

## PREFACE

The research and reading done for this project have explored the realms of behavior and optimal performance for human beings. From an academic view, play convincingly appears to be the most useful state of being to manifest innovation and productivity in people. The outcome of spontaneous and unbidden activity appears to be quite advantageous, especially to the adult intellect. However the author has realized, through the exploration of this project, that the inherent study of utility in play has misdirected the research from the beginning. Three conclusions have been drawn from this experience.

First, ultimately, nobody can define or categorize play. Play is continually changing, building up, and falling apart. It is not a structure or based in a language. Every description of play is separate from the actual experience. In order to be spontaneous and unbidden, each person has to create the sense of play for him or herself. Cultural conditioning creates boxes and labels, but creation continues to do the improbable or miraculous as to destroy the commonly held beliefs. Innovation and creativity occur when one moves outside of the box. It is essential to recognize the temporary nature and limited capacity of talking about play.

Second, although it is easy and convenient to attack the rigid, formal, and over-controlling models that appear to kill creativity and play, the author recognizes the overwhelming need to model play himself. Anyone can find problems or condemn the actions of others, but the real leader is the one who can live, act, and do the alternative possibilities. Walking the talk is much more effective than talking the walk. By writing this paper, the author can only have a minimal impact without otherwise manifesting a life of

play. The social protestors find problems to fight against while the social activists find solutions on which to take action.

Lastly, play is beyond limitations of utility. As soon as the adult observers find usefulness in play, it is habituated to serve the cultural constraints. When play has a specific direction or purpose, the spontaneity and flow is lost. Business managers, teachers, or parents who intend to encourage creativity actually kill it when they say when, where, and how it is to be done. For a child, there need be no reason or utility to play. They just play; it is what they are driven to do. Play can only produce more play. Any thoughts other than the play itself distract the attention and crumble the play. Original play that is spontaneous and unbidden could not possibly have any utility.

Play is who we are when we are at our best as human beings. To those in search of innovation and productivity, play is an effective route to follow. The experience of play is the incentive or intrinsic reward while innovation and productivity are the outcomes. Finally, please do not take my word or that of the experts whom I make reference to in this paper, but go experience play for yourself and allow your own senses to report back to you whether this works or does not. The journey of a lifetime waits for those who follow their hearts.

Through the experience of writing this paper, I have learned many new insights as to the tensions between work and play. Entering this project with a playful ambition, I had an idealized sense of how play should fit into business and life. Picking Henry Sayre, OSU Art Professor, to be my mentor was an easy route to ensure an open and lighted-hearted supervisor that would allow me to play. He freely let me go to write this paper in a less serious style than most academic research with interludes or “play sections” to test the limits of our culture. Next, I chose Jonathan King, OSU Business Professor, to be on my

committee because I knew that he would agree with the essence of my project. His material and insights aligned with my ideas. Lastly, I asked Jack Drexler, OSU Business Professor, to finish my committee because of his management background. Upon presenting him with my paper focused on using only intrinsic rewards of play to spur innovation and productivity, I faced much objection. Drexler and King are in opposite camps in terms of motivating workers with external versus internal rewards. The challenging conversation that I engaged in with Drexler offered the greatest learning experience of this entire project. I met with someone who disagreed with me, and I had to rethink my foundational points and question my assumptions. Drexler's addition to my committee exemplified the greatest lesson where I could learn about the tensions between work and play.

Play can only be recognizable as “play” within a framework of discipline. Systems of interaction for human life create a dynamic stress between laborious work for survival and freedom of expression and playful being. Structures and ordering systems of culture organize the work and play. Play can only be defined against work and lies in a continual tension within the framework and structures of life. By submitting to and aligning with the structures of an organization, one lives within the boundaries and is rewarded with the freedom to play. The following four metaphors more clearly describe this dynamic: Within the structures, laws, and labors of a society, carnival exists as an opportunity to play and test the unknown. One submits to a society and its limits and lives within its benefits and playtime. In another example, the Nike Corporation in Beaverton, Oregon hires its employees that choose to give themselves over to the rules and operational structures of the company. Within this framework, two hours of free play are available for the people each day along with other opportunities for relaxed behavior. Free play is defined within and in

contrast to the deadlines, projects, and rules. This paper offers a great metaphor. Various requirements for the work are laid forth by the Honors College and the English language for footnotes, sentence structure, and format. The interludes are free play that can only be recognized as such against the given workload assignments and limits. Lastly, this Honors Thesis has demonstrated the tensions between work and play. Sayre willingly let me go and play in order to bump up against the requirements of my committee members. Only by facing the rigorous expectations of Drexler can the playfulness of my project be seen. Play is the opportunity to test the consequences of one's actions against the limits of the cultural expectations.

Work and play create a dynamic condition in our culture today. I have learned that play and freedom of being can only be recognized as such within a discipline. There are plenty of structures within the world of business. By being clearer with these frameworks in expression and implementation, play will be able to exist and to spur innovation and productivity. By submitting to the rules and expectations, one is rewarded with play opportunities. Laborious tasks are intertwined with moments of being spontaneous and unbidden.

Many people feel trapped by the boundaries and limitations of work unfortunately. No option, flexibility, or courage to step into the unknown is available to their senses. This paper explores the world of play where these structures can no longer be over burdensome, but rather resemble a game. Play can only be defined when one accepts the rules of the game. Therefore, structure and conditions for life cannot be completely separated from play, but rather give play its depth and meaning. By understanding these interactions, one can learn to not be a slave to the various games.

## **INTRODUCTION: FOR WHAT ARE WE CREATED?**

The easiest secret to keep is the one that nobody wants to hear. The easiest questions not to ask are the ones to which nobody wants to respond. What if we were to ask these questions: What other purpose for life could there possibly be than to have fun playing? How could anything be of more value than the experience of full and complete joy in the moment-by-moment game of life? Why would anyone pursue something other than the timeless adventures and mysteries continually offering new fascination and appreciation to daily life? Would these questions reveal secrets to a culture of consumers who are dying quickly in the rat race of life? Today, many people ponder the meanings of life but few stop to listen to their design and to the heartbeat of creation. We do as our adult models tell and condition us to do.

The alternative meaning adults and institutions of our culture give to the meaning of our life is **HARD WORK**. For this paper, work, independent of the activity, is a state of being where the focus is on getting material possessions or external rewards that leave one feeling tired, worn-out, heavy, laborious, and dissatisfied. Work is the result of analysis and prejudgments that leaves one feeling manipulated. The public school systems engrain in the students to work hard at getting good grades and passing the tests so they can gain more content. Corporations and businesses of America demand their employees to work long hours in laborious tasks to make products and to move up the chain of command. Religious leaders suggest that we have faults and inadequacies that require correction through good works. Fashion magazines and television beauty programs condition the viewers to work diligently at losing weight, at changing hair color, and at maintaining a self-image in tune

with the trends. Athletic coaches persuade their kids that hard work and doing the right things pays off in the form of championships. The government requires the average workers to spend the first four to five months of each year hard at work to pay taxes. The parents tell the youth to work hard at school to get a good job. The bosses tell the employees to work hard for an early and comfortable retirement. The retirement communities assist the elderly at living because the work is too hard. When we die, people have to work hard at making it through the funeral and moving on with life. Where does it stop?

The children of the world continually invite us to PLAY. For this project, play is a state of being where an activity is pursued for the inner reward of joy, love, or satisfaction, regardless of the task. Instinctive and unasked play is the dropping of prejudgments to freely enter an experience. We all begin life as players – infants and youngsters are driven to play with the world around them. They play with their family and animals, in sandboxes and mud-puddles, and among the toys of their non-stop playground. Their learning expands rapidly as the children quickly adapt to their environments. They experience, adjust, experience, adjust, experience, adjust – movement into the unknown is a continual process that adults call play. Sages throughout history have continually advised the civilized adults to learn about their design by following their playful children. Christ taught his followers that one must become like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. Lao Tzu revealed that wise men see and do as little children do.

What in our biological design has creation given us to perform at our best? Rather than chasing after the latest fashion or trendy form, the truths in life can be found in our functioning. The guiding question changes from “what is right and wrong?” to a roadmap for life found in the question “what works?” What satisfies you? What makes you happy?

When do you feel the most alive? What thoughts relax your body? How do you experience refreshment and ease? Do what works and stop doing what does not work.

The beauty of looking to children allows us to move beyond the cultural conditioning manifested in adults' disease. The children offer us a pristine and unsoiled view of our design. By observing infants, we can remind ourselves how creation has intended life to be.

Are we created to work hard doing serious business? Is growth meant to be difficult, painful, and slow? Is our time on this planet about getting the perfect job, the perfect beautiful spouse, the perfectly large home, the perfect luxury car, and the large trophy for perfectly winning? This is how we are currently living as a society. The stories that we tell each other suggest this is how it is supposed to be, and the pain, disappointment, and sorrow from not meeting the expectations have become a normal part of life.

This paper will explore new alternatives and possibilities of the daily avenues of life in business, education, and parenting. By looking at various aspects of hard work versus hard play, the nature of optimum performance will be revealed. What makes the great musicians, athletes, artists, businesspeople, car mechanics, and gardeners the most creative and efficient at their vocation? How can others do all of the right things as their adult figures suggest and yet continually fail to succeed? When are we most creative, having a steady stream of new ideas? When are we most efficient, where performance is effortless and eloquent? This project will quench and then dissolve the adult mind that is otherwise known as "intellect" and craves utility rather than "childish pursuits in life." The utility of play is beyond our wildest imagination.

