

Hope for the uprooted woman

Are We Having Fun Yet? by Ann Kelley

When was the last time you had fun? I'm talking about laugh-out-loud -with-your-friends fun, absorbed-in-your-favorite-activity fun, or lost-track-of-time fun!

Having fun came easily for us as children, but, as adults our responsibilities may often lead us to believe we have no time for fun. In fact, making time for fun often seems selfish and frivolous.

I'm married to a man who lives for fun. Doug is playful, funny, and sometimes downright silly. I have a good sense of humor and can even be funny, but in the first 20+ years of our marriage, the responsibilities of adulthood – two kids, home ownership, daily to-do lists, big decisions – were serious business for me.

I needed to learn how to lighten up; how to take a breath, relax, and have fun.

My younger son always seemed to know when he needed to intervene and break me out of constantly *doing*. When he was little I taught him the hand-clapping game, "Say, say, oh playmate", that I had learned as a little girl:



Say, say oh playmate

Come out and play with me

And bring your dollies three,

Climb up my apple tree.

Slide down my rain pipe,

Outside my cellar door

And we'll be jolly friends

It became our thing that we did together. We got faster and faster with our hands as we sang the song faster and faster. Breathless at the end, we always laughed and hugged as if we'd just finished a marathon.

At 34, he can still sense if I'm feeling stressed or overwhelmed. He'll pull me away from what I'm doing and get into the stance that I recognize as *Time for Say, Say Oh Playmate*. I can't resist.

Those few seconds of fun still inject me with energy, joy, and connection!

Are you making time for fun? Consider this issue of *Bloom* your prescription for greater health and vitality by engaging in fun!

Take the plunge

Whether you're new to your community or are a long-time resident, let this issue of *Bloom* spark your desire to pursue an interest or to create opportunities for fun. Send me an email about your experience! akelley@justmoved.org



We don't stop playing because we grow old;
we grow old because we stop playing. - George Bernard Shaw

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Three Essentials for True Fun

In researching her book, *The Power of Fun: how to feel alive again*, Catherine Price drew from her own life and the help of more than 1,500 people from around the world to explore and report on their definitions of fun. This group she called the *Fun Squad* was asked to describe “three experiences that stood out in their memories as examples of True Fun.” The stories she received were all different, but across the board, “...there was a lightheartedness, an exuberance, an excitement that feels so electric and freeing and contagious that it jumps off the page.”



She labeled their experiences *True Fun*. She writes, “True Fun is the confluence of **playfulness, connection, and flow**. Whenever these three states occur at the same time, we experience True Fun.”

Playfulness — “A spirit of lightheartedness and freedom—of doing an activity just for the sake of doing the activity and not caring too much about the outcome. ...Playfulness creates a sense of being outside of your normal reality; you’re relieved of your everyday responsibilities and feel carefree; you smile frequently and laugh easily. When people are being playful, they sparkle.”

Connection — “The feeling of having a special, shared experience with someone (or something) else. ...It can occur when you feel unusually connected to your physical environment (e.g., nature), the activity in which you’re participating, a pet, or even your own body. However, in the vast majority of instances, this connection is with another person....”

Flow — “...when you are fully engrossed and engaged in your present experience to the point that you lose track of the passage of time. Self-consciousness and judgment—whether from yourself or other people—are anathema to flow, as is any form of distraction.”

Signs of True Fun

- Laughter
- A sense of release/freedom/letting go
- Feeling like you’re having a special, shared experience
- Losing track of time
- Feeling free from self-judgment and self-consciousness
- Feeling like you’ve temporarily “stepped out” of normal life
- Being fully absorbed and present
- Not caring too much about the outcome
- A feeling of childlike excitement and joy
- A positive boost in energy
- Feeling totally yourself

Take Your Fun History

Price recommends that you think back to three experiences that you would label as *True Fun*. Ask yourself *why* they felt fun. Price describes these as, “moments in which you felt completely present, engaged, and alive, in which time seemed to simultaneously stand still and fly by, and that were so joyous and energizing—so fun—that they count as some of your most treasured memories.”

When you’re looking for your fun, Price suggests incorporating these conditions:

1. Being engaged and present
2. Not feeling judged or self-conscious
3. Going all-in
4. Not caring too much about the outcome
5. Being with other people

Why you need more fun in your life by Michael Rucker, Ph.D.

Five reasons science suggests you should have more fun

1. Having more fun improves your relationships, both at work and in life

Research shows that when we have fun with others, these experiences have a positive effect on building trust and developing communication. Having fun gives us an opportunity to connect and be creative. It can also make us look more vulnerable, but at the same time approachable and friendly, which can help build connections and bonds.

