulation through play often occurs in the form of popular social activities, such as karaoke.



1 INTIMATE BONDING

Play offers people across cultures the opportunity to seek comfort and security through engaging in a playful activity with a small number of individuals they connect with on a deeper level. The playful activity typically brings familiar individuals (e.g., old friends, family) closer together. People see play as a perfect tool for facilitating real-life relationships and use it as an antidote for living more of their lives online. We heard intimate bonding through play often come to life through traditional activities like card and board games.

■ "PLAYING FOR ME IS INTERACTION WITH HUMAN BEINGS. FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND GESTURES ARE a part of it. Having a good time together. WITH A COMPUTER I CANNOT SHARE BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS. WITH MY CARD GAME BUDDIES I CAN REMEMBER THOSE EVENINGS AND emotions involved. I don't have that with A COMPUTER."
JANA P. GERMANY

● "Personally, I have seen as people who in their personal relationships go very bad, but at the time of playing these people CAN JOIN AND SET ASIDE THEIR PROBLEMS AND THIS CAN EVEN HELP THEM TO IMPROVE THEIR relationships."
LIPING L. CHINA

2 STIMULATING PLAY

Play can also be the spark that forms new connections, naturally encouraging cooperation within a group of people, both small and large. People told us that socially stimulating play typically involves higher energy activities that break down the boundaries that often inhibit people from FINDING OR BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS.

■ "I CAN CONNECT WITH FRIENDS, WITH FAMILY, WITH MATES, WITH CLASSMATES AND WITH SPORTS COLLEAGUES. YOU CAN USE CARD GAMES, SOCIAL GAMES OR SPORTS GAMES. BUT YOU CAN ALSO PLAY WITH EACH OTHER IN A BAND OR IN A SPORTS CLUB OR IN SPORTS LESSONS OR THE YOUTH GROUP. It is important to have fun and get to know EACH OTHER AND TO EXCHANGE IDEAS."
KORNELIA L. GERMANY

● "I like playing games together with my friends, and we sometimes play Xbox together. It is really fun and enjoyable to FIGHT TOGETHER OR FIGHT AGAINST EACH OTHER. WE TALK OR SOMETIMES MAKE FUN OF EACH other when we play together."
XING LONG C. CHINA

03

ESCAPE

No matter how happy and content people are with their jobs, daily obligations and family commitments, they consistently express a strong need to take moments of freedom away from their everyday lives.

THESE MOMENTS OF FREEDOM ARE OFTEN BEST WHEN THEY'RE PLAYFUL, BREAKING THE STATUS QUO AND INTERRUPTING ROUTINES.

- ▲ "I mostly use play to get away from the stresses of my daily life. MY JOB CAN BE VERY, VERY STRESSFUL AND IT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO UNWIND and relax when I leave. I like TO GO PLACES AND DO THINGS THAT I WOULDN'T TYPICALLY DO AND THAT GIVES ME A CHANCE TO ESCAPE ... I use play as a way to have fun and GIVE MYSELF SOME MUCH NEEDED relaxation time."
EVE K. US

Play to Escape usually translates into two different forms:

CULTURAL NUANCES

Interesting cultural nuances emerged:



In both Germany and the US, people mostly play to escape through transformation. People from both cultures offer plenty of examples of when playtime allows them to break away and escape into another world or into another version of themselves. An EXAMPLE: WHEN PLAYFUL, TRAVEL IS SEEN AS A COMMON way to actively change an environment to alter your context and break the traditional rules of the EVERYDAY. A BENEFIT OF TRANSFORMATIVE PLAY IS OFTEN perceived to be a shifted perspective when one returns to 'normal' life.



In China, playing to escape is typically articulated as small moments of distraction. Generally, people tell us that they have less time and lots of working rules and obligations and they crave small, and distracting playful moments to break the monotony and stress of the everyday. These distractions commonly take the form of sending lighthearted messages to friends and colleagues during work meetings, or taking 30 seconds out to play a quick game online.



1 TRANSFORMATION

Transformative play is a tool people use to step outside of their everyday life, by allowing a different or new version of themselves to take over through a variety of playful activities. This transformation can be internally driven, for example by using imagination and fantasies, or externally driven through immersive environments that facilitate play. Disneyland, VR technology and the theatre are all cross-cultural examples of how immersive environments facilitate play by transforming people from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

■ "DISNEY PARK MAKES ME FEEL THAT I CAN PLAY FOR ESCAPISM. DISNEY PARK IS A MAGICAL world to me. When I enter the park and IMMERSE MYSELF IN THE RIDES AND ATTRACTIONS in the park, I leave the whole world behind."
JON B. US

● "I ENJOY PLAYING COMPUTER GAMES. I IMAGINE MYSELF AS THE CHARACTER IN THE game. The reality seems to be so far away from me when I immerse myself in the games."
SIXUE W. CHINA

2 DISTRACTION

Playing to escape is distraction. While still immersive, playing as a distraction is often a more spontaneous form of play, quick bursts forming brief moments of escape. It seems to be fuelled by the ever-increasing repertoire of devices. Online games such as Candy Crush and Sudoku are frequent examples of how play can offer people bite-sized moments of distraction. The people in our online community talked about these moments as a small oasis, offering peace and calm across a busy and stressful day.

● "Playing online games is my favourite thing to do in my free time. I forget about ANYTHING, PARTICULARLY THINGS THAT MAKE ME unhappy."
ZHIZHAN G. CHINA

04

EXPLORE

People are curious, looking to learn and develop by better understanding themselves and their social and physical context.

PLAY IS OFTEN A KEY TOOL THAT ENABLES US TO LEARN AND DEVELOP THROUGH EXPLORATION.

People experience a need to play that takes them outside of their usual frame of reference, not only as a potential escape, but primarily as a way of discovering more.