**SPONTANEOUS AND UNBIDDEN PLAY  
IS THE MOST USEFUL STATE OF BEING  
TO SUPPORT CONTINUAL INNOVATION AND  
TO UNLEASH MAXIMUM PRODUCTIVITY.**

## CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF PLAY

In order to understand our current ideas and understanding of play clearly, it is helpful to gaze backwards across time and to explore the various possibilities, practices, places, and purposes of play. Cultures express themselves through their creative activities and free play. The moments when life is acted upon spontaneously show the true nature of people.

Although our society views play as a creation of culture to ease the stressfulness of serious work, a closer investigation reveals play is much deeper and older. Internationally recognized play specialist Fred Donaldson PhD, in his book *Playing by Heart*, describes how “play is a gift of Creation, not an artifact of culture.”<sup>1</sup> This points to the prehuman, precultural times before conceptualization and learned responses. Donaldson uses the term original play to distinguish between play as the source of creation and love and the adulterated cultural forms of play as contesting and competition. Primordial and indigenous societies lived much differently than modern people without the concept of separating work from play.

A few primordial societies have survived deep within the Amazon jungle untouched by the poisonous sprawl of modern civilizations. Recently, anthropologists have seen glimpses a few thousand years back in time by discovering these indigenous people. Their studies and observations paint a picture of life and play older than our cultural notions.

Anthropologist and author Jean Liedloff studied one of the Amazon tribes known as the Yequanas. She recognized how these people violated civilization’s rules for human behavior and recorded it in her book *The Continuum Concept*. Most obviously, there was no



word for “work” in the Yequana language.<sup>2</sup> They had no concept or general language construct for work – only the activities involved. Without any signs of unhappiness or labor, these people approached every facet of life with a lightness of ease and sense of play. “They did not distinguish work from other ways of spending time,” notes Liedloff.<sup>3</sup> She tells stories of the women leaving their fireside several times daily to cross treacherous hillsides and slippery ravens to the river to collect only minimal amounts of water. There was no expression of haste, hurry, or increase in carrying capacity to lessen the “work,” but rather they warmly socialized and played with the children along the way.

Liedloff shared a story where she and two Italian men joined some Amazon Indian men on a canoe trip. They reached a particular point where they needed to carry their heavy wooden canoes around a large waterfall. The half-mile, multi-day portage through big boulders in the hot sun was an inch-by-inch task. The strains, pumps, and brushes left the Italians tense, frowning, losing their tempers at everything, and cursing nonstop. On the other hand, the Indians had a fine time, laughed at the unwieldiness of the canoe, making a game of the battle, relaxed between pushes, laughing at their scrapes and especially amused when the canoes, as it wobbled forward, pinned one, then another, underneath it.<sup>4</sup> The men shared the same task and pains, but the differences in well-being of the modern men diverged from the indigenous men. This opens the possibility of play being older than civilized culture and points to the potential for light-heartedness in all activities.

Looking upstream toward the many tributaries forming the raging river of Western civilization, one can see the springs of play that have formed our culture. Author Johan Huizinga, in his book *Homo Ludens* (Latin for *Man at Play*), describes the root of cultural play:

The spirit of play... is older than culture itself and pervades all life like a veritable ferment. Ritual grew up in sacred play; poetry was born in play and nourished on play; music and dancing were pure play. Wisdom and philosophy found expression in words and forms derived from religious [play]. The rules of warfare, the conventions of noble living were built up on play-patterns. We have to conclude, therefore, that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come from play like a babe detaching itself from the womb; it arises in and as play, and never leaves it.<sup>5</sup>

The process of culture is creative and dynamic like a child at play, however many participants have lost the awareness of this light-hearted spirit. Our cultural ancestors recognized that spontaneity for a human being is like water for a tulip.

Ancient Roman society could not live without games. For those people, “They were as necessary to their existence as bread,” notes Huizinga in his study of the play-element in culture.<sup>6</sup> The playfulness is very clear in Roman art and literature that is based in Latin, a language of engagement and inner joy. Colorful celebrations, lavish community festivals, athletic games, and circuses, being the most obvious sense of play, provided the life sources of pleasure in Roman times from which the creative lifestyles flourished.

The times of the Middle Ages began to show signs of separating play from brutal fieldwork, plagues, and murders. Special time was set aside for festivals and carnivals that laid within the labor of everyday life. Nonetheless, the oppressed began to use play as an escape and experienced much pleasure at its core. Huizinga describes, “Medieval life was brimful of play; the joyous and unbuttoned play of the people, full of pagan elements that had lost their sacred significance and been transformed into jesting and buffoonery, or the solemn and pompous play of chivalry and the sophisticated play of courtly love.”<sup>7</sup> Carnivals,

traveling minstrels, improvisational theater, and religious rituals are examples of attempts to experience pleasure and joy amidst the suffering.

Even during the Renaissance and its artistic and scientific discoveries, the experience of joy was present. “The whole mental attitude of the Renaissance was one of play. This striving, at once sophisticated and spontaneous, for beauty and nobility of form is an instance of culture at play.”<sup>8</sup> The splendors of the period were nothing but an eloquent and solemn masquerade in the allegories and emblems of the idealized past. The architecture, graphic arts, and poetry sparkled in the free playtimes.

The following seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries separated increasingly a person’s play from their work, and the sense of play throughout the culture declined. According to Huizinga, “The nineteenth century had lost all feeling of its play-qualities.”<sup>9</sup> The loss of naturalness and increase in formality through Western cultures is most obviously displayed in the highly popularized use of the wig during these times. The sophisticated people took their free moving, unattached, natural hair and fashionably pinned it up tightly so it would not move and covered it with an artificial covering of styled hair. Like the wig, the playfulness in humans became tensely rigid, bound-up, and often covered with unnatural replacements.

The state of play following the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is rapidly disappearing among the adults of the Western culture. Work is of the primary interest and pleasure is the final pursuit when the individual takes care of all the serious business of life. Some people argue by saying that our society as a whole is devoted more to pleasure than any society of the past. Wendy Berry, in her writing *What Are People For?*, remarks, “That there can be pleasure industries at all, exploiting our apparently

limitless inability to be pleased, can only mean that our economy is divided from pleasure and that pleasure is gone from our workplaces and our dwelling places.”<sup>10</sup> To eliminate drudgery of fieldwork, we put people in office cubicles sitting in front of a computer monitor all day. Pleasure and play can only be hobbies when they are separated from one’s work or vocation.

Our culture distinguishes play from work by space and time limits. Play is to occur in enclosed facilities called playgrounds, sports fields or courts, sandboxes, parks, dancehalls, choir rooms or during certain times like Christmas Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, January 1<sup>st</sup>, after 5pm, Friday nights, birthday parties, wedding days, twenty-minute recesses, after school, or while the game clock is running. Play outside of these and other cultural boundaries is often labeled weird, immature, “psycho,” bizarre, childish, inefficient, evil, or wasteful. On the other hand, work is what we are supposed to be doing the rest of the time to be useful, productive contributors to society. But, are we truly most useful, productive contributors when at work? Or are these qualities satisfied in play?

## **INTERLUDE: IN A LAND BEFORE TIME (AND WORK)**

Imagine for a moment a period where the sense of time was dramatically different from our current experience. Think what it could have been like a few hundred thousand years ago. What if before culture and life as we adults know it, our ancestors lived in a land without time? Possibly, human beings lived in-place and joyously on this planet where there was no “time” as we know it. There were no mornings, no afternoons, no evenings, and no nights. There were no clocks, no calendars, no appointment books and no schedules or deadlines. Work, being the burdensome experience of an activity, was not even a possibility. Time, as our cultural concept, did not exist because the people lived in touch with the play of the universe. Each moment lasted an eternity for these people who lived harmoniously in their human bodies for a few hundred years before altering form. Full and complete joy was who they all were. They had nowhere to go, nowhere to be, nothing to do, and no one to go and see. Directions and plans were taken from the moment-by-moment impulses of intuition as they flowed in harmony with life’s rhythms. There was no tomorrow to worry about or yesterday to think about; the present moment was the only possibility for attention, action, and admiration. Not only were their minds without time but also their bodies were without age. Our ancestors did not grow old, but rather the two-hundred-year-old women reflected the youth of the new babies. Development and maturation were about growing young and feeling fresh and light. These human beings played, and played, and played by allowing themselves freedom of being. In a land before time, our ancestry lived with nothing to get or accomplish, so they did not hesitate or wait, but played in the present moment. This play lasted for millions of years effectively before the concept of work.

## CHAPTER 2: END OF CHILDHOOD PLAY

Much like the absence of play in the adult communities in our first world culture that has declined throughout history, today's children are taught to grow up and stop playing when they become adults. When do kids have to stop being kids and become something "more" in life? When do fantasy and imagination die to satisfy the structure of the real world? When is the impulse to play starved out by the conditioning of hard work? An investigation into these questions and the current end of childhood play in the twenty-first century will demonstrate adults' intellectual need for utility and for success in terms of current societal norms.

We all start life as players. However, infants appear to many people as working for their survival. In our culture, the apparent strenuous activity to be understood, get food, and conduct biological processes has been promoted by painfully violent birthing practices, lack of in-arm experience, absence of genuine bonding with parents, and unhealthy diets. In more natural and bonded cultures, it is apparent that infant struggles are actually very playful. Overall, infants and children across the planet in each culture share play as their instinctive calling in life. World famous expert in child development and brain growth, Joseph Chilton Pearce clarifies in his book *Magical Child*, "Children are driven by millions of years of genetic encoding to follow intuitively their only road to survival and intelligence – which is play."<sup>11</sup> This is not something taught to them by their parents or culture but rather arises from deep within their biological design. For the children there is no other choice or possibility. Michael Murphy, author and specialist in human performance and athleticism,

describes how children “have a deep, uncontrollable, irreversible drive to play.”<sup>12</sup> Ideas of work, seriousness, or the real world do not exist in our pristine state of being as youngsters.

