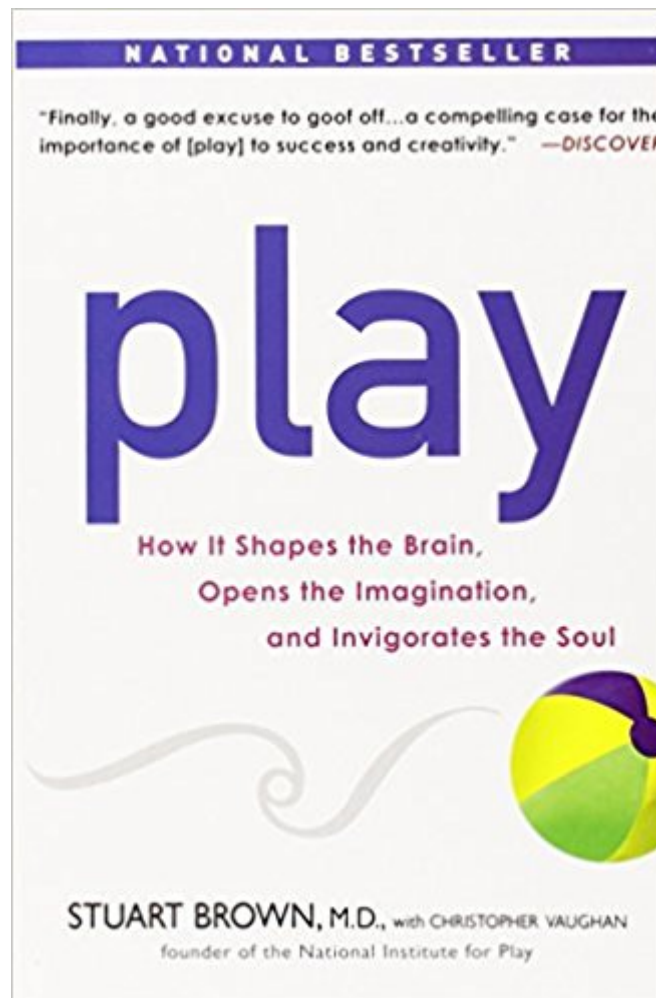




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# Play: How It Shapes The Brain, Opens The Imagination, And Invigorates The Soul



## Synopsis

Read Stuart Brown's posts on the Penguin Blog. From a leading expert, a groundbreaking book on the science of play, and its essential role in fueling our happiness and intelligence throughout our lives. We've all seen the happiness on the face of a child while playing in the school yard. Or the blissful abandon of a golden retriever racing across a lawn. This is the joy of play. By definition, play is purposeless, all-consuming, and fun. But as Dr. Stuart Brown illustrates, play is anything but trivial. It is a biological drive as integral to our health as sleep or nutrition. We are designed by nature to flourish through play. Dr. Brown has spent his career studying animal behavior and conducting more than six-thousand "play histories" of humans from all walks of life—from serial murderers to Nobel Prize winners. Backed by the latest research, *Play* (20,000 copies in print) explains why play is essential to our social skills, adaptability, intelligence, creativity, ability to problem solve and more. Particularly in tough times, we need to play more than ever, as it's the very means by which we prepare for the unexpected, search out new solutions, and remain optimistic. A fascinating blend of cutting-edge neuroscience, biology, psychology, social science, and inspiring human stories of the transformative power of play, this book proves why play just might be the most important work we can ever do.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Interview with Dr. Stuart Brown, MD Q: How do you know play is important to both adults and

children? Dr. Brown: In my career I have reviewed more than 6000 life histories, looking specifically at a person's play experiences over his or her life. In studying these histories it has become vividly apparent that play is enormously significant for both children and adults. I began thinking about the role of play in our lives while conducting a detailed study of homicidal males in Texas. What I discovered was severe play deprivation in the lives of these murderers. When I later studied highly creative and successful individuals, there was a stark contrast. Highly successful people have a rich play life. It is also established that play affects mental and physical health for both adults and children. A severely play deprived child demonstrates multiple dysfunctional symptoms-- the evidence continues to accumulate that the learning of emotional control, social competency, personal resiliency and continuing curiosity plus other life benefits accrue largely through rich developmentally appropriate play experiences. Likewise, an adult who has what was a playful youth and doesn't play will demonstrate social, emotional and cognitive narrowing, be less able to handle stress, and often experience a smoldering depression. From an evolutionary point of view, research suggests that play is a biological necessity. There is evidence that suggests the forces that initiate play lie in the ancient survival centers of the brain--the brain stem--where other anciently preserved survival capacities also reside. In other words, play is a basic biological necessity that has survived through the evolution of the brain. And necessity=importance.