▲ "I 'PLAY TO EXPLORE' BECAUSE I LIKE TO DISCOVER NEW PLACES, NEW MUSIC and new movies."
NINA K. US

Play to Explore manifests itself in two distinct forms of play:

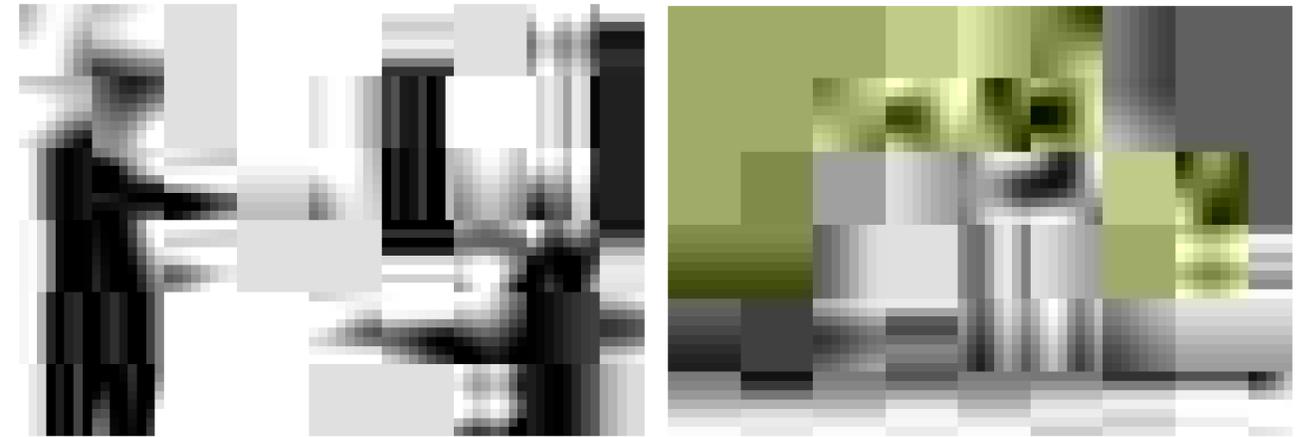
In our research, we've found that people across cultures play in order to expand their horizons and discover the world. Parents tell us how their children are learning and developing through exploratory play, developing language, emotions and creativity, as well as physical, social and intellectual skills. With adults, play to explore manifests in two DISTINCT FORMS OF PLAY: PLAYING IN A COMPLETELY IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENT or setting out on a playful journey of discovery.

CULTURAL NUANCES

Interesting cultural nuances emerged:



Across the USA and Germany, people are concerned about schools moving away from play as a form of exploratory learning and discovery for children. People share a genuine fear that too many parameters are being put in place to guide and instruct play, diluting the potential to explore and discover. There is a PERCEPTION THAT SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND TARGETS ARE being set for children from a very young age, which distracts from their opportunities to explore through play.



1 IMMERSIVE PLAY

Is a form of play where people are completely engaged in an environment and set of stimuli. The environment can be real or imagined, but people use that high level of engagement to explore new possibilities by interacting with the stimulus they're SURROUNDED BY. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES INCLUDE Virtual Reality, where a person is immersed into a new and different world, and Role Play, where a person immerses themselves in a new and/or different persona.

▲ "I DISCOVER WHEN I AM CONFRONTED WITH ANOTHER WORLD FOREIGN TO ME: AS A CITY PERSON THIS CAN BE THE FOREST OR THE FARM. AS AN OFFICE PERSON, THIS CAN BE THE NATURE." GEORGE C. US

● "TRAVEL IS MY FAVOURITE PLAYFUL ACTIVITY, and I think it belongs to play to explore. WHEN I TRAVEL TO OTHER PLACES, IT REALLY broadens my horizons and enables me TO HAVE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES. I CAN SEE DIFFERENT SCENERIES, TRY DIFFERENT FOOD, MEET different people or even learn a new language, yet somehow it's all really playful." YUN Q. CHINA

■ "I CAN ALSO DIVE INTO ANOTHER WORLD WHEN I dress up as a medieval man; I walk in full armour and imagine how I shoot my dinner with a bow and arrow, it's very playful." BRIDGET R. GERMANY

2 PLAY TO DISCOVER

Is a form of play that facilitates exploration of either the inner or outer world. A wide range of playful activities enable discovery; these activities focus on identifying new and previously unknown learnings. For example, this form of play includes the discovery of new emotions, physical skills and intellectual capacity. Play to discover is inherently linked to learning and development; activities tend to be less structured than other forms of play.

▲ "Take your kids abroad, somewhere TOTALLY DIFFERENT. FOR ME THE BEST WAY TO PLAY IS TO TAKE AWAY SOME OF THE TECHNOLOGY and allow us all to learn more about nature and its beauty through play." PATT C. US

● "I like play to explore. It is interesting to FIND OUT / LEARN NEW THINGS. THE SAMSUNG GEAR VR GLASS IS VERY COOL, WHICH ENABLES me to enter a unique virtual world, inspiring my imagination." JIAN Q. CHINA

■ "If you do something different, you MIGHT DISCOVER NEW TRAITS AND TALENTS OF your own." WOLFGANG B. GERMANY



The world we live in isn't typically set up to encourage and inspire people to be different and unique; and as a result, people often neglect their creativity.

AT WORK, EMPLOYEES HAVE A SET ROLE AND CLEAR OBJECTIVES; AT HOME, PARENTS OFTEN IMPOSE SET ROUTINES INTO THE HOUSEHOLD TO HELP CREATE AN EASIER AND MORE EFFICIENT LIFE.

WHILE THE REAL WORLD IS FILLED with limitations and barriers, a more playful world can break down those barriers.

In doing so, play can give people permission to express a different version of themselves, as well as a platform to be creative.

▲ "FOR ME, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN artist to feel playful or expressive; YOU JUST HAVE TO FEEL COMFORTABLE with who you are."
MARY P. US

Play to Express manifests itself in two ways:

When people express themselves through play, they're typically either experimenting by trying new or different versions of themselves, or they're using their creativity as an outlet to build or create something.

CULTURAL NUANCES

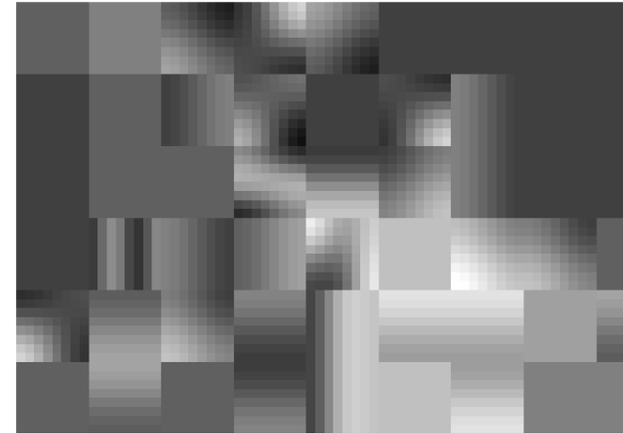
Interesting cultural nuances emerged:



In Germany, there is a trend towards Live Action Role Play (LARP) as a form of playful experimentation. LARP involves dressing up and immersing into a real-life fantasy world where people can play a king or a knight, among other roles. It allows people to experiment with different sides of their personality in a playful and protective environment.



In China, playful self-expression is generally manifested in 'smaller' moments of non-conformity. These playful moments are often stimulated by a desire to act outside the typical group norm.



1 EXPERIMENTING

People tell us that through play they can have fun testing different and often more extreme versions of their personality, style and identity. While the experimental process may be playful and fun, it often indirectly allows people to evolve and formulate themselves as they grow and develop, helping them become more comfortable in their own skin.