So, why do these players ever stop doing what they are born to do and love with all of their heart? The answer lies in their adult models that tell stories and live out the concept of work before play. Donaldson remarks, “Children ask for playmates and we give them adults.”<sup>13</sup> As a society, we are out of touch with the deepest needs and desires of our youth, our next generation, and our own future. Very early in life around ages three to four, our youth “clearly learn two things: first, to separate play and work, and second, that work comes before play,”<sup>14</sup> observes Donaldson from his extensive time spent playing with young children. In other words, activities are divided into being restricted or unrestricted, and fun or difficult and boring. Children learn that if there is work, the uneventful and restricted tasks to be accomplished, then it must be done before engaging in the fun or playful tasks. Slowly, play is removed from the primary focus to the outside edges of life.

A variety of social conditioning systems use punishments and rewards to instill playtime as a secondary focus to work as human beings develop. The most obvious is in the public school system that most children begin to attend at age five or six. How often do you hear, “All they want to do is play!” by complaining teachers and adults? Teachers use grades and detention to force kids to sit still, listen, and follow directions in the classroom setting. Recess becomes a controlled play environment scrunched between the “real” learning of schoolwork. The kids protest, yet the adults continue. Free play limited to after school time slowly disappears at age seven to eight as adults fill up the schedules with many organized and structured activities. At ten to eleven years of age, recess disappears along with arts and crafts as schoolwork monopolizes after-school time. The children lose the ability to drop

prejudgments as they are continually on guard of possible punishment for getting out of control. They are in training to become adults. Donaldson reveals that education controlled by adults becomes a project of teaching children to take directions and develop longer attention spans which is the opposite of spontaneous and unbidden play.<sup>15</sup>

“From the perspective of the modern adults, to mature away from child’s play is to free oneself from the power of the pleasing delusion of childhood’s charms and spells in order to carry out the important work of adults life.”<sup>16</sup> The fantasy, make-believe, and imaginative play have less room in the adult’s intellect than things with utility in the “real” world. “More profound, more subtle and more disturbing is the feeling that somehow childhood dies with natural causes rather than from our calculated acts.”<sup>17</sup> We have normalized the condition that we know as childhood’s end or post-adolescent depression. The loss of spontaneity and dreamtime is widely considered the way it is supposed to be. Moving beyond the childish play is what adults think is the necessary step to be an innovative and productive member of society. Dropping prejudices to explore unknown realms by goofing off and giggling are replaced with work schedules and difficult routines.

To beautifully describe this end of child’s play, Murphy uses a metaphor from a Jonathan Swift story: “We [adults] are like the little Pusions who have chained the Gulliver in us down.”<sup>18</sup> Only in play does Gulliver, our higher creative self, let loose and return us to the state of blissful childhood. The adults have taken what creation has given our children and us and crumpled it up into boxes and categories, virtually ending the possibility of free flowing and natural movements. The end of childhood play is experienced by most every human being in our modern first world culture as structured, hard work appears to satisfy the need for adult intellectual utility. Is this working?



## **INTERLUDE: NEVER-ENDING DREAM**

Take a few moments to dig deep into your memories of childhood. Go back to a time when anything was possible and imagination was the name of your game. Remember the hidden dreams, visions, and wishes of your youth. Absorb yourself completely in the deep longings of your heart that captivated your imaginative play in the long summer days. The dreams and visions of greatness full of potential dominated your mind and passion. Bring them into clear focus with bright colors as these pictures lived within you as a playful youngster. Now imagine that you had full and complete support from your parental and adult models to continue playing your dream part in life. Ask yourself what would it have been like if you had received nothing but endless encouragement and affirmation from your adult models that you would manifest these dreams. What if these adults were playing and living their dreams? How would your life be today? What circumstances, beliefs, ideas, feelings would be different? Who would you be today if the playmate within was completely safe to become whatever it desired? Ask yourself, what if your deepest fantasies were a never-ending dream and reality at the same time? A sense of joy and laughter begins to roll uncontrollably when one sees the answers of these questions have little to do with work, jobs, and labor, yet everything to do with play, fun, and happiness. What if we could see the comical nature of our adult lives by growing deeply in touch with those endless childhood dreams and could provide infinite encouragement and affirmations to our children and ourselves? What would our world and our work be like if everyone young and old played out their dreams?

### CHAPTER 3: OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE AND PERFORMANCE

What is it that we really want out of our life experience? The adults of our culture each have their own list of qualities to describe their desires. We want to prove ourselves useful to the societal expectations. The idealized themes of innovation and productivity are a reverberating mantra throughout the lives of adults in our current culture. Regardless of the context or period, adults desire to be the one with the newest, latest idea and the person who can accomplish the most or produce the most successful thing. Deep down everyone wants to be all they can be. Given the desired realization of potentials, when are human beings most useful at experiencing optimal performance? When is enjoyment and satisfaction high with effort and interference low? What factors lead to our most useful state of being? Are we continually energized and experiencing optimal performance hard at work – or are we hard at play?

People in all walks of life can recall peak moments in life at home, in athletics, on the job, with hobbies or in other relational activities where their enjoyment was complete and performance was easy. Professor and former chair of the department of psychology at the University of Chicago, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi studies these optimal experiences – the source of creativity and invention. He shares a few examples of people who recalled heightened awareness when immersing activities became spontaneous and automatic. In his book, *Flow*, he shares a dancer's description of such a moment. "Your concentration is very complete. Your mind isn't wandering, you are not thinking of something else; you are totally involved in what you're doing... Your energy is flowing very smoothly. Your feel relaxed, comfortable and energetic."<sup>19</sup> In another example, a mom who enjoys of time spent

with her small daughter. Providing insight into optimal experience, she describes, “Her reading is the one thing that she is really into, and we read together. She reads to me, and I read to her and that’s a time when I sort of lose touch with the rest of the world. I’m totally absorbed in what I’m doing.”<sup>20</sup>

Lastly, a rock climber reverberates a deeper understanding of flow:

The mystique of rock climbing is climbing; you get to the top of the rock glad it’s over but really wish it would go forever. The justification of climbing is climbing... you are a flow. The purpose of the flow is to keep on flowing. It is not a moving up but a continuous flow; you move up to keep the flow going. There is no possible reason for climbing except the climbing itself; it’s self-communication.<sup>21</sup>

Whether they are artists, musicians, scientists, athletes, or technicians, people who reach these optimal experiences describe them in a similar fashion. Enjoyment of the activity is so engaging that the people have no absent thoughts and are fully present. A freedom to be spontaneous in movement and in mind allows these people to explore the realms of being. Actions, thoughts, and feelings unite into a continuous flow.

From his extensive studies of flow research, Csikszentmihalyi has found eight major components of flow or peak performances:

- (1) The tasks are within one’s reach of doing. (A person must believe that they can do the activity within the realm of their skills.)
- (2) One must be able to concentrate on the doing. (Interferences of prejudgments or concerns of what others will think of them stop getting in the way of the activity itself.)
- (3) Clear goals are created. (A descriptive and specific vision or picture is necessary to model the course of the performance.)
- (4) Immediate feedback is available. (Experiences from which one can adjust in order to fit the desired outcome allow the flow to continue.)

- (5) One acts with deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life. (The tensions dissolve when one's attention is present and the relaxation allows for elegant movements.)
- (6) One is allowed to exercise a sense of control over their actions. (A person's internal signals and desires create a sense of ownership and facilitate freedom from within.)
- (7) Concern for self disappears, yet paradoxically, the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over. (The defensive tendencies drop as self-consciousness is not longer an issue and the mind-body expands in its sense of ease and comfort.)
- (8) The sense of the duration of time is altered. (The moment can seem to stop in eternity or the time can fly by without notice.)<sup>22</sup>

Once of the most universal and distinct features of optimal experience is that the person becomes so absorbed and involved in the activity that self-awareness spontaneously dissolves and the sense of separation with the action stops. The deep union between the doer, the action, and the object captives all senses. The analysis, judgment, and worrying disappear with the societal conditioning of what is possible, and new potentials are realized. When a person forgets the way it is "supposed to be" or the limitations, new horizons and growth can occur. The purpose of the flow is to keep on flowing.

The paradoxical nature optimal experience is described in the concept of "projecting the future but playing in the now." Without a clear goal or method for feedback, one cannot be deeply drawn into an activity. Although the sense of self disappears, a desired outcome or basis for activity that provides feedback is part of deep enjoyment. For example, a tennis player receives immediate feedback from an opponent who returns the shot. From this information, the server can become immersed in the process of hitting each shot. Without the point of reference, adjustments cannot be made. Purely creative activities, like art and

music, often times have no clear goals that are apparent in the beginning, but as the process unfolds, the person uses internal senses and desires to match feedback from their project in order to adjust and become more engaged. Entering flow is like listening to a car stereo system. When installing an in-dash CD player, one cannot know if the installation was successful until the speakers are wired up and provide auditory feedback. In optimal experience, goals and feedback are necessary to give the process shape and responsiveness.

