

Patch's Toy Chest

Add a Little Playtime with Games

Most people wake up to an alarm and rush through their day trying to accomplish every chore and task on their list. Often, that list does not include any stop-and-enjoy-life time; no playtime. Most people think that is a luxury they cannot afford. However, playing is not just about having fun. It is not an indulgence, and it is not something to forfeit during a busy schedule. Playing is about enjoying time with others. It is an essential aspect to a healthy life, and is something to make time for.

Kids have the right idea, because at some point during each day, most kids play, and they usually wish they could play more. Time for play, such as playing non-electronic games, is beneficial for them and positively impacts their emotional and intellectual development, allows them to practice problem solving skills in a non-threatening environment, contributes to their well-being and self-esteem, and helps them to learn to manage their feelings. When kids play games, they also begin to understand how to cooperate and “play well” with others, and they practice social skills that will help them properly and positively relate to people as they grow into adults.

Once kids grow up, get jobs and make families, what happens to playtime? They forget about it! Adults know the importance of playtime and encourage their kids to play games. However, they often forget to play themselves. Adults get bogged down by life and responsibilities—getting their kids to school and appointments, working, cleaning and doing yard work, grocery shopping, making dinner, etc. What some adults do not know is that taking time to play games can enrich their lives and make them more productive at work, give them a more positive outlook on life and allow them to function better under stressful situations. Making time for game play offers adults a relaxing way to nurture their well-being. Embracing play keeps them at their best, allows them to manage their emotions and be more productive overall. Playtime for adults is just as important as playtime for kids!



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Adults don't have to struggle to remember how to play—just ask the kids for help! Playing games together as a family is the perfect way to ensure both kids and adults get enough playtime, and also much-needed quality time together. Start off by setting aside just 20 minutes once a week, and see its affects on the family and the individuals. Playing together allows parents to engage fully with their kids, which is not easy to do during today's busy lifestyle. Laughter and play are essential for healthy relationships and will help strengthen the family, improving the quality of the connections and interactions. Playing games together also builds trust and compassion for each other, which are important for healthy families.

Don't forget to include Grandma and Grandpa! The more family members that play, the more fun to be had. Also, it benefits seniors to incorporate playtime into their life just like everyone else. Playing games keep minds sharp and helps increase energy and alertness, keeping players young and healthier by keeping minds active and keeping laughter going. The companionship gained from playing games with family also enriches the lives of seniors who may have retired or are living alone. Game time with their kids and grandkids is certainly something to look forward to.

Looking for more motivation? An excellent way to encourage game-playing and family togetherness is the Million Minute Family Challenge™, an annual event running September 1 through December 31. Sponsored by Patch Products, KOA, Wendy's and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), this event challenges family and friends throughout the USA and Canada to get together, play a non-electronic game and log the minutes at www.millionminute.com. The website keeps track of every group's minutes and adds them together, hoping to reach over one million minutes of play! It's a fun event and the website offers game suggestions, game night ideas and so much more. The event definitely encourages families, as well as friends, to play games and have fun.

However kids and adults play, they just need to make it fun and inclusive, and remember to make it a priority in the way they live whether they are age 6, 16, 36 or 66. As George Bernard Shaw said, "We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing."

So, try grabbing your favorite board game, or some dice or cards, and play a game with your family. Add a little playtime to your schedule and enjoy life more fully.

