

Spring 2016

## It's Play Time



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CEAP

This quarter's Sand Paper focuses on the lighter side of life; finding balance through recreation and play. In American society we are often rewarded for hard work and a dedication to being productive. Many of us are driven and have a very difficult time relaxing. When we finally go on a vacation, it takes days before we

can slow our brains down and leave our work and life demands behind. Do you wish you could have more fun in your life and less work or worry? If so, it might be time to explore your creative side.

Let's start by going back in your memory to a time when you played and had fun for the joy of it. For most of us we are thinking back to age 5, 6 or 7 years old. What brought you joy? I loved to draw with chalk on the sidewalk. I would create with my friends an imaginary rocket ship. We played all day drawing new additions on the ship and acting like space travelers. Today, decades later my most satisfying hobby is oil painting and I find great pleasure in bringing friends together for interesting, thought provoking conversation.

What was your favorite thing to do in your childhood? Was it riding your bike, exploring a woods, building things, running, playing games? Are you doing the things you loved then, now? This is a great place to start to explore and develop a hobby or increase your recreation.

Years ago someone broke the word recreation up for me into two words; re and creation. Recreation time is time to create again. A time to use the right side of our brains, to think outside the box, to break routine, to stop and smell the roses. It is also a time to reconnect to the joy you once knew daily as a child when you were more fo-

cused on the present moment and the enjoyment of that moment and less focused on the past and the future.

Spring is an inspiring time to be reborn to new behavior. We hope this newsletter will inspire you to play, have fun and recreate. Take a step towards being less stressed and create the person you want to be and others want to be around.

Play matters. Encourage it in yourself, your family and your workplace.

This is Captain Gretchen signing out from the good ship Sand Creek . Happy Spring!

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

"It is a happy talent to know how to play"-Ralph Waldo Emerson



# The Hidden Benefit of Recreation: How Hobbies Improve Our Lives

By: DJ Enga, CPFC

**H**ave you ever found yourself so immersed in something that you lose track of time? Being engaged in an activity that you find pleasing and enjoyable is a great way to find calm while also improving our overall quality of life.

Recreation and enjoyment are part of what makes a person functional and happy. Finding activities that are fulfilling causes a person to be mindful by focusing on one thing at a time. Mindfulness has been shown to help decrease anxiety, lower heart rates and allows an individual to gain focus and control.

Recreational therapy has also been proven to aid in the healing process too!

Here are some benefits to having a hobby:

**T**aking a Break  
Hobbies encourage us to take a break, but a break with purpose. Taking time away from your daily responsibilities to engage in an activity that you find meaningful helps you think about other things. Taking your mind off any stressor or problem that you might be struggling with is a healthy way to gain a fresh perspective.

**U**nite  
Connecting with others who are passionate about a shared interest is a wonderful way to gain insight and connectivity. Having social support while engaging in an activity helps

push us to improve and helps us feel united with others who are doing the same.

**N**ew Challenges  
Oftentimes when our lives seem mundane or routine it could be a result of not putting in the effort to push ourselves into areas whereby we maybe don't feel all that comfortable. Whether it be physically, emotionally or spiritually, taking on a hobby that is aligned with an area that we feel could improve helps nourish us in ways that are good for us.

**O**pportunity  
Doing something that you are passionate about creates opportunity in other areas of your life. Many people have found side businesses, or stumbled into life-altering relationships with others, or even found themselves moving into a totally different place, or phase of their life journey, as a result of engaging in things they love doing.

Finding a hobby isn't always easy. It requires some self examination. If you already have a hobby (or hobbies) great! If you do not have a hobby, perhaps find time to take time alone and write down a list of things that have always interested you: Running, joining the gym, sewing, starting a blog, coin collecting or photography or anything that inspires you. Keeping an open mind and allowing the sky to be the limit is the key to identifying an activity that could potentially bring tremendous enjoyment and fulfillment in your life.



## TRIVIA QUESTION:

What is the name of the modern-day treasure hunt using modern navigation techniques like GPS that can be cultivated into a hobby?

ANSWER: Geocaching

# MAKING FUN WORK

By: DJ ENGA, CPFC

**W**orkplace fun has been directly correlated to job satisfaction. A growing number of business writers and consultants maintain that having fun at work is a critical component to keeping employees motivated, happy and productive. Social psychology literature illustrates that when employees are in a good mood they tend to be more altruistic. That sense of wellbeing is contagious and spreads to others in the organization as well as to clients and customers

## Establishing a Fun Working Environment

With any luck, you already have a workplace that has an interest in your organization and the business it occupies in the industry. However, many work processes can become mundane and routine. Implementing new processes and spicing up routine tasks can cut down on absenteeism, improve productivity, lower turnover and create innovation in various roles.