The necessary sense of safety and comfort, to fully direct one's attention to the task at hand, brings to light the issue of motivation and rewards. All action has a motivating factor; there is either an external or an internal reward. Seeking to please another person, to do the "right" thing, to follow directions, or to gain some content like money or a material end are all forms of external rewards. Seeking external acknowledgements leaves one subject to manipulation where fear, threat, or intimidation from these outside forces can pull one away from one's center or source of life. The fear of abandonment motivates one to move in a given direction but only supplies worries, anxieties, and mental interferences. Attention can never be fully present with the possibility of the external reward being taken away or reprimanded. "A person who is constantly worried how others will perceive her, who is afraid of creating the wrong impression, or of doing something inappropriate, is also condemned to permanent exclusion from enjoyment."<sup>23</sup> Seeking external acceptance always weighs one down with the worry of "what will they think of me (if I do 'good' or if I do 'bad')?". Tired, worn-down, burnout workers across the country are chasing after these external rewards and sacrificing their youthful lives. One is left confined to the limitations as defined by others.

On the other hand, intrinsic motivation results from being fully absorbed in the

moment at hand. Pursuing an activity for the love of it, the enjoyment, the satisfaction, or the wonder are clear examples of intrinsic motivation. The deep enjoyment of optimal experience is so rewarding that even expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile, simply to be able to feel it. In heightened awareness, the doing is the end. "It is when we act freely, for the sake of the action itself rather than for ulterior motives, that we learn to become more than we were."<sup>24</sup> Experiencing the moment is the reward in flow activities. OSU Honors College Dean Joe Hendricks tells a beautiful example of intrinsic motivation. Navajo sand painters clear a flat surface and intricately and precisely decorate it with colored sand. Many hours are spent creating marvelous designs, shapes, and colors that cause all observers to be in awe. At the end of the day, the sand painters stand up and kick over their sand paintings.<sup>25</sup> These human beings paint, not for money, praise, accolades, or collections, but rather for the experience of painting. This is when one is operating at full capacity.

So is this hard work or hard play? When young children are fully absorbed in an activity, the adult observer calls it play. When grown children (adults) are fully absorbed in an activity, the adult observer calls it work. We have created a language of confusion and ambiguity because both are doing the action for similar internal rewards. However, when a person takes action, hard play is light, enjoyable, growing, and absorbing, while hard work is heavy, laborious, tiring, and an undesirable effort after an external reward. Hard work is not hard play. However, hard play can appear to the observer as hard work. The fully engaged adult participant may appear on the outside to be serious and hard at work, but the internal physiological experience is fun, light, engaged, energized, and thus characteristic of play. Therefore, the adult culture has confused itself within its language.

Nothing has become more confused than our cultural concept of competition. We have created meanings for competition to be zero-sum games where there is a clear winner and a loser and everything is “us against them.” These external interferences cripple flow and play by making the chase for victory with awards and prizes that get in the way of the activity. No other option is available except battling. On the other hand, the root word for competition comes from the Latin term that means “to strive together.” Cooperation and group bonding heighten human experience and self-improvement. The flow or intrinsic rewards of life call one to continual excellence rather than the short-lived victory. The peak performers at play are absorbed in doing rather than talking about how their next victory will get them somewhere. Freedom and choice are available for the internal play of excellence.

It is difficult for many adults to say, “I get paid to play for a living,” when s/he is captivated by their vocation. As noted earlier in our cultural history, we have worked to eliminate childish things from adult life except, of course, children themselves because when adults play with kids, it is almost a transformation for them, back to their own childhood. However, all great performers who learn to utilize their mind-bodies to be innovative and productive have learned how to in play. Chuck Hogan, world famous golf coach and expert in human learning, clarifies, “All of the discoveries and discoverers – the scientists, politicians, statesmen and women, doctors and financiers – have been driven by the deep desire to play (which looks like work and is often described as such).”<sup>26</sup> The individuals who are great at whatever they do never lose the joy of play. Their work is their play, and their play is their work. If one is to reach their desires of optimal experience and performance, spontaneous and unbidden play is the door to new possibilities.

## INTERLUDE: THE ZONE

Imagine for a moment, an experience that you have had in life that was captivating and compelling beyond belief. Remember the internal and external phenomena within the activity that fully absorbed your attention. Think of a time when you did more or became more than you previously believed possible. You were in a flow, also known by some as the zone. The zone is who we are created to be. What is this captivating state like?

The zone is what draws one from the inside to pursue a desirable activity in life. In this state, one's attention is fully present and unifies the action and activity. Effort is eloquent and zero energy is expended. An extreme sense of ease and comfort envelops the experience. All worries, concerns, and problems dissolve into the stillness of life. The clarity of mind and purity of heart channel energy effortlessly to the task. The sense of the universe at play invites impulsive and not-commanded action. Thoughts, feelings, and actions unify into one being and the pleasure transcends imagination. All things are possible and awareness expands as prior limitations dissipate. Normal thinking, analysis, and judgment stop as one moves freely into the uncreated core of the moment. Time stops, and a sense of eternity, with no beginning and no end, best describes the present moment in the zone.

A dropping of prejudgments and a loving appreciation of life allow one to do absolutely nothing yet to be all possibilities in the experience we call flow or the zone. The zone is original play. Play is the zone. We live in this world as youngsters. This is who we always have been and always will be. We recognize this when we get out of our own way and pay attention to play.



## CHAPTER 4: POSSIBILITIES OF PLAY

“The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed,” remarked Albert Einstein.<sup>27</sup> To marvel at the possibilities of life is the heart of a playful person. To think of the impossible and dream about the infinite, one must let go of conditioned limitations. “If we are to come out to play, we must open ourselves to wonder at once terrible and fascinating, of ourselves and of the universe of which we are the ears and eyes and mind of all,” reveals Josephs Campbell, a world authority on mythology and cultural anthropology.<sup>28</sup> Play is how we learn to open up to new possibilities and potentials not previously considered by the conscious mind.

“So what exactly do you mean by play?” most adults question. It is difficult, if not impossible, to define. Play is the dropping of prejudgments to enter an experience freely and openly. Play is creativity – creativity is play. However, intuition and instincts create it anew for each individual. The consuming intellect of many adults’ minds cannot grasp play. Contrary to those who are full of prejudgments like the expert worker that claims to have the answers and know it all, the player knows nothing and continually asks new questions. The expert worker has “got it” and narrowed the realm of possibilities. The player allows “it to get him/her” and expands the vastness of potential outcomes. Donaldson, the playmate specialist, clarifies, “Play is an invitation to unlearn to be a beginner.”<sup>29</sup> Perceived boundaries define what we are capable and not capable of doing or being. When we learn to play, life’s constraints reveal themselves to be flexible, soft, and fluid. Author Gyorgy Dozci

writes, “As limitations they open doors toward the limitless.”<sup>30</sup> Play is the pathway to infinity and beyond. To redefine oneself is to become a beginner at play as explained by Takuan Soho: “The mind simply becomes as it was in the beginning when we knew nothing and had yet to be taught anything at all.”<sup>31</sup> In deep play there is nothing to gain, nothing to prove, and nothing to be.

Play is the greatest learning environment possible. Rather than typical education that involves debilitating conditioning, play is nature’s plan for learning through complete entrainment of the thinking, feeling, and action of the mind-body system and the three levels of the brain. Into what types of play has our culture categorized this learning? Having studied play in world-class athletes and young children, Hogan attempts to depict seven forms of play to better identify the imaginative and creative characteristics of this state of being. As written in *Golf & the Intelligence of Play*, examples of play include:

- (1) Imitative play: A person copies the language, beliefs, behaviors, and techniques of the models in her/his perceptual field.
- (2) Creative play: Skills and inventions are developed by one trying multiple styles and molding them to compose a new form or function.
- (3) Role-playing: A person learns by pretending to be another player, artist, athlete, or scientist by emulating the nuances of technique and mannerisms.
- (4) Visualization play: The internal images that represent experiences or concepts are a continual source of play and recreation for a developing mind-body.
- (5) Symbolic play: The acute imagination of a player forms a world where one object can stand for another.
- (6) Social play: People learn the rules, ethics, morals, and expectations of society through interaction with other human beings.

- (7) Independent play: In the absence of intervening forces outside, a person learns autonomy and confidence to perform in life by having full dominion over their experience.<sup>32</sup>

Although play is beyond categories, these various forms of being report the process of opening potential. These demonstrate how we can do anything, be anyone, go anywhere and have it all without limits or boundaries.

Having explored the physiological and psychological aspects of play and peak experience, a physical explanation of the biological reactions is necessary to fully understand the utility of play. Although the brain has been thought to be the governing systems in human learning, new research indicates the significance of the heart or vascular system in development. As a cellular biologist at Stanford University, Bruce Lipton, PhD describes the vascular system as an on/off switch. He notes that when “on,” safe and open, the body is in growth mode. When a person is in a state of threat, the body shuts “off” its openness and directs the energy on protective, defensive measures and the growth stops. When in a safe environment, all systems are engaged in exploration and receptivity, fully taking in the surroundings.<sup>33</sup> At the Institute of HeartMath research center in Boulder Creek, California, scientists are exploring the physiological mechanisms by which the heart communicates with the brain, thereby influencing information processing, perceptions, performance, emotions, behaviors and health. They have found that the heart is connected neurologically to the brain and releases chemicals to alter states of anxiety or joy. When in the state of love and appreciation, chemicals from the heart dictate the growth of the brain. On the other hand, fear and anxiety disrupt the rhythm of the heart and autonomic nervous systems.<sup>34</sup> This research supports the idea of playing by heart. The sense of fearless play allows one to

literally open up to the processing centers of the mind-body. The cells within the heart are responsible for releasing chemicals that relax the body and heighten awareness. The signals guide the mind-body with a direct connection to the brain. A merry heart truly provides healthy chemical and physiological states of being where ideas can freely flow and energy is strong. The player who pursues an activity for the love of it will also be more productive and innovative than the worker who does it for power, money, or glory.