The boundaries of experimentation vary from individual to individual.

▲ "I MISS BEING CREATIVE AND I AM TRYING TO FIND NEW WAYS TO BE PLAYFUL AND EXPRESSIVE NOW I AM A MOMMY... I FIND MUSIC AND DANCING WORK!"
DOROTHY A. US

● "I FEEL LIKE I CAN EXPRESS MYSELF THROUGH MUSIC. I LIKE SINGING WITH MY friends in KTV. Singing allows me to fully express myself and be who I am; different songs represent different emotions."
HAIYAN L. CHINA

■ "IN REAL LIFE, I COULD NOT WALK THROUGH THE CITY AND JUST GO STRAIGHT, NO ONE WOULD REALLY MAKE SPACE AND AS SOON AS I KICKED SOMEONE THERE WOULD BE TROUBLE. IN THE LARP [IMMERSIVE PLAY], however, I was able to push people to the side, stalk them, and everyone saw it as a game and responded ACCORDINGLY."
CHRISTIAN H. GERMANY

2 CREATING

Play is a tool that allows people to access their creativity. From activities that require a more creative mode of thinking, (eg., painting or acting), to activities that enable people to tap into their imagination, (eg., actively dreaming).

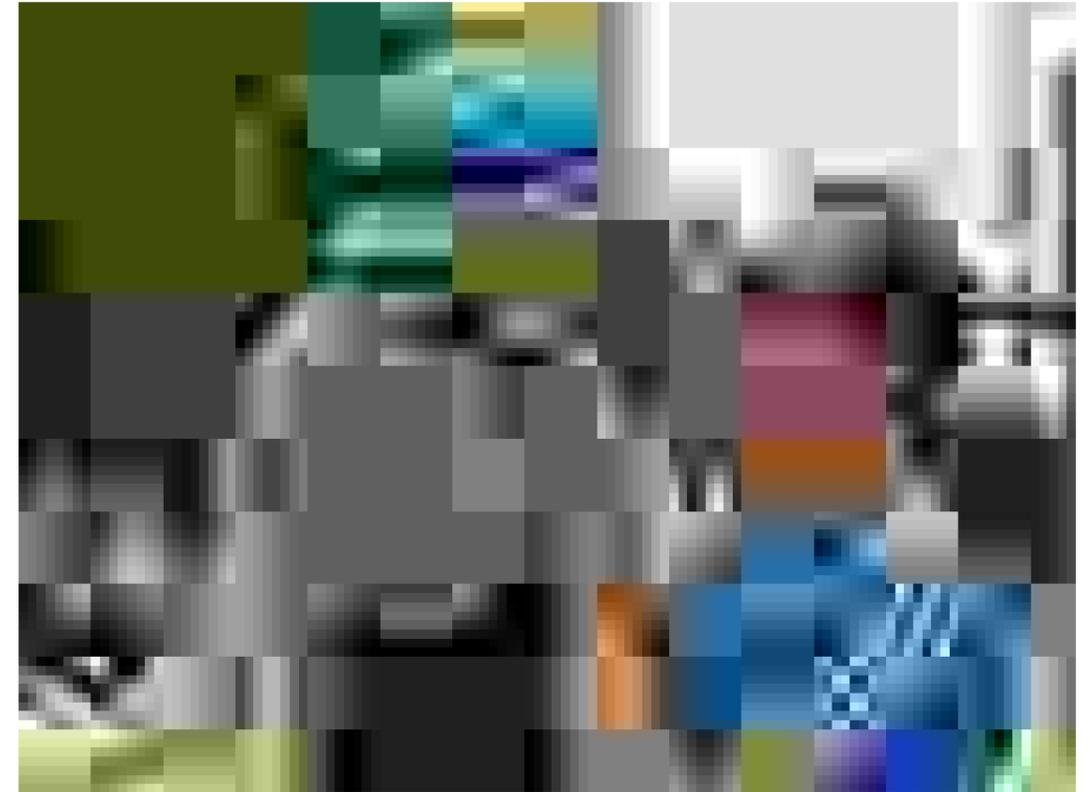
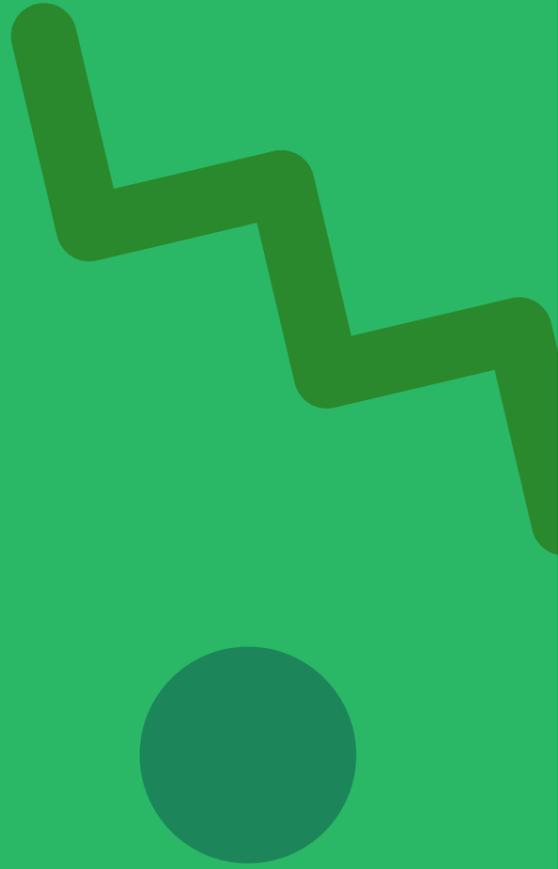
Creative play can also be a small and subtle manifestation of self-expression that adds an element of play to the everyday. (eg., decorating a locker at school or buying a colourful or quirky phone case).

▲ "My 27-year-old daughter likes to dress up with her friends and go to anime conventions. I ALSO LIKE TO DRESS UP FOR HALLOWEEN AND MAKE MY COSTUMES MYSELF. IT'S DRESSING UP BUT IT'S CREATIVE, PLAYFUL AND personal."
VICTORIA H. US

● "I like playing basketball to express MYSELF. I FEEL LIKE I CAN BE THE PERSON I WANT TO BE (MY DREAM AS A CHILD WAS TO BE A PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYER). WHEN I AM ON THE BASKETBALL COURT, I PLAY WITH AN alternative version of myself."
PARK Z. CHINA

■ "A NICE PILLOW OR BLANKET PLACED SOMEWHERE CAN BE PLAYFUL. A CERTAIN LEVEL OF PLAYFULNESS CAN BE FOUND IN FURNITURE AND DECORATION. IT'S THROUGH THOSE LITTLE THINGS THAT I REFLECT MYSELF EVERY DAY."
MARIANNE C. GERMANY

HOW DO WE PLAY TOGETHER?



