

# Bloom

## Hope...for the uprooted woman



### Make Time to Play

When you were a child, play came naturally. You gave no thought to the physical, emotional, and psychological benefits of play. You just knew that you loved playing with your dolls or on the playground, or playing board games with your siblings.

Along the way, you grew up. Life became more serious and filled with schedules, commitments, bills to pay, jobs to go to, families to feed, homes to keep up, children to nurture, and a long to-do list.

Life can seem more about survival. But, as Rebecca Hitt, author of the *Consciously Parenting* series states, "Survival isn't nurturing. While our basic survival needs must be met for us to be able to access our ability to play, survival alone isn't enough to create a healthy family. But...when our basic needs are met, we can play. And when we realize that, in terms of having a thriving family, getting to play is just as important as getting a good meal and enough sleep, we can make a conscious effort to add more play into our lives."

What is play? Is it just for kids or is it important for adults as well? Life is full and busy enough—why should I make play a priority for me and for my family? Good questions. Keep reading!

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*Bloom* provides inspiration as you seek to grow and thrive during times of life change.

## Yes Virginia, There Really is a National Institute for Play

According to the National Institute for Play, play is done for its own sake and not for any survival or practical value. Play entails fun, makes you feel good, is exciting, and is a cure for boredom. When fully engaged in play, you lose any sense of the passage of time and you drop any self-consciousness about whether you look awkward or stupid.

Stuart Brown, M.D., founder of the National Institute for Play, says the opposite of play is not work, it's depression. "Our inherent need for variety and challenge can be buried by an overwhelming sense of responsibility. Over the long haul, when these spice-of-life elements are missing, what is left is a dulled soul.

"Neither work nor play can thrive without the other. We need the newness of play—its sense of discovery and liveliness that it provides, and the purpose of work—the economic stability it offers, the sense that we are doing service for others, that we are needed and integrated into our world."

From *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul* by Stuart Brown, M.D. Penguin Group Publisher, 2009.

Brown has identified 8 play types. See if you can find yourself in this list.

**The Joker:** class clown, practical joker.

**The Kinesthete:** people who like to move. They want to push their bodies and feel the result.

**The Explorer:** exploration is their preferred avenue into play. New places, new or deeper feelings, new information.

**The Competitor:** enjoys a competitive game with specific rules and wants to win.

**The Director:** enjoys planning and executing scenes and events. Loves the power. Born organizer.

**The Collector:** the thrill of play for the collector is to have and to hold the most, the best, the most interesting collection of objects or experiences.

**The Artist/Creator:** joy is found in making things or to make something work.

**The Storyteller:** the realm of the storyteller is in the imagination, they can bring play to almost any activity.



## The Role of Play in Relationships by Doug Kelley, Ph.D.

A couple of years ago my wife said to me, “Play is really important to you, isn’t it?” Uhm... my only tattoo says, *play*. Need I say more? The problem with *play* is that it sounds trivial to most American minds. It’s an add-on. An extra. Not to be taken seriously.

I beg to differ.

Recent research has demonstrated that couples who play together, stay together. I’ve been interested in this idea, so last spring I conducted a research study to find out how play is related to intimacy with family, friends, and romantic partners.

### Here are my takeaways.

First, *there are a variety of ways to play*. You don’t have to use all of these, but hopefully some of them will make sense for you. A lot of people told us they use humor in playful ways. Appropriate humor demonstrates closeness and comfort with one another, and brings us together through laughing. Think about those times when you and a friend couldn’t even look at each other without losing it. So good!

Our participants also told us they *play games together and use shared activities* as a means of enjoying one another. When it’s over 100 degrees outside, Ann and I sit in the pool, play cribbage, and watch baseball.

People also reported using *affectionate touch* to bring them together. A 44-year old woman told us about how she rides on the back of her husband’s motorcycle, and “When we come to a red light, he will reach his hand back and hold my calf for a few seconds and I squeeze his arm.”

Finally, a number of people reported playing through *mock fighting*. Wrestling has been a favorite way of connecting with my children and grandchildren, and Ann and I even play-fight with one another as a fun way to find ourselves in the middle of a big hug and kiss!

Now let’s get to the gist of the matter. Besides reporting how they play, our respondents told us of the rich relational outcomes it brings. We were told by a number of people that when playing, they are closer to being their *true self*—play helps us drop the barriers we often put up between ourselves and others. In this way, play leaves us *vulnerable*. We heard from people that being able to be silly and fun, without judgment, is key. When we are truly playing we are also totally *present* with the other person in a way that communicates a sense of *worth and value* to them. One mom told us that when she plays with her kids, not doing any other tasks, it “shows that I believe my kids are worth spending time with.” Feeling valued in this way facilitates a sense of *openness*, where significant talk just happens, culminating with a sweet sense of *closeness*.