Once the mind-body system is open to enter an experience, the brain develops connections in its storehouse for later use and reference. The author has gained much insight from time spent with his friend and mentor Chuck Hogan. As a developmental expert in NeuroLinguistic Programming and kinesiology, Hogan has conducted extensive brain research in labs, in books, and in human beings to better understand the process of learning and growth. Hogan has shown the author that in play, the brain actually grows. Brain fibers connect from one neuron to another and from one neuron field to another. Beneath these layers, the trillions of thinking cells that run the brain through synaptic connections are compelled to connect and expand through play.<sup>35</sup> For example, a young child takes a handful of water and throws it on a fire. The known characteristics of water, stored in the water neuron field, are joined with the known characteristics of fire, stored in the fire field. The resulting steam and sizzling creates a new possibility in the young mind at play. The use of imagination to create new combinations and opportunities is crucial for further development and capacity. The brain neurologically wires itself up by making chemical connections between the neurons, axons, and dendrites.

“The most significant outcome of play is the role of play in formation and expansion of relationships. Play is the pivotal constituent of person, social, universal and conceptual

relationships,” asserts Hogan.<sup>36</sup> The internal and external causalities of how things work and operate is the springboard for new ideas. Being able to relate and find interconnectedness is what shapes the new discoveries, efficient performances, and harmonic balances of life on this planet. Original play of learning is not about competition operated out of fear that creates zero-sum, win/loss contests. “Nowhere has the meaning of play been more demeaned than in the idea that it is something that one can win at.”<sup>37</sup> Only through love, trust, and cooperation can relationships build in an individual and in society. Play expands and unifies rather than separates and divides. The human being who optimizes their skills and abilities is the one who functions from the relationships developed through play. On the other hand, the human being who underutilizes their potential is the one who fails to recognize these relational interconnections. Through play, possibilities and potential can manifest themselves in the physical reality experience.

## **INTERLUDE: IF YOU WANT TO SAVE THE WORLD, DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING**

We have crippled our children and our own physical development through over-controlling atmospheres that manipulate behaviors with rewards. Everyone has an idea how the world should be and how others should change. We get in each other's way and do not allow them to spontaneously act on their inner experience. We get in the way of others and ourselves trying to "save" them. What if we all did absolutely nothing to save the world and allowed nature to play its way along?

Imagine, for a minute, a world with no saviors or cultural priests that have the latest fix to your problems. There would be no "how to" books, no experts, and no therapists. By ending judgments of "right" and "wrong," predictions, and prescriptions, the symptoms of paralysis by analysis could cease to exist. Rather than fixing this problem, then that problem, then the other problem, everyone would let go and see that problems dissolve and heal themselves. With no answers to life, yesterday's brilliant solutions could not create today's present calamities. This world would become free to operate from internal signals. The drive to play and adapt to life's changes would free the evolutionary process. Humans could do what they love and follow their dreams without having anyone tell them what they should or should not do or be. One could live defenseless. The learning of the human mind-body would follow instinctual impulses of life and develop new possibilities for interaction. Relationships would thrive and potential realize. The development of the human body would be successful with an open-heart state that is free of threats or punishments. The adult intellects would let go of control and allow the childish intelligence deeply encoded in the DNA to spring forth into a life of harmony and happiness. "If you want to save the world, do

absolutely nothing,” is a way of life that surrenders to the function of creation and trusts in the qualities of love and play. The world would be a playground of possibilities.

## CHAPTER 5: PLAYING THE GAME OF BUSINESS

With increasing pressures for optimal performance, the ongoing jingles of the twenty-first century in America and other first-world countries are “be innovative” and “be productive.” In order to succeed in the demanding and competitive marketplaces, most every business seeks to come up with new ideas for products, services, and processes. In addition, the effectiveness of an organization depends upon how productive the workers are in accomplishing their tasks. These are not secrets held by the insiders but obvious truths about desires and expectations of modern enterprises. Owners and managers want their employees to be all that they can be to help the company.

To illustrate this more clearly, instructors in the OSU College of Business with close ties and experience in the marketplace have continually affirmed the need for creativity in many aspects. Steve Lawton, International Business Professor and advisor to the State of Oregon along with many international corporations, emphasizes, “Innovation is the engine of growth! It is the only way to succeed internationally in today’s business world.” He adds, “Businesspeople need to develop an equidistant point-of-view that looks at the world from multiple cultural and geographic perspectives to efficiently operate in the global markets.”<sup>38</sup> Recognizing the relationships and interconnectedness of complex group systems is necessary.

Author, researcher, and teacher of project management at OSU, Erik Larson emphasizes, “Those employees who get promoted are not those who do a ‘good’ job. Rather those people who develop creative and imaginative projects are the ones who the owners and managers advance further along in the company.”<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, those who follow the same



route will be by-passed by risk-takers and free-thinkers who challenge the normal and rational organizational constraints.

Lastly, revolutionary instructor in business organizational design and systems management at OSU, Jonathan King teaches that in order to be an innovative manager, one must rethink patterns of interaction in a childlike manner of openness to see “outside of the box” and to create new possibilities.<sup>40</sup> The ability to think in circles and explore new ways of seeing by recognizing employees as assets allows one to reach new horizons in the business world.

Without a doubt, most managers desire to have innovative and productive businesses but few succeed at creating playful environments that stimulate the creative juices. Their behaviors and language reflect fear and constraints rather than love and spontaneity. The good intentions of businesspeople fail to meet their desired outcomes. Many workers feel manipulated, overworked, and dissatisfied with their long, uninteresting hours on the job. The long-held model for many businesspeople is the inaccurate notion of “no pain, no gain” and the continual pursuit of more money. “Most jobs... are not designed to make us strong and happy. Their purpose is to make money for someone else.”<sup>41</sup> The modern world of business is doing a great job of crippling potentials and ending play. As professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School, Teresa M. Amabile states, “When I consider all of the organizations I have studied and worked with over the past twenty-two years, there can be no doubt; creativity gets killed more often than it is supported.”<sup>42</sup> Conflicts arise between dollar signs and people. If we keep doing what we are doing, we are going to keep getting what we are getting. What alternatives are available for a manager?

In Amabile's paper, "How to Kill Creativity," she confirmed that "if you want to spark innovation, rethink how you motivate, reward and assign work to people."<sup>43</sup> The hierarchical controls and evaluation systems of interaction need to change in order to alter the culture, behavior, and results of the company from an "organization" into an "imaginization." Amabile offers insights of what environment managers can establish and how they can get out of the way of their employees. The creativity-stimulating hints fall into six categories in the paper: challenge, freedom, resources, work-group features, supervisory encouragement and organizational support.

First, challenge is the most effective way of stimulating creativity by accurately matching people with their task. Given the framework of the organization, knowing the desires and abilities of the employees can nurture play. "Managers can match people with jobs that play to their expertise and their skills in creative thinking and ignite intrinsic motivation," explains Amabile.<sup>44</sup> In order to allow employees to be playful and open to their potential, a manager must give them what they want. This will establish an openness and passion to energize the employee. Successful employers will have to move beyond the typical shallow "working relationship" and truly get to know and understand their employees through bonding and listening. Allowing them to find a challenge that they enjoy so that they can perceive the obstacles as a game of their choice offers many benefits. "If workers really enjoyed their jobs, they would not only benefit personally, but sooner or later, they would... certainly produce more efficiently and reach all the other goals that now take precedence."<sup>45</sup> The trick is for managers to be sensitive enough to the signals as to help find a balance between boredom and overwhelming demand – allow them to play at their own pace.

Next, granting freedom of process is helpful to allow creativity and play to flourish with a sense of ownership. Amabile clarifies, “Creativity thrives when managers let people decide how to climb a mountain; they needn’t however, let employees choose which one.”<sup>46</sup> The amount of input from employees in goal-setting is flexible and needs to be balanced. However, the key is for managers to create a clear and precise vision or goal that is stable and then to allow the employees to use their own methods and skills to accomplish the task. By creating this sound framework, play can be recognized and utilized. Rather than indefinite and continually changing goals or paying only lip service to freedom, an effective manager will establish a simple, unambiguous target and allow the employee to play the game their way.

The allocation of resources such as time and money directly influences creativity and play. “Deciding how much time and money to give a team or project is a judgment call that can either support or kill creativity.”<sup>47</sup> Appropriate deadlines can provide a sense of challenge for players to reach new limits, however it is also essential to provide sufficient time for exploration and incubation activity without a sense of time or other constraints. Innovative companies, like 3M, allow workers free time on the clock at work to explore any interest of theirs. This free play occurs when one chooses to be a part of the organizational structure and is a segment of the daily schedules. Providing adequate resources and funding with explanation of the organization’s financial capabilities allows all of those involved to make connections, see the big picture, and get the job done. The more delegation of responsibility to the workers connects them to see the whole system and to move from internal instincts and understandings.

Work-groups that managers design with people that are diverse, interested in similar things, willing to support each other, and accepting of these unique perspectives create playful environments.<sup>48</sup> Groups with diverse perspectives and areas of knowledge open the range of options and insights to explore. Playful teams are ones who are safe enough and supported by the others to make mistakes and not be afraid of failure. Homogenous groups of people have limited points of view.