Play allows children to develop their creativity, nurture both their physical and emotional well-being and explore the world through mirroring adult behaviour. BUT IT IS NOT JUST CHILDREN WHO BENEFIT FROM play.

IN FACT SOME OF THE MOST BENEFICIAL PLAY IS WHEN CHILDREN and adults play together, whereby they connect and strengthen intergenerational relationships and learn from each other.

—
 “WHEN CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN PLAY TOGETHER, THEY’RE ACTUALLY MAKING EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS. THEY ARE LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER. THEY ARE LEARNING BOTH ABOUT WHO THEY ARE AS WELL AS about the other person and they are exploring together. At the same time, they are learning how to observe things together and how to take risks together.”

YESIM KUNTER, PLAY FUTUROLOGIST



Whilst every culture and family has their own play rituals and traditions, we HAVE IDENTIFIED SIX common forms of adult-child interplay.

01

'Free-Style' Play

FREE-STYLE PLAY IS UNDIRECTED PLAY. IT IS FREE, SPONTANEOUS AND UNSTRUCTURED.

The child simply follows their own play urges. Adults immerse themselves in the world the child has created, providing no direction or rules so as to not inhibit creativity. Most of all, they enjoy being silly together.

This type of play nurtures a child's CONFIDENCE AND DECISION-MAKING. It also allows adults to regress by experiencing the world through a child's eyes, freeing up new ideas and shaking up normative thinking, and is primarily motivated by 'play to explore'.



Examples:
Fantasy role play



— "Child and adult interplay is at its best when they both forget what they're doing AND THEY'RE COMPLETELY LOST in the game. And the game takes over reality and the GAME BECOMES REALITY. They're lost in play and time disappears."
ROY LANGMAID, PSYCHOLOGIST

▲ "KIDS ARE CONSTANTLY engaging with imaginative PLAY WHERE THEY CREATE A world and ask you to join in. (EG., PLAYING PRETEND RESCUE HEROES, PRETEND SCHOOL, PRETEND DOCTOR & PATIENT). THESE ARE FUN BECAUSE KIDS SAY REALLY UNEXPECTED things you did not realize THEY PICKED UP ON AND YOU just go along with it."
LISA W, US

02

'Build-It' Play

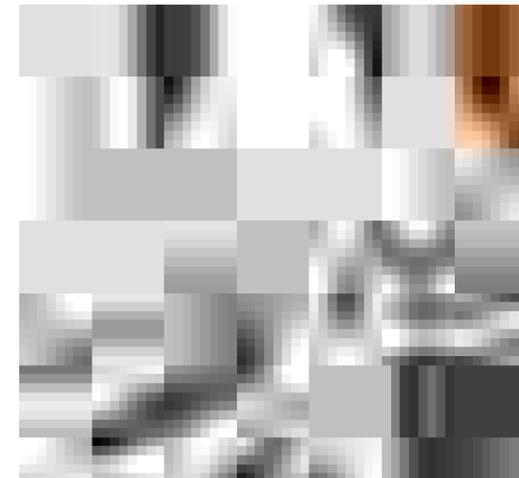
BUILD-IT PLAY IS CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY.

Children and adults play together by using objects and toys to create something new, thinking creatively about how best to build it. Together they experiment, explore and celebrate their accomplishment.

This type of play teaches adults and children how to think more creatively about problem-solving together and is primarily motivated by 'play to express'.



Examples:
Building a sandcastle, creating a fort in the living room, building with Lego or Jenga



▲ "LEGO OR OTHER BUILDING BLOCKS ARE A NICE EXPERIENCE, CREATING something together. We do THIS AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK at some point, not always together, though. Someone starts, then someone else PICKS IT UP AND AT SOME POINT THERE IS THE FINAL result."
ARIANNE C. US

03

'Mirror-Me' Play

MIRROR-ME PLAY IS IMITATION PLAY.

Children mirror adult behaviour in a playful way by helping them out with adult tasks and turning these into a game. Children often come up with imaginative ways of completing the task that adults hadn't thought of.

This type of play helps children develop social skills and helps adults to de-stress, turning a frustrating chore into a lighthearted, satisfying activity. This form of play is primarily motivated by 'play to connect'.

**Examples:**

Playfully helping with chores, baking or cooking together



● "I REALLY ENJOY COOKING TOGETHER WITH MY CHILD. I LIKE TEACHING HER TO MAKE various kinds of food. And she seems happy when we COOK TOGETHER. WE LEARN AND play around with different WAYS TO COOK. WE REALLY ENJOY THE PROCESS, DURING WHICH WE USUALLY HAVE GOOD COMMUNICATION."
ZU H. CHINA

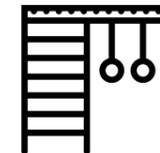
04

'Muddy-Boots' Play

MUDDY-BOOTS PLAY IS PHYSICAL PLAY.

Children and adults play together in physical or sporting activities, typically outside, and spend quality time together. They let-go, run around and free themselves of physical and social constraints.

This type of play allows both children and adults to use up energy, release endorphins and feel happier. This form of play is primarily motivated by 'play to explore'.

**Examples:**

Throw and Catch, Hide and Seek



■ "We played handball TOGETHER. WE LOVE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. FOR FUN AND TO COMPETE AGAINST OTHERS. I love playing football with our boys or together with our dog in the garden. THESE ACTIVITIES FEEL GOOD. We move, we have fun and enjoy the play. It lifts the mood and elevates the COMMUNALITIES BETWEEN US."
YUKI A. GERMANY

05

'Out-of-the-Box' Play

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PLAY IS ARTISTIC PLAY, BUT NOT NECESSARILY WITH A CREATIVE OUTPUT.

Out-of-the-box play is artistic play, but not necessarily with a creative output. Through arts and crafts, children and adults release their inner creativity and express a more creative, open side of their personality. In turn, they gain pride and joy from the creative process.

This type of play promotes a more creative mode of thinking, allowing adults and children alike to tap into their imagination and a world beyond rules and obligation.

This form of play is primarily motivated by 'play to express'.



Examples:
Colouring, dancing



■ "We've been very playful WHEN WE CREATED EASTER DECORATIONS FOR EASTER. We had a lot of fun EXPERIMENTING WITH COLOURS and materials. We laughed A LOT AND FELT VERY CLOSE."
WALTRAUD J. GERMANY

06

'Formal' Play

FORMAL PLAY IS STRATEGIC PLAY.

Formal play is typically less spontaneous and more structured than the other types of adult/child interplay outlined. It is focused, yet enjoyable, and allows EVERYONE PLAYING TO FIND RESPITE and distraction from everyday life. Children and adults either play with or against each other to solve a SPECIFIC CHALLENGE.