I want to finish by emphasizing that play doesn’t mean you have to enjoy card games or be particularly silly or funny. Play is creative, letting your true self out of the box. Play may take the form of taking time to read with your kids, putting an unexpected note in your husband’s suitcase, inviting a friend for coffee, or dancing in the kitchen to Michael Bublé. The key is finding yourself by letting yourself go, even if just for a moment.

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Dr. Kelley is a Professor of Communication Studies at Arizona State University and a leading researcher of personal relationships. He teaches classes that focus on relationship processes such as intimacy, love, forgiveness, conflict, and reconciliation. He speaks and has authored six books on these subjects, including *Just Relationships* and *Reimagining Our Relationships*. Learn more at [RelationshipArt.com](http://RelationshipArt.com). Contact Dr. Kelley at [RelationshipArt@gmail.com](mailto:RelationshipArt@gmail.com). His wife, Ann, tends to be more serious and needs Doug to remind her to play!

## Laughter Is Good Medicine

Laughter is a powerful antidote to stress, pain, and conflict. With so much power to heal and renew, the ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, enhancing your relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free, and easy to use.

**Laughter relaxes the whole body.** A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.

**Laughter boosts the immune system.** Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

**Laughter triggers the release of endorphins,** the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

**Laughter protects the heart.** Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

**Laughter lightens anger's heavy load.** Nothing diffuses anger and conflict faster than a shared laugh. Looking at the funny side can put problems into perspective and enable you to move on from confrontations without holding onto bitterness or resentment.

**Laughter may even help you to live longer.** A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

**Laughter stops distressing emotions.** You can't feel anxious, angry, or sad when you're laughing.

**Laughter shifts perspective,** allowing you to see situations in a more realistic, less threatening light. A humorous perspective creates psychological distance, which can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and diffuse conflict.

**Laughter draws you closer to others,** which can have a profound effect on all aspects of your mental and emotional health.

Using humor and laughter in relationships allows you to:

**Be more spontaneous.** Humor gets you out of your head and away from your troubles.

**Let go of defensiveness.** Laughter helps you forget resentments, judgments, criticisms, and doubts.

**Release inhibitions.** Your fear of holding back and holding on are set aside.

**Express your true feelings.** Deeply felt emotions are allowed to rise to the surface.



### The Benefits of Play for Adults

- **Improve brain function.** Playing chess, completing puzzles, or pursuing other fun activities that challenge the brain can help prevent memory problems and improve brain function.
- **Stimulate the mind and boost creativity.** You'll learn a new task better when it's fun and you're in a relaxed and playful mood. Play can also stimulate your imagination, helping you adapt and problem solve.
- **Keep you feeling young and energetic.** Playing can boost your energy and vitality and even improve your resistance to disease, helping you feel your best.

The Benefits of Play for Adults; How Play Benefits Your Relationships, Job, Bonding, and Mood.  
[www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/benefits-of-play-for-adults.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/benefits-of-play-for-adults.htm)





## Make a Plan to Play!

Hey friends! Now that you know that *play* is not only fun, but vital to your well-being, I encourage and challenge you to begin to *play*! Start planning how you might implement *play* with your friends, within your marriage, and with your family. With the insight and suggestions presented in this issue of *Bloom*, you can be intentional about how you might *play* well together. I know this issue has encouraged me to incorporate more *play* in my life and to make time for it in my busy schedule.

We would love to hear how you *play*, or how you are planning to *play* more! Go to the Just Moved Facebook page at [www.Facebook.com/JustMovedMinistry](http://www.Facebook.com/JustMovedMinistry) and share your ideas to encourage others. I love to play Rummikub with my grandchildren. I think it's time to take it off the shelf again and get a game going!

Have fun, make memories, and laugh a lot!

*Susan*

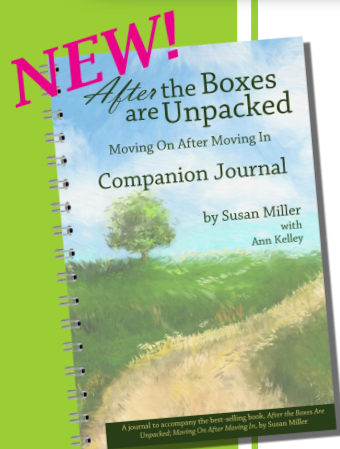


## After the Boxes are Unpacked

If you have a heart for newcomers OR you are a newcomer and don't want to go through this transition alone, we make it easy to start an *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* group. Whether there are 2 or 20 in the group, women make friends, feel more connected to the community, and grow spiritually as a result of going through the *After the Boxes* study together.

The helpful staff at Just Moved will guide you every step of the way. You invite other newcomers you meet or are new to your church and we provide everything you need to get started! Military installations, through the Chapel or PWOC, can have study materials donated through our Operation Hope program. (Learn more at [justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study/free-to-military](http://justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study/free-to-military) or call 480.991.5268.)

Learn more at [justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study](http://justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study)



### After the Boxes Are Unpacked Companion Journal

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