Supervisory encouragement helps acknowledge the performance by employees when filled with continued support within the framework of the system. According to Amabile, “Managers in successful, creative organizations rarely offer specific extrinsic rewards for particular outcomes. However, they freely and generously recognize creative work [play] by individuals and teams – often before the ultimate commercial impact of those efforts is known.”<sup>49</sup> Obviously not every idea is worthy of consideration, but only in a safe and supportive environment will the play come naturally and be flowing. According to Ronald Miller, OSU Business Professor and Professional Arbitrator, management can have a performance evaluation that is administrative, a means to issue rewards, promotions or punishments, or developmental, a means to focus on growth, new skills, and advising from the managers, but they cannot do both at the same time.<sup>50</sup> A business must decide if it wants to develop its employees or to administer them. Either a culture meets new possibilities with judgment and criticism, or it does not. “In many companies, new ideas are met not with open minds but with time-consuming layers of evaluation.”<sup>51</sup> Play can only occur when prejudgments dissolve. Successful supervisors can end criticism and see failures as valuable information about what does not work.

Lastly, Amabile describes how organizational support creates a trickle down effect when the leaders throughout the system can make everyone feel a part of the game.<sup>52</sup> Supervisors can only spur creativity and playfulness by exemplifying it themselves rather than merely talking about it. The workers follow the leaders' actions. They do not learn partially by example; they learn one hundred percent by example. In addition, opening the lines of communication for information sharing and collaboration helps the employees to see, feel, and experience the various interconnected relationship within the business.

To avoid the death of creativity, a company must create a safety net for all to find support for risk-taking and exploring new horizons. The result of social play significantly creates interpersonal relationships where everyone can work as one and not against each other. In play, the competition of "me against you" and "us against them" disappears, along with the old barriers to potential.

The most significant area that businesses must rethink and reorganize is the area of rewards in terms of incentive plans. Rewards directly affect motivation. The majority of businesses in the U.S. attempt to motivate their employees by connecting compensation to performance. Studies have continually revealed that supervisors place money as the number one motivation that they think their employees have for doing their job. However, on average, financial rewards are down on the lists at about five or six when employees list their own priorities. Author of *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*, Alfie Kohn has found that manipulation of workers' behavior is not functional. In a paper titled "Why Incentives Don't Work," Kohn vindicated, "Most managers too often believe in the redemptive power of [extrinsic] rewards."<sup>53</sup> Those who use money, vacations, commissions, special privileges, banquets and awards merely achieve short-term behavior modification through manipulation.

Lasting adjustments in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors focused on innovative and productive ends fail under extrinsic motivators. Most managers clearly see that punishment of workers hinders performance by creating an atmosphere of distrust and defensiveness. However, most businesspeople do not see that “punishment and rewards are actually two sides of the same coin. Both have a punitive effect because they are manipulative,” clarified Kohn.<sup>54</sup> Whereas creativity and play build relationships and cooperation, hard work in pursuit of financial or extrinsic rewards breaks relationships. In pursuit of individual gain, the whole divides and everyone loses. Instead of playing with new possibilities, reward-seekers do precisely as they are told. “Whenever people are encouraged to think about what they will get for emerging in a task, they become less inclined to take risks or explore possibilities, to play hunches, or to consider incidental stimuli. In a work, the number one casualty of rewards is creativity [play]. As the late John Condry put it, rewards are the ‘enemies of exploration.’”<sup>55</sup> Too often managers assume that their employees will not do anything if not rewarded. Explained very eloquently by Andrew Leiby, Senior Partner of the Performance Group, “Money is an outcome of high performance. Satisfaction and respect are incentives.”<sup>56</sup> Incentives are the captivating experiences that draw us into an activity, while outcomes are results or byproducts of the activity. In another example, George Morris, former CEO of General Motors, states, “Ultimately money doesn’t make people more productive; if so, the people who get paid the most would be the most productive.”<sup>57</sup> Any human being could testify to the validity of this statement. Often the lower-paid employees complete more daily tasks than the higher-paid ones. So what incentives do employees truly want from coming to their job?

Intrinsic rewards are the lasting motivators to allow productive and innovative players within organizations. Having a sense of accomplishment in performing the work itself is most consistently the top reason for people doing their job. Increased freedom, flexibility, and control to perform the daily tasks allow people to find satisfaction and joy in doing the tasks their way. In summary, the reward excelling at something is to have done it.

Successful stories have occurred in the American business movement known as Lean Production. This has happened by involving employees in all aspects of operations. Performance skyrockets when punishment for unpopular ideas disappears. Some areas of Lean Production look to rename their people from employees to members. Others are considering ways of accounting for their human beings as assets on the balance sheet rather than as expenses. Truly, the workers want respect, participation, satisfaction, and freedom to do what they want, how they prefer, and when they choose. “Productivity and performance improve the most when work is reorganized so that employees have the training, opportunity, and authority to participate in decision-making,” reminds Eileen Appelbam, Associate Research Director of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington D.C.<sup>58</sup> People want to be human beings who can think for themselves and not robots that are continually programmed with instructions or like work horses – constantly chasing the carrot held out in front of their nose.

Another way of framing the development of playful discoveries within large and often stagnant organizations and corporations is to foster “Hot Groups” as described by Jean Lipman-Blumen and Harold J. Leavitt in their book, *Hot Groups*.<sup>59</sup> Hot groups arise within organizations, often without specific planning, to passionately address a rising need. “Hot groups know how to think like children – and that’s good.”<sup>60</sup> They waste no time in paralysis

by analysis but rather take action intuitively in an open manner that contagiously frees brain cells. “Hot groups get silly.”<sup>61</sup> Excessive playfulness amongst adults creates bonds, a sense of cause, and opens up new ways of addressing issues and obstacles. “Hot groups work informally and democratically.”<sup>62</sup> They manage, discipline and make decisions themselves without supervision and control by top management. “Hot groups work very long hours, but they don’t perceive it as work.”<sup>63</sup> The captivation, excitement, and interest in the self-created projects leave no desire to be anywhere else other than in the moment. “Individual performance appraisals disrupt the work of hot groups,” and “Individual incentive schemes don’t help either.”<sup>64</sup> Competition and self-consciousness only slow down these collective efforts. Hot groups are the most dynamic and innovative sections of organizations where workers let go and play in the most productive manner possible with a focus on function rather than form.

As one of the most innovative companies in its industry, Nike has quite successfully created a playful job environment. The new ideas brought forth by efficient employees flourish in the fun corporate environment. As an employee at the Nike Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon, for the last ten years, Barb Horn remarks in a recent interview that the culture is very relaxed and casual. She clarifies, “Nike is a successful innovator because they have learned what people want,”<sup>65</sup> and then give it to them. Thus, Nike managers allow their employees to take an hour-and-a-half to two-hour break sometime during the day for lunch and free time. As a Nike intern and OSU business student, Josiah Lake describes, “It is a given that from 11:30am until 1:00-1:30pm everyone goes out and plays. People play pick-up games on the basketball courts and soccer fields, while others are exercising inside one of the two gyms or running outside on the track and eating lunch.”<sup>66</sup> This free time is a great



opportunity for people from all areas and levels to the company to interact and develop relationships while releasing excess tension and gaining new ideas. In the office, people are free to dress comfortably and can wear whatever they choose. Lake highlights, “If someone is walking around in a suit and tie, you know they are from ‘the outside’ and not from Nike.” The managers give employees projects with clear goals and allow them freedom to make their own decisions as to how to meet the specifications. Horn recalls, “The freedom that I am allowed to have demonstrates that the managers trust me.” Whatever works is the philosophy at Nike. Marketing people often have their music blasting when trying to connect with popular culture and to gain new perspectives. Other employees can be found playing catch with a football down the hallway or bouncing tennis balls off the walls to let go and “recharge their batteries.” For Horn, the most rewarding part of her job is the flexibility, recognition she receives for her work, and the fact of not being micro-managed. In other words, she feels in control rather than being controlled. Nike has successfully created a playful environment that manifests itself in innovative and productive workers.

One of the most influential product development teams in the world, IDEO Inc. in Palo Alto, California, is a clear example of playfulness on the job. The leader of this organization is Dave Kelly, a Stanford graduate, who often mocks corporate America and boasts of his group’s weirdness. “Being playful is hugely important for innovation. Fresh ideas come faster in fun play.”<sup>67</sup> The company prides itself in its ability to design new products through a process of focused chaos, diverse teams, equality without titles, encouraging wild ideas, and deferring judgment. They recognize the need for timelines; however, childlike brainstorming is a unique part of the procedures where quirky ideas that conflict with the boss are encouraged. The team postpones judgments of “good” and “bad”

to later in the development. Maintaining lightness and humor throughout the process is a vital ingredient. They encourage mistakes by not criticizing new insights. They believe that the sooner and more often they fail – the more rapidly will they be at finding success. The employees build their own work areas and love what they do. They are free and responsible at the same time. “I like to hire those people who don’t listen to me,” says Kelly about his operation which baffles corporate America. “One mind,” “chaos can be constructive,” “teamwork,” and “enlightened trial and error succeeds over the planning of a lone genius” are all strong values of IDEO. This company knows how to play and overflows with innovation and productivity.

In summary, play allows the genius to spring forth innovative and productive employees. Rather than the rigid, hierarchical, manipulative, and strict environments of most corporations, spontaneous and unbidden play allows fresh ideas to flow. “The more a job inherently resembles a game – with variety, appropriate and flexible challenges, clear goals, and immediate feedback – the more enjoyable it will be regardless of the worker’s level of development.”<sup>68</sup> In the experience of joy, anything is possible and we are at our best. The managers that learn to get out of the way of others and themselves by creating a safe environment will profit largely in the long run.