Here are a few suggestions that might inject some fun into other aspects of daily operations:

## Redefining Culture Starts with You

The way a business operates is a reflection of its overall culture; this should be your first area of focus. Try to create an atmosphere where you make fellow coworkers feel comfortable and able to express themselves. This allows for easier modes of collaboration to occur, which ultimately makes everyone's job easier. Having an optimistic attitude can be contagious and can impact the organization on many levels.

## Understanding your Passion and Interests

Each and every member of a work team is bound to have certain interests or passions, which they no doubt share with other employees. Understanding and sharing these passions can bring you closer with your coworkers. Find mutual interests together. For example, suggest a good book you've read and suggest that a coworker read it too and talk about it together, or collaborate on an exercise goal, or weight loss challenge.

## Make Monotonous Activities More Appealing

As a staff, it might be productive to engage in different areas of training that align with your industry or business. Consider the idea of bringing in people that can help offer a different perspective, such as a customer who might be able to educate your business on their mission and how you might improve your

understanding of how to serve them. Also, identify areas of routine in team meetings and offer new ideas on how to reach objectives and work goals. Oftentimes introducing some element of competition, or role sharing, is a great way to get yourself thinking outside the box and can even afford a new respect for what others do each day, and what they are responsible for in their own workplace functions.

It is natural to feel a little uneasy about making the working environment a more fun and entertaining one. However, if you implement changes in the right way and in the right areas, both the business and its employees can enjoy a number of far-reaching benefits.

Give Sand Creek a call at 888.243.5744 to consult about ways of injecting fun into your work place.

## 10 Ways to Have Fun at Work (While Also Being Productive)

1. Write a letter to one of the most influential people in your industry and ask for one piece of advice.
2. Have everyone bring in one of their favorite fruits to share and be prepared to give an explanation as to why it's their favorite.
3. Ask co-workers to offer up their best joke.
4. Bring in old magazines for everyone to read and put them in a break/lunch room.
5. Give a copy of one of your favorite books to a coworker.
6. Everyone write a thank you note to their favorite client, customer or business.
7. 'Random Question Friday.' Email out five random questions to coworkers and share replies.
8. Have a child paint the office/workplace a picture and hang it up in a common area.
9. Have a themed potluck each quarter.
10. Have an ugly sweater/shirt contest.

# Teams Need Play

By: Carol Nagele-Vitalis, M.A., OAP Consultant

**P**lay is an important part of humanity and has been around longer than human beings, animals have been playing since the beginning of time. Dutch historian and cultural theorist Johan Huizinga wrote a book in 1938 called *Homo Ludens*, or "Playing Man," that looks at the significance of the play element of culture and society – especially the fact that play is a necessary condition of the generation of culture.

Playing is learning, playing is creating, and playing speaks to an inherent part of our human psyche, in ways that more constructed processes do not. Think about when we were little and on the playground. Playing with complete strangers in the sand box was not an issue, even if there was a language barrier we found common ground. Through the act of play, a wordless communication was established. How many other acts in life can compare to this?

Huizinga identifies 5 aspects that define 'play':

1. Play is free, is in fact freedom.
2. Play is not 'ordinary' or 'real' life.
3. Play is distinct from 'ordinary' life both as to locality and duration.
4. Play creates order, is order. Play demands order absolute and supreme.
5. Play is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it.



Building a team requires intentional focus on elements like communication, bonding, problem solving, and as you think about it those all come naturally as a part of the play. All this points to the importance of generating a time and place for your team to have fun and be playful. Work without play becomes drudgery and repetition leading to the shutting down of creative thinking and communicating. Teambuilding time at the beginning of a meeting helps loosen up the confines and expectations that work often brings with it. Try it next time your team meets, build in a short play time that is for the sole purpose of playing together and call us if you need ideas, we are here to help. A little play time can't hurt and you may even enjoy it. Let us know how it goes!

# RECREATION & LEISURE: THE ENEMY OF STRESS

By: DJ Enga, CPFC

## Imagine this familiar scenario...

Overwhelmed with work, feeling disconnected from others, the car won't start, the kids are screaming in the living room and an unexpected bill arrives in the mail. These are common and inevitable stressors that all of us have experienced at one time or another.

What will be the next calamity? How do we cope?

