

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY



Not sure why you should spend more time playing? This guide will tell you why...

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PRIMALPLAY.COM

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You should always consult a health professional before altering or changing any aspect of your lifestyle regimen, including the guidelines as described in this book. The author urges all readers to be aware of their health status and to consult health professionals before beginning any health, diet or lifestyle programme.



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CHAPTER 1:

NO PLAY, NO GAIN



“We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.”

- George Bernard Shaw

PLAY MUCH?

Between the constant demands of work and family, it often seems like there's little or no time for play in our daily lives. When was the last time you played? I mean **really** played.

You might regard organised sport as playtime or going to a party as play, but what I am actually talking about is play that is activity based on unadulterated and joyful movement.

When children are asked what they think is important in life, play is often at the top of the list. Of course, most of us reading this post are no longer children, so how is this relevant to us as adults?

Well, there is growing evidence to suggest that play – the type of joyful, physical activity that we typically associate with young children – can have significant health, mind and body benefits for adults as well.

Play is not difficult to justify. Playful movement promotes practical strength, balance, agility, coordination, speed, skill and mental focus.[1]

[\[1\] "Paleo Fitness: Primal Training and Nutrition Program to Get Lean, Strong and Healthy", Darryl Edwards, Ulysses Press, 2013](#)



The Importance of Play

Play unlocks the mind, it samples endless possibilities, it seeks and finds new levels of creative opportunities.

Play is key to physical, mental, and social well-being, but it is often underrated and viewed as superfluous. Play is endemic to human development – a biological necessity based on our survival.

As Stuart Brown the founder of the American National Institute for Play states: [2]

“When we stop playing, we stop developing and when that happens, the laws of entropy take over--things fall apart. When we stop playing, we start dying.”

— Stuart Brown

What to find out more about Primal Play? Get more details:
<http://bit.ly/PP-What>

[2] "Play: How it shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul", Stuart Brown, Avery, 2009



NO PAIN, NO GAIN!

Yet when it comes to exercise and activity adults still tend to opt for a workout rather than a play-out. I often get posed the question by my clients. “Why should we play, Darryl? I have better things to do with my time!” As is the case in most instances, the question is easily asked, but the answer is somewhat difficult to grasp. I usually respond by introducing them to a playful activity that challenges their perception of fitness. For example, doing an arm wrestle against a partner whilst [standing on one leg](#) (get a play partner and try it to see what I mean!).

[How about playing Primal Play tag?](#)

One observation is that the fitness industry has a preference for sweat, pain, and suffering. With exercise we mistakenly believe we need to undergo significant sacrifice in order to get fit.

We should be punished for even thinking about being sedentary. Despite lip service to the contrary, “*No pain, no gain!*” remains the industry mantra.

The path on this painful journey may be endurance based such as long-distance running or multi-discipline endurance (swim, bike, run) or ultra endurance races – because 26 miles isn’t enough?

Check out Darryl’s TED Talk “[Why Working Out Isn’t Working Out](#)”



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There is also the let's-get-fit-and-work-as-hard-and-as-fast-as-possible-camp, whose workouts of choice produce an inevitable collapse into a heap, and puking is the ultimate evidence of their commitment to hard work.

There is the pursuit and sacrifice of sculpting a body as if hewn out of clay by pumping iron and isolating certain body parts to build muscle, working to failure rather than success – without a hint of irony!

There are also the movement disciplines, which focus on technique, skill and form above all else, reserved for the elite few who have the effort, money and patience to achieve the movement of genius.

Another category becoming increasingly popular are long distance challenge-type runs with mud or military style obstacles. Are you man or woman enough to attempt – and suffer through – these challenges?

Of course don't get me wrong there is a time and a place for hard work, and I've done my fair share of it. What I am suggesting is that we should also find time for serious play too.

Let's revise our approach to getting fitter instead of "No pain, no gain!" - perhaps "No play, no gain?"

[Download *No Play, No Gain* research article](#)



CHAPTER 2:

NOT JUST FOR KIDS



“Man is most nearly himself when he achieves the seriousness of a child at play.”

— Heraclitus

ISN'T PLAY JUST FOR KIDS?

Well play can be confusing for us adults; it is either seen as frivolous, deemed as foolish, or blanketed as childish activity related to relieving boredom with no well-defined goals.

Adults often judge play as an unnecessary task even for their children. Instead, they encourage their children to pursue more organized activities based on education or those leaning towards “sporting” talent.

Due to our warped attitudes on the subject, time for spontaneous play is more and more difficult to come by. It’s ironic that we now pay other people to teach our kids how to play!