**INTERLUDE: “YIPPEESKIPPEE, I’M GOING TO GO PLAY TODAY!”**

Imagine for a few moments a business world where everyone played all day. What if everyone jumped out of bed Monday morning and shouted at the top of their lungs, “Yippeeskippee, I’m going to go do what I’m going to go do! I’m going to play to day!” And then come Friday afternoon at five o’clock everyone sighed and said with a tone of reluctance, “We’ll I guess it is time to go home and recreate for the weekend.” What if everyone saw their daily responsibilities on the job as the most captivating and interesting game of their life? What if the owners played, the managers played, the employees played all day long?

Well, in this delightful world, imagine how the rates of absenteeism would dramatically decline. The people would rather be at their job playing than sitting at home in front of the TV or some other time wasting activity. Vacation time and sick leave would also significantly decrease because the employees would not be constantly counting down the days until their next break from work. Their tasks would be impromptu and not commanded, thus they would go home at night more energized, refreshed, and thus healthier than when they left for work in the morning. They would have a robust and satisfying family life without the typical feeling of being “worn out from work.” Workman’s compensation and other medical and labor costs would decline because the people would be very alert on the job and less susceptible to external accidents or internal disease. The time wasted making, fighting, and settling lawsuits would disappear because people would be satisfied with their lives without the need to blame or to sue others for their problems. All dysfunctional levels and hierarchies would dissolve in this play land, as cooperation would flourish. Being

ecological or environmentally friendly would not be a questionable issue but rather a given concern because everyone would so clearly see their relationship and connectedness to the natural land around them through their play experiences. The people would not possibly think about dumping poisons into the river or atmosphere or wasting the earth's non-renewable resources. Employee theft and sexual harassment would decrease because the intelligence of play manifested in people would not be controlling or possessing external phenomena of people or property. The internal sense of joy, centeredness, and grounding would provide a continual and deep source of pleasure and life. Nobody would be out to consume something or to get someone with a sense of complete satisfaction, ease of being, and deep contentment within each person. Diversity would flourish and the thought of Affirmative Action plans would not exist. The people could not possibly hire someone because of their minority status if they did not consider such judgments in the first place. In a state of play, there would be no judgment of skin color, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, or race. Everyone would be the same and everyone would be uniquely different. Tolerance and acceptance would be the colors of this life. In this play world of business, productivity would soar and innovations would abound. Chances are consumption would decrease as with the money spent for remediation in medical, psychological, criminal, educational, and other preventative or corrective areas. Growth in the archaic and inaccurate measurement of GDP would decrease but truth growth in human satisfaction, health, and happiness would skyrocket.

What if everyone saw his or her job as a fun playground? What affect would that have on our towns, our states, our country, our planet, our environments, our species, and on all of the other forms of life in this world?

## CHAPTER 6: FOUNDATIONS OF PLAY

“Any educational system not founded on the arts [play and imagination] is bound to fail,” said Margaret Mead, a well-known social anthropologist, about the necessity for developing relationships and interrelationships.<sup>69</sup> This profound statement has been overlooked or ignored by many educators. “Imagination is more important than knowledge,” highlighted Albert Einstein often during his innovative life. What if teaching institutions began to investigate these ideas more thoroughly? Ultimately, the models during one’s formative years as a child either nurture or debilitate the creative capacity of an adult human being. Early-life experiences and models shape the majority of behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that one carries through life. How are we doing? What options do we have? Are we raising children full of new ideas and energy to make a difference in our world? Or are we crimping them into boxes by not allowing them freedom to play? The instinct to be creative and explore the unknown possibilities depends upon one’s experiences of safety or threat in the public schooling system and in the family with parents.

Signals and feedback surround our culture as to the condition of the public educational system in the United States. As the 1990 New York City’s Teacher of the Year, John Gotto attempts to describe the situation by saying, “Our children are dying in our schools.”<sup>70</sup> This is not limited to the more frequent school shootings over the past few years with children biologically incapable of creating an alternative option to violence. The school leaders are cutting imagination and creativity along with the funding for art, music, drama, and athletic programs. Currently, Dr. Peter Breggin, well-known author and founder of the Center for the Study of Psychiatry, estimates that about two out of five kids are being placed

on Prozac or Ritalin, mood-altering drugs in the same classification as cocaine and heroin, when failing to sit still in the chairs and listen at school.<sup>71</sup> As noted earlier, teachers replace recess and free playtime with vigorous readings, exams, and multiplication tables around ages eight to nine.

The administrators of higher education are reshaping the nature of colleges and universities into career development agencies. College advisors and professors encourage the students to study areas that will be helpful in the future job market and to avoid the curriculums like the humanities and liberal arts that hold little utility in the “real world” and with which one cannot make much money. The clearest evidence is the continued discussion about changing tuition costs to match the expected salary upon graduation. What messages are we sending? Donaldson remarks, “I never did find the university to be a place of scholarship where people engaged in the play of ideas.”<sup>72</sup> Instead of learning for the sake of learning as modeled by our Greek ancestors, whom we drive the word “campus” from their Latin word for “playground,” schooling has become a race after awards, positions, trophies and degrees. Genuine philosophy, the love of wisdom or learning, has vanished from most schools as students count down the days until its end like prisoner anticipating release from corrections. Separating students into disciplines and specializations has disconnected them from much of the diversity in university experience. Upon what assumptions have we based our pattern of schooling?

Every system of interaction, or web of behaviors, has a set of assumptions or unquestioned areas that give it shape and meaning. Accomplished Art Historian and OSU Art Professor, Henry Sayre teaches his students the art of deconstruction or questioning the unquestioned. He suggests that by exploring the assumptions of a system, one can actually

learn more than from observing the obvious and given conditions and structures.<sup>73</sup> So, what do public school administrators, teachers, and educators assume about the nature of learning? As self-made billionaire, leader in innovative wealth creation, and co-founder of the Excellerated Learning Institute, Robert Kiyosaki reveals eight assumptions of our school system in his book, *If You Want to Be Rich and Happy, Don't Go to School?* He describes how he had to unlearn these concepts to find his success in life. They are as follows:

- (1) Nobody really wants to learn so you have to use force or threat.
- (2) Learning must be boring and slow.
- (3) You cannot have fun and learn.
- (4) You cannot teach anyone anything unless you control them and force them to sit still.
- (5) Testing and grading are necessary.
- (6) Not everyone is smart.
- (7) Not everyone can pass.
- (8) Teachers are smarter than the students.<sup>74</sup>

Basing our actions, thoughts, and beliefs on these assumptions, we have normalized the extremely burdensome and time-consuming educational process for both students and teachers. Having the children sit quietly for many hours on end in hard chairs while the teacher lectures for the upcoming test is the ritualized conditioning that we call learning. Educators use tests and grades to manipulate the learning process and to ensure the students repeat back what they hear. The threat of giving a “bad grade” is the same as a boss using pay incentives where extrinsic rewards cripple the flow, play, and absorbent mind-body. OSU Business Professor Ronald Miller offers the clearest example of this when he

proclaimed in class one day, “If I don’t test you on the lecture material, how can I make sure that you study and learn this stuff? Using the threat of an examination is the only way that I can make you read through this dry and somewhat boring material of higher education.”<sup>75</sup>

This attitude is commonly held among many teachers in America who threaten students with tests, poor grades, and detentions to temporarily alter behavior patterns. School is not learning or play – it is behavior modification and work.

What alternative models are available to those who recognize the dysfunction in modern public schools? Let us explore some possibilities. What would it be like if students were free to move? Blood flow, oxygenation, and relaxation would replace the sense of stagnation, boredom, and sleepiness. How would teaching change if instructors did not use exams? Well, teachers would have to ask the students what they wanted to learn and their play or inner drive would spontaneously guide and redirect the course of learning. Teachers would release control, and students would have to take more responsibility in terms of cooperating, creating new ideas, and settling differences between people and concepts. What if school and learning were fun? As Dean of the OSU Honors College, Joe Hendricks recalls a method he used when teaching his undergraduate classes where he would have students make jokes out of the class reading material. He figured that if students could make the connections between humor and the concepts, they could demonstrate their understanding and have some fun.<sup>76</sup> How could a school operate without grades and honors? Automatic teamwork and the following of the students’ interests would replace competition and forced study. The love of learning would recapture and empower the students from their current place of learned helplessness through over-controlling teachers. Joyful endeavors would replace long hours of laborious cramming. Intrinsic rewards would stimulate new ways of



seeing and dreaming. Students would more frequently discover the most rare occurrence in the world, a genuinely new idea.

At the Excelled Learning Institute, Kiyosaki allows his adult students periods of time to freely let loose by singing, dancing, and running around to open up their mind-bodies. Then he actually introduces more material at a faster rate than most teachers do – followed by more free play. The unplanned physical movements incorporated in the classroom rapidly increase the learning capacity.<sup>77</sup>

Educators at Reed College in Portland, Oregon give their students the opportunity to design their own curriculum or course studies. Rather than being handed a standardized sheet of scheduled classes to take, Reed students are free to select the classes that fit their own interests. The liberty eliminates the interference of “I have to take this class because it is required, but I really do not want to be here.” Rather the inner motivation directs education, and the students gain a sense of ownership and responsibility.