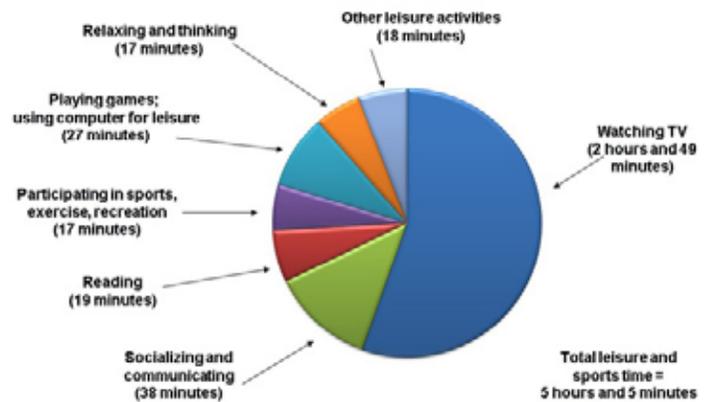
Unfortunately, some may turn towards activities and behaviors that are not healthy for us, which can only exacerbate the problems over time. We use these outlets to calm ourselves and to avoid dealing with the internal fears and anxiety generated by the real world. Whether it's overspending, overeating, binge watching TV shows, alcohol or even drug use, all these behaviors tend to be acceptable societal norms for dealing with stress.

A healthier way of coping with life's stressful times is through play and leisure. Recreation can revitalize our spirit and give us a renewed sense of confidence and empowerment. When we engage in a recreational activity we are automatically taking our attention away from stressful thoughts and putting it somewhere else. Ideally a combination of mental and physical recreation allows for the mind and body to detoxify and gives your mind a chance to re-group.

Leisure also provides the chance to find balance in our life. It puts us in control of how we're spending our time, which is an important consideration because you may feel overwhelmed by obligations. Finding balance is also a reason why leisure and recreation can enhance our overall quality of life.

Physical recreation is associated with improved self-esteem. In addition, we are more likely to

## Leisure time on an average day



NOTE: Data include all persons age 15 and over. Data include all days of the week and are annual averages 2014.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

feel satisfied about our life when we regularly take part in recreation activities. This has significant implications for mental health and, in turn, physical health. In fact, 90 percent of respondents in a 2013 American Recreation Coalition study reported being satisfied with their health and fitness. In contrast, 60 percent of those who didn't take part in such activity reported not being satisfied with their health and fitness.

Typically, people can 'work-off' anger, indignation and frustration by taking long walks or engaging in some form of physical activity such as exercise. The body's systems (heart, hormones, metabolic reactions, and responses of the central nervous system) are all strengthened through stimulation. Following periods of extended exertion, the body systems slow and bring on feelings of deep relaxation. Attaining this relaxed state is vital to stress reduction. Recreation and leisure are great ways to 'clear your head' while inclusively creating healthy behaviors that promote well-being.

## DEAR SANDY,

I'm very close with my sister and have recently noticed that she wrestles with bouts of boredom. It seems as though this leads to periodic stretches whereby she gets really down on herself, followed by a bad overall attitude towards life. She comments on how she sees others on social media "having such a good time" and yet she's left feeling stuck. I've suggested that she needs to find a hobby and she just looks at me and rolls her eyes, responding with a snappy, "Oh yeah, like what?"

I believe she wants to get involved in something but I sense that she has absolutely no idea where to start. Do you have any advice on how I might help her?

Signed,

Now What?

## DEAR NOW WHAT,

First of all, comparing the quality of our own lives to what we see others doing on social media is a perfect way to engage in something called 'Compare and Despair' behavior: The act of looking at what other people post online (Facebook/Twitter) causing a person to feel bad about themselves. This can impact our self esteem in a huge way. Seeing friends online posting their exotic vacations, or going to expensive restaurants, attending birthday parties, events, job promotions, etc. while your sister struggles to find something that fulfills her isn't an easy thing for her. I'd suggest she refrain from comparing herself to others in that way. Please know that social media is largely used as a means to self promote in a variety of ways and oftentimes has little real value or substance.

I think your suggestion of finding a hobby is great but it sounds like she isn't sure on exactly where to start. My suggestion would be to put some time aside to sit down and play the 'What Makes Me Happy?' game. It's a very simple, non-invasive way to get her mind working outside the box focused on areas and personal values that might propel her forward. The game is easy, each of you get a tablet of paper and see how many things you can list. When you're done, share the list with one another and talk about the things you wrote down.

Examples: Dogs = Volunteering in a shelter or being a foster. Drinking good beer = Start your own craft brew from a brew kit. Looking at old pictures = Try your hand at a scrapbooking collection, Hanging out with friends = Start a regular meet up. Reading a good book = Join a book club. Clothes = Go make your own outfit from scratch. Food = Get involved in a cooking class... You get my point.

I believe that once your sister can get out of that 'Compare and Despair' mode and place the focus back on herself and things that make her happy, is a good first step at self discovery and can also lead to tremendous personal fulfillment!

Happy Spring!

Sandy



SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO DEAR SANDY BY EMAILING US  
AT [INFO@SANDCREEKEAP.COM](mailto:INFO@SANDCREEKEAP.COM).