

### **Family Corner: Taking Play Seriously...It's your responsibility**

Play is Fun! It is a time when we feel most alive. But play can also be hard work, because we too often take it for granted and may completely forget about it. Play isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. Play is as important to our physical and mental health as getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising. It supercharges learning, helps us relieve stress, and connects us to others and the world around us. Play can even make work more productive and pleasurable. Despite its power, somewhere between childhood and adulthood, many of us stop playing. We exchange play for work and responsibilities. When we do have some leisure time, we're more likely to zone out in front of the TV or computer than to engage in stimulating play. By giving ourselves permission to play with the joyful abandon of childhood, we can continue to reap its benefits throughout life.

We play to learn, to create, to feel challenged, to pass time and to calm and focus ourselves. We play as spectators, as competitors, as collaborators, and just for the fun of it. The lifelong benefits of play are many. Play connects us to others. Sharing joy, laughter, and fun with others promotes bonding and strengthens a sense of community. We develop empathy, compassion, trust, and the capacity for intimacy through regular play. Play is a doorway to learning, stimulating our imaginations, helping us adapt and solve problems. Play arouses curiosity, which leads to discovery and creativity. Play is an antidote to loneliness, isolation, anxiety, and depression. When we play with other people, whether they're friends or strangers, we are reminded that we are not alone in this world. We can connect to others in delightful and meaningful ways that banish loneliness. Play teaches us perseverance, a trait necessary to healthy adulthood, and it is learned largely through play. And if these are not reasons enough to take play seriously, Play makes us happy!

For some ideas about how to have fun with those you care about, read on to learn about "Lifelong Games" courtesy of Helpguide at <http://www.helpguide.org/life/lifelong-games.htm>.