This type of play brings families together and is a fun way to help adults and children to focus, relax and solve problems creatively.

This form of play is typically motivated by 'play to repair' and 'play for comfort'.

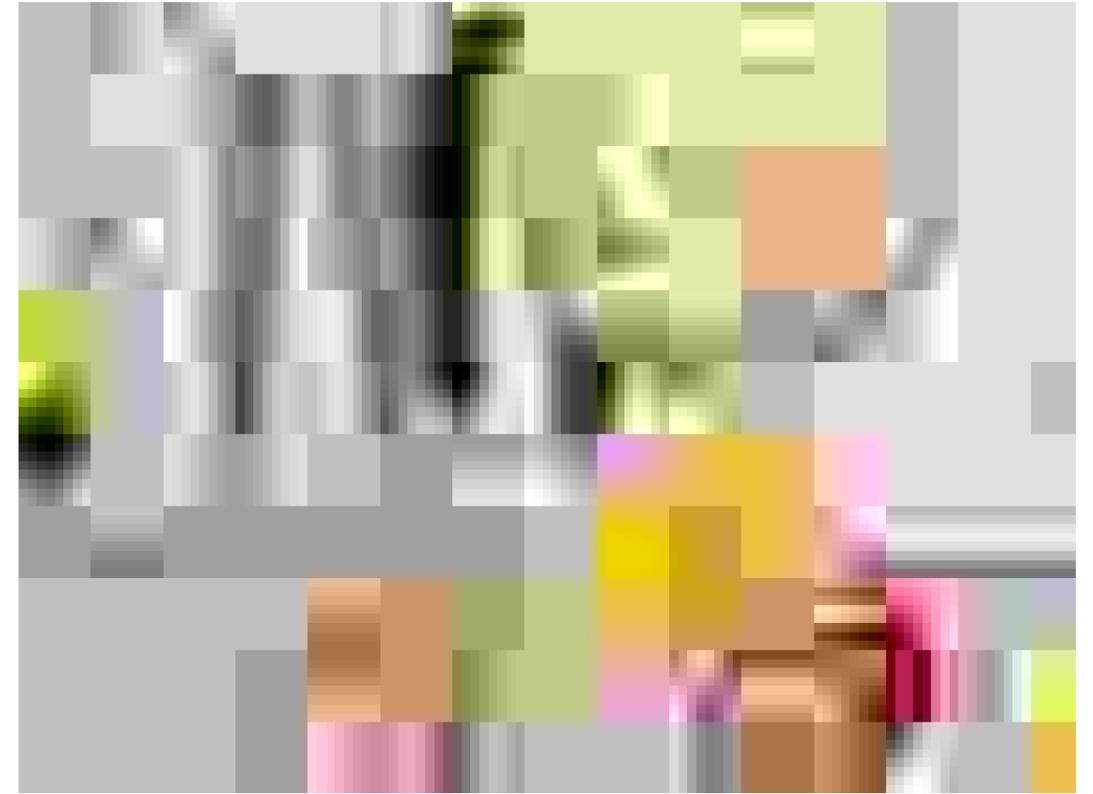


Examples:
Chess, board games



▲ "PLAY WITH MY CHILD FEELS shared when we are both laughing and getting excited such as in a game of Jenga when we are working together to win and especially when all of the blocks fall over."
VICTORIA H. US

WHAT ARE THE ENABLERS & BARRIERS TO PLAY?



In our research, we've found that play is unanimously seen to be a power for good. A world without play is viewed as world not worth living in...

...HOWEVER,

there are many things that stop people from playing and that provide unwanted barriers to play.

- Stress and responsibilities at work are commonly cited as barriers to play as well as rigid daily routines that enforce certain roles.
- Many see play as an activity (for children), as opposed to a mind-set that can be employed to bring joy to everyday activities.
- PLAY IS SEEN AS A LUXURY – A 'NICE TO HAVE' moment when all other serious activities have been taken care of, partly due to THE DIFFICULTY IN QUANTIFYING THE 'RETURN ON investment' when it comes to play.
- Modern day life is quick to steer people away from play. Adults feel that it is socially unacceptable to embrace a playful mind-set and are often concerned that modern day education discourages children from playing to learn and develop through play, a fear that is supported by SOME OF THE 'EXPERTS' WE SPOKE TO:

—
"We sit in a military system nowadays.

FROM A YOUNG AGE, KIDS ARE TAUGHT IN A DIRECTIVE MANNER. THEY'RE INCREASINGLY BEING TOLD TO CONFORM AND TO THINK IN A CERTAIN way."

ROY LANGMAID, PSYCHOLOGIST

—
"As adults, we get very much scared of making mistakes. Failure is frowned upon and, as a result, we forget how to play, we're scared of taking risks, of asking too many questions and we often close the door on our own curiosity."

YESIM KUNTER, PLAY FUTUROLOGIST

But it's not all doom and gloom. In our research, we've also heard about several enablers of play, used across cultures.

~~~~~  
The external environment can often provide a TRIGGER POINT, SPECIFICALLY environments that feel very different from the norm.

People highlight the impact of playful designs, décor and structures within a space as well as natural changes in the environment.

● "I went to a Japanese restaurant recently that made me feel playful. I like their simple but elegant design which made me feel relaxed. Also, their waitress is so friendly and caring, their service is great. I had an enjoyable experience."  
CHA C. CHINA

▲ "One year, after a long dry, hot spell, it began to rain about 11 PM at night. I woke the girls and we went out and played in the rain. The neighbours even joined us!"  
MARTHA L. US



~~~~~  
A special occasion or activity can often become an enabler of play.

People tell us that the excitement produced around special occasions, as well as the people participating in those moments help them move into a playful mindset.

● "The time that made me feel playful was when I attended a concert last month. It was a rock and roll concert. I sang out loud, and danced with the music. I had so much fun and felt relaxed as I forgot about my pressures during that moment."
SHU L. CHINA

~~~~~  
A range of internal and intense emotions can also trigger play.

The people in our online community talk about play as an opportunity to jump from a negative mindset to a more positive one. (eg., play as a reliever of stress or a distraction from boredom).

● "NO ONE IS ABLE TO DO WORK CONTINUOUSLY WITHOUT STOPPING. FOR me, to make my everyday tasks more playful, I would take breaks during the day to refresh my mind, and make me feel that my day would not be so boring."  
TOM T. CHINA

"I HAVE A WONDERFUL memory of visiting my mom in the nursing home and playing bingo at Thanksgiving. The staff made bingo special on that day. When we had bingo instead of hollering bingo we had to say 'gobble gobble'. The laughter was wonderful."  
VICTORIA A. US



" I ALSO JOKE AROUND WITH MY FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK POSTS. I USE SARCASM, PUNS AND WORD PLAY, EMOJI 'S, AND STICKERS. A FEW PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE MY **humour, but most of them like my humour.** I HAVE A WHOLE GROUP OF FRIENDS WHO TALK TOGETHER EVERY DAY ON FB. WE TRY TO OUTDO EACH OTHER WITH **funny remarks.**"  
**GRAYSON T. US**

~~~~~  
For parents, we heard that the behaviour of their children is often a trigger for play.

