



# Playful pleasures

## 10 ways to bring more fun into your life

by Nicola Kimpton

Studies have long shown that engaging in 'play' is beneficial to children. It's not just fun, it also helps them to learn valuable skills and make sense of the world around them. Yet being playful needn't, and indeed shouldn't, be solely the domain of children. All of us can benefit from incorporating playfulness into our lives. Being playful helps us to relax.

It creates positive energy that is uplifting, enhances creativity and helps us to rediscover the magic of life.

Play can be defined as engaging in activities for interest, enjoyment and pleasure. Play is something that can be done alone or with others and can be planned or spontaneous. It is also a state of mind. Being playful means being good-natured, humorous and full of fun and high spirits.

Being playful is good for our health. It releases tension, transforms negative emotions and helps to reduce stress. Having fun boosts our creativity: it stimulates our imagination and enhances our problem-solving skills. Being playful builds healthy relationships. When we are playful, we exude positive energy that connects us to others and helps smooth over differences or disagreements. As well as being fun, engaging in play puts us in touch with our true inner selves. It helps us to identify our passions and strengthens our connection to the divine.

### To incorporate play into your life:

**1. Establish 'playtime.'** The first step is to consciously make time for play – around 30 minutes a day is a good place to start. This may sound like a big investment at first, but as the benefits highlighted above demonstrate, it's time well spent and you'll soon want to add more.

**2. Tap into your passions.** Make a list of things you enjoy. This can be anything from meeting up with friends, to listening to music or playing sports. If you're not sure where to start, think back to when you last had a good laugh or enjoyed something so much you lost track of the time. If there's a new skill or hobby you want to learn, take a class to get yourself started.

**3. Draw inspiration from your childhood.** Think back to childhood activities and experiences you enjoyed. This might include doodling, building a sandcastle, flying a kite, reading fairy tales or walking barefoot in the grass. Engaging in past pleasures helps recreate the magic of childhood.

**4. Be creative.** You don't have to be an artist to be creative. We are all unique and have our own interests and talents. Whether

you write a story, take photos or fix a car, the objective isn't to be 'perfect', it's to have fun and enjoy expressing yourself.

**5. Get physical.** Play tennis, go for a walk, shoot hoops or play in the ocean. Anything that gets you moving reduces stress and releases endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals, making you feel happy and energised.

**6. Feel the rhythm.** Another great way to have fun is to listen to music. Play music as you go about your day or set aside time to sing and dance to your favourite tunes. You can do this alone or with friends – just do what comes naturally and let yourself go!

**7. Have a laugh.** Read a funny book, watch comedy or meet up with friends to share jokes or amusing stories. Don't take yourself too seriously, lighten up and try to see the funny side of life. Laughter is contagious and can help ease you through tough times.

**8. Celebrate.** Parties and celebrations are a great way to have fun and shouldn't be limited to birthdays or special anniversaries. Instead, try to celebrate the 'everyday things' in life, such as good food, friendships, a sunny day or beautiful scenery. Celebrate in whatever way feels right to you, be it a surprise party, a fancy meal or a quiet walk in the park.

**9. Be spontaneous.** Instead of meticulously planning every aspect of your life, leave room for improvisation. Being open to new experiences makes you flexible and can also introduce you to new interests and passions.

**10. Let go of your inhibitions.** Being playful may make you 'look silly,' yet the purpose is to let go and have fun. So give yourself permission to play and remember that as long as you aren't hurting yourself or others, it's good to indulge yourself.

Being playful is not just an activity; it's a state of mind. Life is meant to be fun and we are at our best when we are relaxed, playful and happy. So enjoy discovering your passions and sharing your new, positive energy with others. All it takes to get started is a smile.