Consider these comments by David Elkind in the *American Journal of Play*: [3]

“School administrators and teachers – often backed by goal-orientated politicians and parents – broadcast the not-so-suitable message that these days play seems superfluous, that at bottom play is for slackers, that if kids must play, they should at least learn something while they are doing it.”

— David Elkin

[3] "The Power of Play: Learning what comes naturally", Elkind, American Journal of Play, 2008

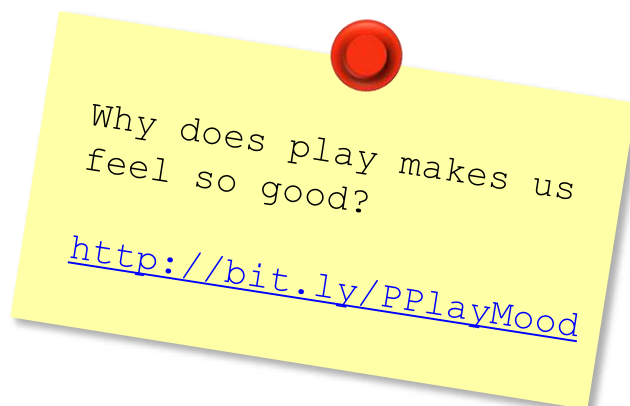


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The varied movement and physical activity encouraged by play have obvious advantages for your body, such as mitigating the effects of stress. That's because play helps to release the body's natural endorphins, which contribute to your overall sense of pleasure and well-being. That's right – playing with your pet or playing games with the kids in the park also releases the same endorphins that are released after a workout or a run.

What's less well known is that playing can also help to free up your creativity and imagination. In the workplace, so much focus is placed on bottom-line results and productivity, that we sometimes lose sight of how important play can be for creating a more innovative workplace. Ever wonder why some Silicon Valley companies have beanbags instead of chairs in the office or table football (foosball) located near meeting rooms? That's right – spontaneous play and the freedom to act *young* can spark your creativity and imagination.

Play can also keep you feeling young and energetic, improving your overall mental health. It's not how young you are; it's how young you feel.



PROGRESSIVE AND IMAGINATIVE PLAY

There are two aspects of play that are particularly relevant to us as adults: progressive play and imaginative play.

•**Progressive play** serves the purpose of advancement – advancing from young to old through the function of play: Imagine a kitten practicing how to pounce, which is a precursor to catching prey. Or, a child learning how to climb a tree, developing tactics to manage risk as well as the ability to climb.

•**Imaginative play** utilises techniques such as visualisation and focus to make you “work” harder. This is one reason athletes often use visualisation when training to improve their athletic performance. Research demonstrates that visualisation brings about quantifiable improvements as well as psychological changes. [4]

Studies also suggest that using **mental imagery for movement** can create similar electrical activity in the muscle as that seen during actual movement. [5]

[4] "Advances in Sport Psychology", Champaign IL, Human Kinetics, 2002

[5] "Motor Control and Learning", Champaign IL, Human Kinetics, 1999



The Importance of Play



“The playing adult steps sideward into another reality; the playing child advances forward to new stages of mastery.”
— Erik H. Erikson

Find out how Primal Play helped an obstacle course racer. Check out Iain's testimonial:
<http://bit.ly/PPObstacle>



CHAPTER 3:

REDISCOVERING PLAY



“We should seek to reclaim the enjoyment of movement that we experienced as children”

— Darryl Edwards

HOW CAN WE REDISCOVER PLAY?

Playful movement does not need to be complicated. Lay it out in terms of basic movement patterns. Moves that are functional and possible to adapt for all – with challenges that can be scaled to each individual. You can piggy-back carry, focus on [animal crawls and movements](#), or play games such as [tag](#).

Use your imagination to make physical activity more interesting and to increase motivation. For example, if doing a [bear crawl](#), imagine you're crawling under a low-hanging branch covered in thorns and change your body position accordingly. [6] It sounds like child's play, but engaging the brain in this fashion can increase muscle activation and make you work harder. [7]



[6] ["Paleo Fitness: Primal Training and Nutrition Program to Get Lean, Strong and Healthy", Darryl Edwards, Ulysses Press, 2013](#)

[7] "Motor Control and Learning", Champaign IL, Human Kinetics, 1999



SOME POINTERS FOR PLAY

The full benefits of play are possible when you stop viewing everything as an event with a specific goal in mind. Think of play the way a small child would – it just feels good to be running around, living life in the moment.

Be willing to open up to others with a new, more playful personality. This playful aspect is perhaps the difficult part since society forces us to treat everything so seriously once we pass into adulthood. But even something as simple as sharing a joke with a random stranger, or goofing around with young kids can help you feel more confident about engaging in play with others.