The last example of an alternative educational model that honors the development of the mind-body to reach its potential is the Waldorf educational system. It began in 1919 by Rudolf Steiner who saw in schools “the need for imagination, a sense of truth and a feeling of responsibility – these are the three forces which are the very nerve of education.”<sup>78</sup> As the world’s fastest-growing school movement currently and with over one thousand schools worldwide, the Waldorf philosophy is “Academics Through the Arts.” Its educators propose, “Maybe children should wake up excited to go to school... Maybe education is a journey, not a race.”<sup>79</sup> Free play is deeply integrated into the fabric of the learning environment. Movement of the body through singing, dancing, kneading bread, planting gardens, and feeding animals are all part of the diversity of education. Estimations suggest that only five

percent of our total learning occurs through formal education while ninety-five percent is informal and unconscious where intelligence and creativity develop throughout the whole body and its movements – not just in the “thinking” head, as explained by Dr. Carla Hannaford, internationally known neurophysiologist, educator, and author of *Why Learning is Not All in Your Head*.<sup>80</sup> In the Waldorf schools, there is no “teaching to the test” as found in public schools but rather a following of one’s bliss, love, and passion. The graduate children are centered, well-rounded, imaginative, and productive members of society. Having not been taught to “fit-in,” the students are characteristically able to create a better world without the fear of “being different,” reveals Karen Rivers, a Waldorf consultant.<sup>81</sup> Without the fear of being graded poorly or ostracized for disagreeing with the teacher, these students are free to come up with new ideas and ways of doing things. What would have happened to the founder of FedEx if he had listened to his teacher who said it was not possible to create an overnight delivery company as he designed in his class project? Luckily, he ignored the “D” grade and started a leading international company. How would public schools change if each teacher acted to “receive the child in reverence, educate the child in love, let the child go in freedom,” as pictured by Steiner?<sup>82</sup>

The future of our country’s businesses, legislatures, and society lies in our youth. For a corporation to ignore its support of the educational system is like forgetting about its research and development department. Yet many adult voters in America continue to cut back on state and federal funds to school as they get more crowded, less intimate, and with diminished art and creative curriculum. One corporation that is waking up to the reality of ineffective education is Boeing in Seattle, Washington. The company has recently announced its plans to move its eight-five-year-old operational headquarters out of Seattle

because the business climate is not adequate. Looking at one of the key issues, “Company executives... have said a well-educated work force is essential to the company’s success.”<sup>83</sup> And Seattle schools are not nurturing the innovative and productive workers that they need. Education is a key to our business and societal futures, however there is another layer below that is even more critical.

Parenting is the fundamental building block of society. The environment that parents create for their children leaves a lasting memory for life. The sense of safety and love or alternatively one of fear and threat shapes and molds the individual, the community, and the world. The depth of trust and compassion in a relationship determines the bonding of the child to joy or on the contrary to anxiety. Parenting can foster play or kill it. How are we doing?

Although most every parent today is well intended to raise happy and healthy children, few are taking the time to develop meaningful, bonded relationships full of safety and acceptance with their youth. Many parents are simply not present to provide the necessary support and modeling for their children – so the kids learn how to live from the media or other kids without parental models. The number of households with both parents working outside of the home is increasing and many children are growing up in daycares. Without the vital bonding with parents, many children are feeling unloved and unappreciated with low self-esteem. When distractions like television, computers, and video games are replacing parent-child interaction, it is no surprise that childhood suicides are rapidly increasing to unprecedented levels. What options are available for parents?

In his study of flow experiences in humans, Csikszentmihalyi has discovered connections between optimal experience and parenting. He has found family contexts that

promote flow or play to have certain characteristics. First, clarity by the adults gives the children unambiguous goals and feedback. Second, centering in the present moment where parents are most interested in the feelings and perceptions of now rather than tomorrow or next year is crucial. Third, the children need to have the choice of many possibilities including breaking the parents' rules with acceptance and receiving of the necessary consequences. Fourth, commitment from the parents provides a sense of trust and safety from which a child can drop his/her defenses and play. Lastly, challenge with increasing complexity for action as provided by the adults further stimulates optimal experience.<sup>84</sup> All of these put together provide children the opportunity to follow their bliss and yet always know where they stand in relation to household and society rules.

Chuck and Shelly Hogan offer another model as expressed in their non-profit organization, Athletics and the Intelligence of Play. Though the experience of coaching and instructing top PGA and LPGA golfing professionals from around the world, they recognize the strong connection between peak performers and strong parenting. Their model suggests parents need only to provide “unconditional acceptance and rules with ambiguity” in order to allow their children to fully develop their innovative and productive capacities as a human being.<sup>85</sup> Rather than more controlling and to-do-lists, parents need only to provide a safe environment and let the children play. Their philosophy is that children cannot possibly do “badly” because they simply copy their adult models. Thus, the responsibility lies in the hands of adults to clean up their behaviors. Children do not listen to their parents' advice but completely follow their actions.

Discipline is a continual issue among parents. Should we or should we not discipline our son/daughter? How much or what kinds? Well, discipline comes from the Latin word

for vision. A parent's vision, image, or picture of their youth is the key to parenting. Most all parents want happy and healthy kids but few are willing to discipline themselves to be unambiguous, clear, precise and without vagueness, indecision, or obscurity. Ambiguity by parents is the greatest killer of childhood development, because the children learn to manipulate the situation rather than being with the environment and playing their hearts out. If there is not a reliable and clear foundation, their brains turn to mush – the feedback is unclear and their mind-body crumbles.

A marvelous example of a modern society that has collectively acted to further the health of their culture though stronger parenting is offered by Sweden. Following World War II, Sweden created a national policy, as an experiment, to give mothers a year to be with their newborns at seventy-five percent of full employment pay. The results were so successful for the grown children that they extended the policy to include fathers for one year and mothers for two years. Sweden today has a very low crime rate where Prozac and Ritalin are barely known to the citizens and definitely not used on children.<sup>86</sup> The Swedish children have their parents at home during the young formative years and learn safety and trust in life. They are able to play and explore in innovative and productive ways that are absent from much of American society. Will anyone pay attention to this? What have we learned?

“Valuing childhood does not mean seeing it as a happy innocent period but rather as an important periods of life to which children are entitled... In the end a childhood is the most basic right of all children,” declares David Elkin, author of *The Hurried Child*.<sup>87</sup> In order to regain the health of our society, businesses, schools, and parenting we need to rethink how we lay the foundations for our youth. Adults tend to over-control their children, inhibiting the free play, and then blame the children for moral or ethical failure without

recognizing the biological underdevelopment of their mind-bodies. What if we stepped back for a generation and let the children play? What if we gave children playmates as they ask and let them take the lead? As suggested by Donaldson, an adult who has unlearned social conditioning by following children's instinctual play, "A playmate has nothing to teach, rather a presence to share."<sup>88</sup> Schooling and parenting are foundations to create innovative and productive human beings when bathed in love and play but tend to debilitate and cripple creativity when infused with fear and work.

## **INTERLUDE: REWARDING PLAY WITH PLAY**

If there was one thing that educators and parents could incorporate into their lives it would be the ability to stop all rewards for their children playing. By throwing away all trophies, medals, awards, grades, positions, money bribes, “congratulations,” titles, golden stars, and praises along with the negative put-downs, punishments, bad grades, and blaming, no external reward could distract the learning experiences of the youth.

Imagine a life where your experience of play was not rewarded with anything other than the experience of it. Play would be its own reward. What if parents and teachers allowed the process of being innovative or productive to be its own reward? Distracters to inner drive and instinctual motivation would not exist. The feelings, sensations, and stimulations offered by the engagement would be captivating enough to draw you deeper into the activity. When the source or reward of life was the experience itself, the heightened quality of the journey would keep your attention present and immersed in the task. What if the adults played alongside the children and did what they loved to do with all of their heart? What if everyone played and played and played? There would be no depression, no heart disease, no ADD, no childhood suicides, no victims of abuse, no criminal activity, no health problems, no illegal drug use, no enemies and the world would be one huge playground. Everyone would have be the fountain of youth bubbling within them while contentment and satisfaction would cover the planet. What if educators and parents acknowledged that playing for the sake of play is the heart of what it means to be a human being?

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has discovered the nature of human learning and various states of being. The author asks new questions about the basic assumptions of what it means to be a human being. Over the past few centuries, our culture has evolved to clearly separate work and play. Much of the playfulness of the society and communities is being set aside for more serious and useful endeavors. Likewise, each individual in our society finds the playful world of childhood to come to an abrupt stop when work and utility take precedent. Vigorous examinations and textbook studying replace recesses and playgrounds. For many people, the ability to let go and be free ends with the onset of prejudgments.

When experiencing peak performances and optimal experiences in life, humans become deeply emerged in the doing and flow of an activity. The inner rewards draw the person within and beyond. Expanding of possibilities and potential occurs when prior limitations disappear in play. Play is when people act spontaneously and unbidden to enter the unknown and explore new possibilities. The human mind-body opens up when the heart can pursue its loves and passions in life.

The systems and patterns of interactions within businesses all have structures and limitations that define what tasks are to be done and what rules are to be followed. The managers can prosper greatly from innovation and productivity if they can create an unambiguous framework of expectations and allow the intrinsic rewards to motivate their people. Allowing moments for spontaneous and unbidden play helps free the employees to transcend prior limitations. However, the roots of creativity lie in the schools and parenting



of the youth. Without safe and supportive learning environments, the children are crippled and incapable of playing or learning.

This project has shown how the pursuit of excellence rather than victory reframes the nature of interaction. By moving beyond the dualisms of “me against you,” competition transforms into cooperation and relationships and learning can take place. Living as a slave to the world of hard work leaves people feeling tired, worn-out, and burdensome. Valuing and participating in hard play provides refreshment, learning, and new possibilities to life. By understanding the dynamic tensions between play and work, one can see these structures as games and not be a slave to the various systems. By playing, we can all become more than we thought possible in terms of innovation and productivity

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