



Exploring Play!

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“We see the joy of play in children’s faces as they swing in a school park. But in our own lives, we tend to think of play as only a guilty pleasure, a distraction from “real” work and responsibilities. Play *is* fun, but it is anything but trivial. It is a basic biological drive as integral to health as sleep or nutrition. When we play, we are open to possibility and the sparks of new insights. Play – defined as any kind of purposeless, all-consuming restorative activity – is the single most significant factor in determining our success and happiness.”

Check out Stuart Brown’s 2009 book *Play* after you begin your exploration with these excerpts:

Take Your Play History to enhance your own sense of play in your life.

Start this exercise by spending some time thinking about what you did as a child that really got you excited, that really gave you joy. Was it reading comic books? Building a tree house? Making stuff with Mom and Dad?

Helpful questions to stimulate your thinking about play in your own life:

When have you felt free to do and be what you choose?

Is that a part of your life now? If not, why not?

What do you feel stands in the way of your achieving some times of personal freedom?

Are you now able to feel that what engages you most fully is almost effortless? If not, can you recall when you were able to experience such times? Describe. Imagine settings that allow that sort of engagement.

Search your memory for those times in your life when you have been at your very best. (These are usually authentic play times, and give you clues as to where to go for current play experiences.)

What have been the impediments to play in your life?

How and why did some kinds of play disappear from your repertoire?

Are you able to imagine and feel that the things you most desire and enjoy are really the things you ought to have? Why or why not?

How free are you now as you play with your friends and family? Or do you treat them as an extension of a dutiful responsibility?

Find the joy in your past and your half way to create it in your present life.

Brown's Eight play personality types are:

The Joker

- Play revolves around some kind of nonsense. Making people laugh. Practical jokes.

The Kinesthete

- People who like to move. Need to move in order to think. Find themselves happiest moving. Naturally want to push their bodies and feel the results. Competition is not the main focus. The activity is only a forum for engaging in their favorite activity.

The Explorer

- Each of us started our lives by exploring the world around us. Some people never lose their enthusiasm for it. Exploration becomes their preferred avenue into the alternative universe of play – their way of remaining creative and provoking their imagination. It can be physical – going to new places. It can be emotional - searching for a new feeling or deepening of the familiar through music, movement, flirtation. It can be mental - researching a new subject or discovering new experiences and points of view while remaining in their armchair.

The Competitor

- Breaks through into euphoria and creativity of play by enjoying a competitive game with specific rules, and enjoys playing to win. Loves fighting for number one.

The Director

- Enjoys planning and executing scenes and events. Born organizers. Can be the dynamic center of the social world. All the world's a stage, and the rest of us are players in the director's game.

The Collector

- The thrill is to have and to hold the most, the best, the most interesting collection of objects or experiences.

The Artist/Creator

- The joy is found in making things. May show them to other people or never show others.

The Storyteller

- The imagination is the key to the kingdom of play. Creating stories or reading stories. People make themselves part of the stories. Performers of all sorts are storytellers, creating an imaginative world through dance, acting, magic tricks, or lectures.