Look for ways to build play into your schedule. Just as you would schedule a daily workout or lunch with friends, you can schedule “play-time.” Everybody has different ways to express this concept – “me time” or “personal time” are just two popular options – but it just refers to a block of unstructured time to recharge the mind and body. All the better if this “me time” also includes physical activity.

SETTING AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR KIDS

One thing we understand as parents is that our kids are influenced by what we do or do not do as adults. If we demonstrate movement as being punitive, then our children will see movement and activity as punishing and something to fear.

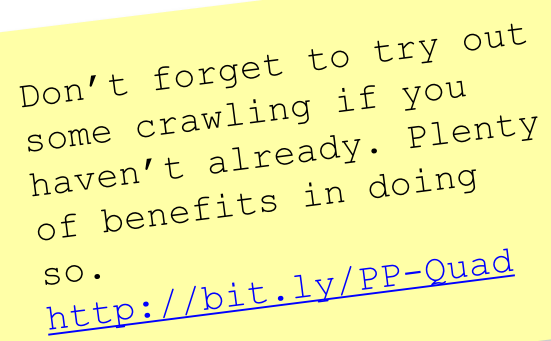
If we are playful and excited about activity, it gives our children an opportunity to enjoy movement too. Play is an essential activity regardless of age. As adults, it is absolutely critical to learn how to play again, it might just help us meet the [physical activity guidelines](#) for a start!

By unlocking all the benefits of play, you will feel better, think better and have a more positive outlook on life. At both home and the office, you may even see a boost in your imagination and creativity too.



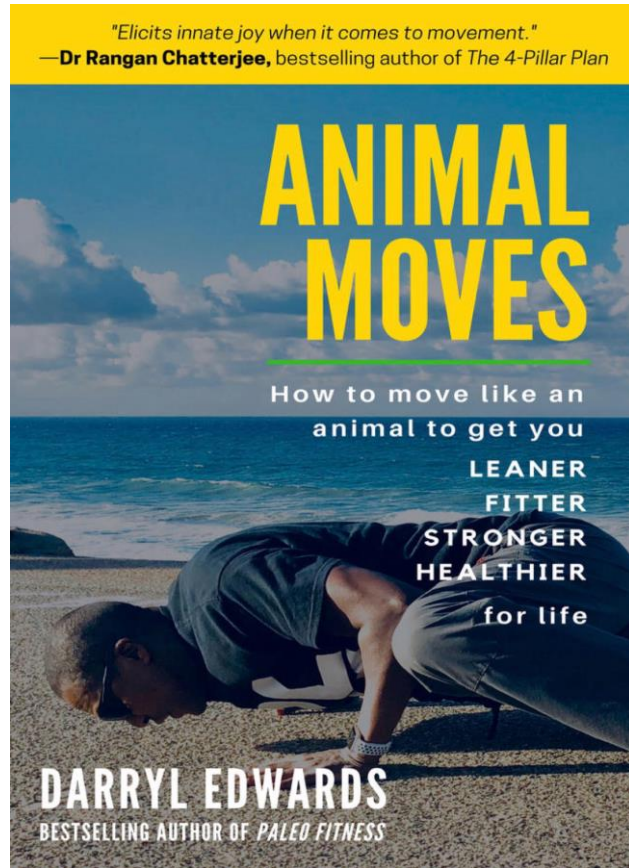
SUMMARY

- ✓ Play is key to physical, mental, and social well-being.
- ✓ Remember - health, mind and body benefits extend to adults as well as children.
- ✓ Try different and interesting movement patterns such as crawling, also recreate the games you played as a kid.
- ✓ Exercise doesn't have to be painful or gruelling. Choose fun!
- ✓ Unlock the benefits of play and have a more positive outlook on life.
- ✓ [Play for Health!](#)



Don't forget to try out some crawling if you haven't already. Plenty of benefits in doing so.
<http://bit.ly/PP-Quad>

ANIMAL MOVES THE FULL BOOK



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darryl Edwards is a former investment banking technologist turned movement coach and author.

He is the founder of the Primal Play Method and a physical activity, health and play researcher.

The Primal Play Method fuses evolutionary biology with the science of physical activity and play psychology.

Darryl wants to inspire humans regardless of age, ability or disability to transform their health by making physical activity fun and engaging.

His work has featured on documentaries, TV, radio, podcasts and international press.

Darryl is author of the best-selling book "*Animal Moves*" and has released a range of fun fitness cards for adults, juniors, infants, office workers and fitness professionals called the Animal Moves Decks.

He regularly presents as a keynote speaker at events worldwide. His April 2019 TED talk "*Why working out isn't working out*"—has now been viewed over 600,000 times (at 31 Mar 2020).

Darryl resides in London, England and publishes about playful living at PrimalPlay.com.



Find out
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