People tell us that bored or badly behaved children can be tiresome and frustrating and that parents often encourage play to change the atmosphere.

● "I don't need to think of anything when I am with them, and I don't need to pretend to be someone else like I do when I am WITH MY COLLEAGUES /CLIENTS. I LOVE BEING WITH CHILDREN, THEY MAKE ME FORGET ABOUT MY DAILY PRESSURES AND I CAN FULLY ENJOY THE time."
SHUSNHUO C. CHINA

▲ "The most playful moments I've had with CHILDREN HAVE DEFINITELY BEEN WHEN (AS AN ADULT) I ENTERED FULLY INTO THEIR IMAGINATIVE WORLD, OR WHEN AS A CHILD, ANOTHER ADULT entered into mine."
JILL M. US

~~~~~  
**For a lot of people, childhood memories and a sense of nostalgia triggers a playful moment.**

This can, for instance, be expressed through childhood games being re-purposed for modern-day families and spontaneous and unexpected moments of nostalgia that spark FITS OF LAUGHTER.

~~~~~  
People also tell us that the presence of other people can trigger play.

Friends, family, colleagues and even strangers encourage a playful state of mind through their engagement and interactions as well as their personality. In contrast, people also talk about how they trigger play in a social context, driven by a desire to build relationships and connect to others.

■ "THE BEST GAME IS TO FIND ALL THE LETTERS of the alphabet from road signs. When you are on a trip as a family you are in the best MOOD AND ANTICIPATING THE FUN AHEAD. I have so many great memories of playing as A KID AND NOW WHEN WE GET IN THE CAR, WE always play!"
ELKE S. GERMANY

~~~~~  
**UNCERTAIN SITUATIONS OR DIFFICULT choices may trigger a playful approach.**

People tell us that they use play as a way to experiment and navigate the new and different without the perceived, and often real, consequences that a more serious approach entails.

■ "TODAY I WAS FORCED TO MAKE A PRESENT BASKET FOR ONE OF MY COLLEAGUES AND SINCE IT **was from work, it was also obligatory! But I** APPROACHED IT PLAYFULLY AND DECIDED TO CREATE 'A LITTLE WONDER'! I PLAYED WITH COLOURS AND DECORATIONS AND MADE IT REALLY FUN."  
**NICOLE L. GERMANY**

~~~~~  
A chore or unpleasant task can also be a trigger for play.

People tell us that they look to turn routine daily tasks into games, to distract themselves. By doing this, the task transforms from 'completion', to 'enjoyment'.