2. Fun makes us smarter

According to science, one way to improve our memory and concentration is to have more fun. Partially, this has to do with the stress reduction that happens when we engage in something we enjoy.

3. Fun reduces stress

Individuals who laughed less had more negative emotions when compared to those who laughed more. In contrast, those who laughed more showed fewer negative feelings even when stressful situations increased.



4. Finding more fun in physical activity balances your hormone levels

It has been well-established that high-stress levels negatively influence our hormones and neurotransmitters (especially cortisol and noradrenalin). When it comes to exercise, find what fun means to you and bake it into your routine.

5. Fun can make you more energetic and youthful

When we effectively reduce our stress levels, this can often provide us with a new boost of vitality. ...Many philosophers and psychologists emphasize the importance of play as we get older.

Read the entire article at michaelrucker.com/having-fun/why-you-need-more-fun-in-your-life

What's Your Fun Type?

Can you identify your Fun Type in these descriptions? You may feel you are a mix of more than one!

The Socializer

Your fun is a collective one. Not that you can't hang with yourself, but why be alone when you can be with your people? You are in your element when you're connecting to your community.

The Enthusiast

You have fun with a purpose. For you, fun is at its best when you are participating in something larger than life and bigger than yourself. You want to be inspired and to change the world.

The Free Spirit

Autonomy lives at the center of your fun. While you might do things many other people do, the way you do them is what counts. You're a natural limit-tester; creativity is your bread and butter.

The Pathfinder

Your idea of a good time is not necessarily taking it easy – you like a challenge. To you, fun means rising to the occasion, using the problem-solving parts of your brain, and achieving mastery.



Find Your Fun by Susan Miller, Founder of Just Moved Ministry

We hear a lot about taking the time to have fun in our busy over-planned and over-scheduled lives. I often forget to allow enough time for fun in my life.

However, I think it's been helpful for me to *define* what constitutes fun for me. I love doing things that bring me happy memories, personal pleasure, and sheer joy when I'm with family and friends. Many of those times also include having fun together. I crave those occasions and need to be more intentional about doing fun things with the people I love.

There are also times when I have fun being alone while doing a home project or planting in my yard. For me, fun can include shared experiences with others *and* the fun of doing something by myself.

Most of us know it's easier *not* to take the time to plan for fun. But we need margins in our lives to allow for more fun and laughter with others. We even need to be spontaneous and not always *plan* fun, but *just do it!* Fun can be life-giving, soul-mending, and invaluable for our mental and physical health.

Here are a few ways I have fun. Maybe they will spark an idea or rekindle a fun memory for you.

Thrift shopping with a friend

We love the "thrill of the hunt" for a bargain and always find something that's irresistible at a great price. We end up at a coffee shop for a fun "show and tell" of all our bargains.

Riding my bike through the neighborhood

During the isolation of Covid, I would ride my pink bike – complete with pink flowers in my basket, pink streamers at the handlebars, and a pink horn – as I called out, "Have a great day!" or simply smiled and said "hi" to anyone I passed. It was a way to connect and interact with neighbors and their children as I rode down the street. I still do that today.

Involvement with my children and grandchildren

So many times, we observe our kids having fun, but how often do we *participate* in their fun?

- I watched my young grandson jumping endlessly on the trampoline and decided to crawl up on the trampoline, sit down, and throw a ball with him. We talked and talked, bounced and bounced, and had so much fun together!
- When my middle grandson's small t-shirt business involved packaging the shirts, I helped him sort, fold, and package at the kitchen counter. We rocked as we listened to the beat of good music. It was so much fun to help him!
- When my oldest grandson sings karaoke to entertain family and friends at gatherings, I join him for a fun, belly-laughing good time.
- As for my three granddaughters, any time we are shopping and doing lunch together is fun!
- My adult children love playing Corn Hole. It's way too much fun for all of us when I get involved!

Fun with friends and newcomers

Life is more fun when I'm having a shared experience with friends!

- Friends and I attended a cooking class together, learned new recipes, and ate the yummy food we prepared.
- I took a painting class with a few friends. It was so much fun as we dabbled in paint together in our creative attempt at artwork.
- I taken newcomers from my class on a tour of our area to give them the chance to know each other better and have some fun exploring new places.
- I'll never forget the elaborate tea party my friends and I attended! We agreed that the experience made us feel so special!

Recalling these memories has reminded me of the importance of keeping fun in my life. I'm ready, are you? *Let's do it!*