▲ "To make everyday task more enjoyable, I SOMETIMES PROMISE MYSELF A REWARD. FOR EXAMPLE, I TAKE AN ICE-CREAM OUT OF THE FREEZER WHILE I'M CLEANING THE KITCHEN. THEN I HURRY SO THE ICE-CREAM DOESN'T MELT!"
NANCY M. US

~~~~~  
**Finally, a more contemporary and less spontaneous trigger for play is a positive life outlook or attitude.**

■ "I ACTUALLY DEAL WITH EVERYTHING WITH POSITIVE THOUGHT!!!! THEN LIFE IS MUCH EASIER TO COPE WITH! I CHALLENGE MYSELF AGAIN AND **again, to be spontaneous rather than live a** LIFE DICTATED BY A FIXED RITUAL."  
**JENNIFER H. GERMANY**



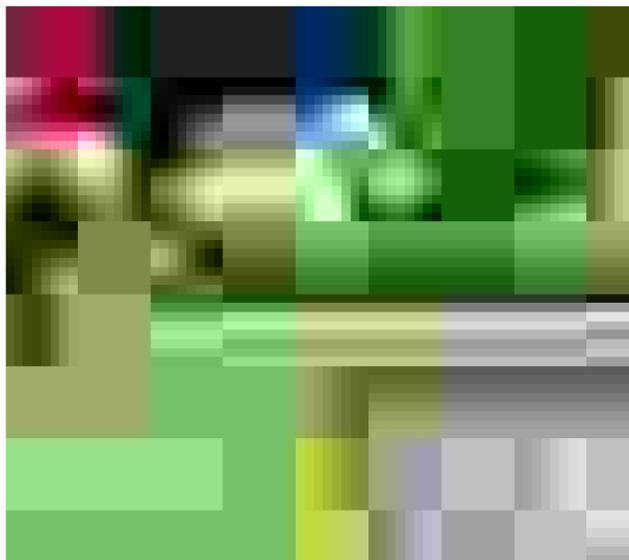
# WHAT ARE PEOPLE'S PLAY "HACKS"



WE DEFINE A PLAY HACK AS A CONSCIOUS physical or emotional action that makes a moment, conversation or chore more playful. In our research, people told us that they often looked to purposefully inject play into their lives through a variety of play hacks.



**"I make sure that at certain times across the day, I ban technology from the house. That frees up the time and space for the kids to actually play together and with us."**  
**ANGIE O. US**



**We heard that some play hacks involve the introduction of physical objects.**

For instance, a fun accessory on the desk at work, or post-its on walls at home.

■ **"FOR LONG CAR TRIPS, INSTEAD OF HEARING, 'ARE WE THERE YET?' FIVE MINUTES OUT OF THE DRIVEWAY, I WOULD START EACH OF THE KIDS WITH A ROLL OF QUARTERS. EACH TIME THEY COMPLAINED IN any way, I would take a quarter from their roll. WHEN WE REACHED OUR DESTINATION, THEY WOULD get whatever money was left in the roll."**  
**MARION D. GERMANY**

**But a play hack can also involve removing a physical or virtual object.**

▲ **"I MAKE SURE THAT AT CERTAIN TIMES ACROSS THE DAY, I BAN TECHNOLOGY FROM THE HOUSE. THAT FREES UP THE TIME AND SPACE FOR THE KIDS TO ACTUALLY PLAY TOGETHER AND WITH US."**  
**ANGIE O. US**

**Translating a task or chore into a game is also a common play hack.**

With a little imagination, the least-fun chores can be turned into games and playful challenges.

▲ **"I THINK I LIKE TO MAKE CLEANING INTO A GAME of sort. My husband and I share the duties OF CLEANING THE HOUSE NOW THAT WE ARE BOTH RETIRED AND WE LIKE TO SEE WHO CAN GET THEIR PORTION DONE FIRST, SO IT'S LIKE A RACE. I ALSO LIKE TO SET A TIMER AND ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH IN A 10-minute segment just to test myself."**  
**BETH T. US**

**Finally, some people told us how they participate in role play, as a hack to inject play into their everyday lives.**

■ **"In REAL LIFE, I COULDN'T WALK THROUGH THE CITY AND JUST WALK IN A STRAIGHT LINE, NO ONE WOULD REALLY MAKE SPACE AND AS SOON AS I KICKED SOMEONE THERE WOULD BE TROUBLE. IN LARP HOWEVER, I WAS ABLE TO PUSH PEOPLE TO the side, stalk them and everyone saw it as a GAME AND RESPONDED ACCORDINGLY."**  
**KLAUS G. GERMANY**



# HOW IS PLAY EVOLVING?



People across cultures don't believe that the motivations driving them to play will change or adapt in the future. THE FIVE PLAY NEEDS IDENTIFIED WILL LIKELY stay the same. However, while the innate human needs driving people to play won't change, people believe that where and how we play will change considerably in the next 10 years.



## HOW WILL WE BE PLAYING IN THE FUTURE?

The experts we've spoken to have identified a set of play enablers that would encourage more play in people's lives in the future. To start with, as the benefits of play become more tangible and measured, society will encourage playing and adults as well as children will have more permission to play. In the future, playing could become as important as a trip to the spa or a run in the park, with

recognised mental and physical health benefits. For example, science has already proven that laughter can dramatically reduce stress levels and a recent study by the VU University of Amsterdam found that playful workplaces result in better communication levels between co-workers.

— "As a society, we play to be ready for the future. When you look back at Egyptian times, they played to understand how to fight, because there were wars. So to understand how we'll be playing in the future requires us to think about what we are preparing for. For example, how can play help to prepare us for AI?" **YESIM KUNTER, PLAY FUTUROLOGIST**

— "As society progresses, automation means there's going to be no reason for us to move around other than to play. As time goes on, I think there's going to be more and more things cropping up all over the place that are encouraging us to play." **DANNY BENT, PLAY ENTREPRENEUR**

Secondly, technology will drive new forms of play in the future. For example, advancements in VR technology and wearable tech offer new and exciting spaces and dimensions for play. Technology will also free up more time in the

future, removing daily chores and potentially opening up more leisure time to fill with play.

However, while more permission and technological advancements may encourage more play in the future, a combination of factors could restrict how we play. When play becomes better recognised and defined, there is a risk that it will also become formalised and structured. The people in our online community are concerned that rules typically follow structure, and too much guidance around how people should play and where people should play risk damaging the spontaneous and unobligated nature of play.

Despite continual time-saving innovations that provide people with the tools to open up more leisure time across their lives, people worry that an increasingly individualistic culture will continue to drive the sentiment that 'time is money' and 'every second counts' leaving people with less time to play. For example, while the invention of the email in 1972 was predicted to drastically shorten the average working day, the reality has been quite different.

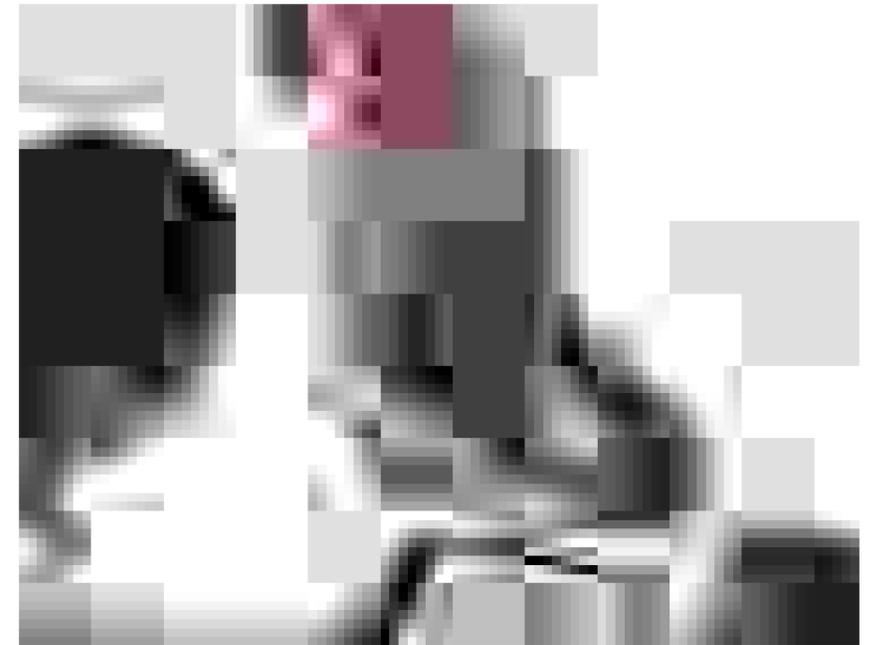
Across cultures, people highlighted 7 trends that they believe will influence how they and society will be playing in the future, with a specific forecasting lens on the next 10 years:

~~~~~  
Back To Retro
As technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, people will continue to rebel by turning to and celebrating nostalgic games from their childhood.

From old board games to the Game Boy, there is a desire to keep play simple.

■ "What's happening with technology is actually scary! Yes, it will completely change the way we play in the future but I think people are starting to rebel. They don't want it. Play is simple and pure and we'll see a big drive back to the games we used to love from years ago, the retro games will become mainstream again."

HEIKO G. GERMANY



Blurring Boundaries

As life becomes faster and time becomes even more of a rare commodity, play will begin to creep into all aspects of people's lives.

From the workplace to the gym, people will look to play in traditionally non-playful spaces.

▲ "I think play will exist everywhere in the future and the whole world will be a playground – nothing will be boring."
BRIAN H. US

Multi-Sensory

Where people embrace the new playful dimensions that technology enables, play will become even more immersive and all-consuming.

In the future, people will play in ARTIFICIAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT ARE designed to engage all of their senses.

● "It's quite fun to think about! LOOK AT WHAT TECHNOLOGY IS enabling us to do now. What will that look like in 10 years' time! We'll be able to plug into a virtual WORLD AND PLAY THROUGH TOUCH, sight, sound and smell! We'll all be PLAYING IN A COMPLETELY IMMERSIVE environment."
KEVIN L. CHINA

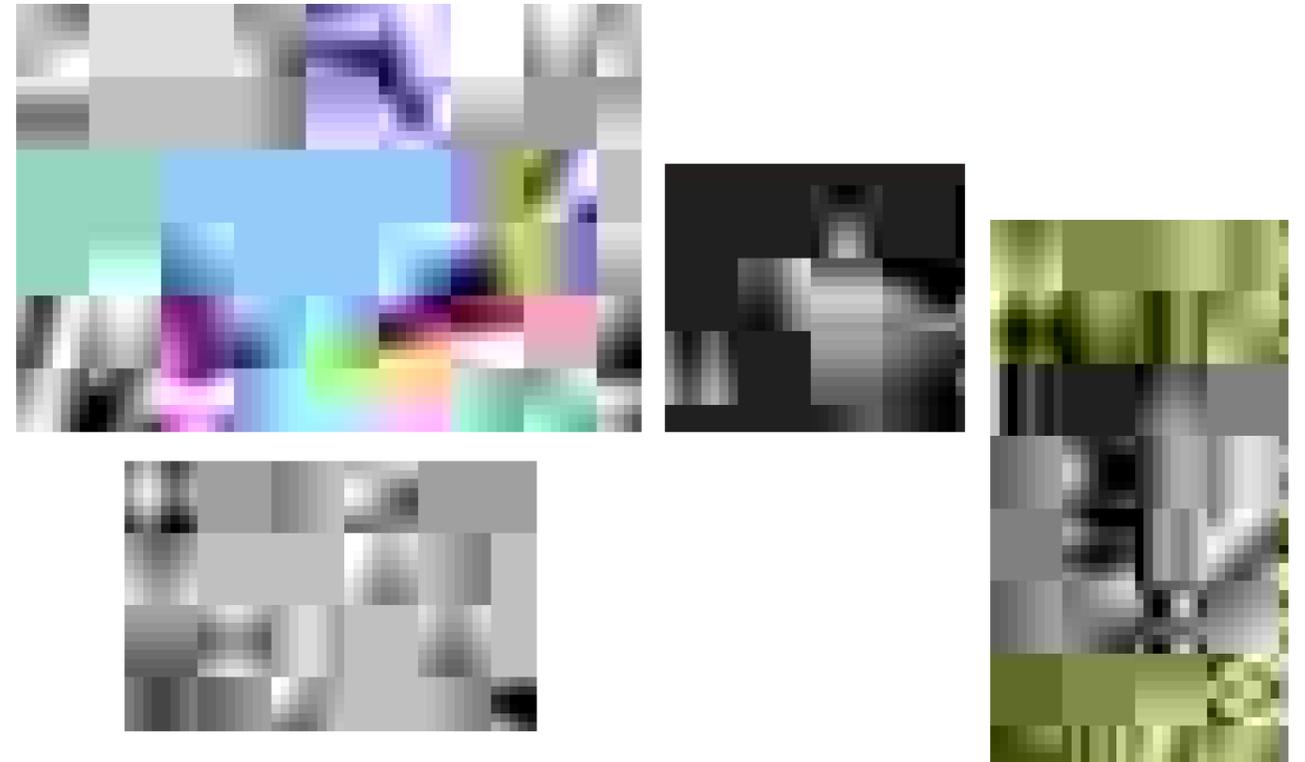
Digital Connections

Technology is opening up a new world of distant connections, enabling people to be part of global digital communities.

While people worry that these connections won't form genuine relationships, they're excited to have the opportunity to play with like-minded across the world.

▲ "LOOK AT ONLINE GAMING TODAY, my son plays with kids from China AND AUSTRALIA, IT'S CRAZY! THEY ACTUALLY TALK TO EACH OTHER WHILE they're playing. The ability to play AS PART OF A GLOBAL COMMUNITY WILL ONLY INCREASE IN THE FUTURE, AS WE CONTINUE TO MAKE MORE DISTANT DIGITAL CONNECTIONS."
ARTHUR M. US





Playful Chores

People are noticing an increasing number of products and services that are designed to translate traditional chores into moments of play.

These innovations change the focus of an activity to play rather than work, removing the feeling of obligation. In the future, people believe the majority of household chores will become games.

■ "LOOK AT SOME MODERN GYMS! RATHER THAN JUST EXERCISING, THERE ARE GAMES THAT PEOPLE PLAY AND AS A BY-PRODUCT THEY GET FITTER. IN THE FUTURE, THE REALLY PAINFUL DAILY CHORES ARE GOING TO TURN INTO GAMES BY CLEVER PRODUCTS!"
RAINER P. GERMANY

Personalised Play

With personalised nutrition already beginning to dictate individual DIETS, AND WITH THE BENEFITS OF play being formally recognised by science, people predict that they'll have their own personal 'play plans' in the future.

These plans will be designed to ensure people are playing in the right way, so that they receive the BEST POSSIBLE BENEFITS.

● "WE'RE ALL GOING TO BE TRACKING every mouthful of food that we eat and I don't think play is going to be very different. We'll be told how many times to laugh a day AND INSTRUCTED TO PLAY CERTAIN games based on our individual personalities."
LISA L. CHINA

Crafting

As brands and organisations provide more platforms to play, people will be looking to take back control of their playtime by going back to basics and expressing themselves through being creative.

Crafting is seen as a growing trend, empowering people to take ownership of their own creativity.

▲ "I THINK WE'LL BE FIGHTING TO KEEP play traditional! It's the anti-movement and I think the return AND RISE OF CRAFTING IS THE FIRST BIG STEP TOWARDS TAKING BACK CONTROL of our playtime!"
ANNE D. US

CONCLUSION



IN THIS YEAR'S RESEARCH WE'VE LEARNED FIVE KEY motivators of why we play. But it is important to note that people play for various reasons, and that a moment of play often meets several needs simultaneously. Furthermore, people engaging in the same type of activity might be driven by different motivators.

People have highlighted play as a tool that enables them to sustain a healthy life, giving them room to be creative and making them happier. But they've also expressed that modern-day life is quick to steer people away from play and that it feels socially unacceptable to embrace a playful mind-set.

We're hugely thankful to the many people who welcomed us into their homes, both physically and virtually, so we can better understand what drives them to play, and what inhibits play - no matter where, and how, we live.

This year's research has strengthened our belief that play is critical for a better everyday life at home. We will take all our rich insights and continue to design for an ever-changing world.

Let's create a more playful everyday life, together!

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Yesim is a recognised play expert and a creative strategist, understanding the behaviour of people to create new EXPERIENCES AND DEFINE NEW opportunities.

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Drawing on 40 years of experience in psychology, psychotherapy, and research, Roy founded The Langmaid Practice in 2010.

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Danny is the founder of PROJECT AWESOME, A NON-PROFIT organisation that offers free FITNESS CLASSES THAT INFUSE FUN INTO FITNESS FOR ALL. HE IS ALSO an award winning author and celebrated journalist. He was voted by the City of London to be one of the 50 most inspirational people in London, and one of the 100 happiest people in the UK.

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As well as being a science teacher, Jasper is head of secondary curriculum and assessment at Ark; an international charity with a vision to transform lives through education.

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