Brown, a physician, psychiatrist, clinical researcher and the founder of the National Institute for Play, has made a career of studying the effects of play on people and animals. His conclusion is that play is no less important than oxygen, and that it's a powerful force in nature that helps determine the likelihood of the very survival of the human race. Having studied thousands of people's play histories, from murderers to Nobel Prize winners, Brown reveals that play is an essential way humans learn to socialize. Beginning with the very first play interactions between mother and child, and working up to adult relationships between couples and co-workers, Brown describes how play helps brain development and promotes fairness, justice and empathy. Work and play are mutually supportive, he argues, noting that play increases efficiency and productivity (playful folks, he claims, are also healthier). Sprinkled with anecdotes demonstrating the play habits of subjects as diverse as polar bears and corporate CEOs, Brown and co-writer Vaughan (*The Promise of Sleep*) present a compelling case for promoting play at every age. The authors include helpful tips for bringing play back into grownup lives, including being active, spending time with others who are playful and rethinking the misguided notion that adult play is silly or undignified. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out

of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is paean for play. Brown says of himself that he is unabashed play advocate and he points to the various ways that play is important for development, physical and mental health, and even the existence of all civilization. I think of myself of as a kind of play advocate as well; I think most people—adult and children alike—need more (or better) play in their lives. Yet I think Brown's enthusiasm about the importance of play probably outstrips the evidence. In some ways, he is overly broad about what gets included as play (and conversely what excluded). The book is definitely pitched at a more general audience (for example, there is no bibliography to help one follow up on the various research studies he talks about). I would have liked and was expecting some more analysis of the science behind the claims he makes—but as a general trade book this just doesn't get below the surface. Nevertheless, there is a lot of value here. Brown has some wonderful anecdotes about the impact of play. He does provide a window into the role play has in development of children and our species. He discusses the ways that the lack of play affects us as adults and suggests some ways to rediscover our play. In this way, the book is a kind of self-help book. It is a good starting point for people thinking about the value and importance of play.

It's refreshing to hear that play is healthy and necessary for a fulfilling life. As an adult, I'm 'supposed' to be stayed and mature, poised, graceful. Instead, I bounce around the house dancing and singing while vacuuming, and while driving I collect some crazy stares and some great laughs as I dance enthusiastically in my drivers seat. I always feel so much better that way than when I just commute to and fro. I never understood why I always feel so liberated on the back of a horse or cruising with my windows down singing my heart out. This book explains in such great detail all the why's behind the happiness and joy I derive from those things. Thorough research, well written and from a place of experience and wisdom. Gives me added hope for the future. It would be fun to meet the author!

In this book the tireless and insightful play advocate, Stuart Brown, delivers an eloquent testament about the uses, delights, and necessity of play. Few write with the verve and command that Brown does. And few cover so much territory so economically. He has thought deeply in his subject and read widely, but reading this charming text you will never feel overburdened by jargon or alienated by insider talk. Brown brings his authority as a surgeon, psychiatrist, film producer, storyteller, and competitive player to writing this book, and so for educators and academics, parents and sports

enthusiasts, this is the book to start with and return to when you are making the case for play.

Play for adults makes headlines but is rarely carried through by incorporating it into learning settings, work. A trainer who provides creative materials for programs - with no purpose except for hand/brain stimulation - this book helps justify why and why others should. Of course in most learning environments, space & room set haven't been accounted for so some principles are tougher to execute. Recommended: "Seating Matters" by Dr Paul Radde. One day, meetings & training settings may get it right!

So far, so good! Can't wait to dive into this book more!

The book presents the idea of play as a human need, just as sleeping and eating are. It makes you aware of how important it is to keep a play state in all areas of your life and truly gives you a new perspective on life . 100% percent recommended if you want to improve your life and be less stressed.

Very superficial. Lots of talking but nothing useful.

In our era of focusing on cognitive skill development and executive function, this book was so refreshing. Play and the happiness it brings is an essential and often overlooked ingredient to human success. In all my many roles in life, I will try to remember and reflect upon the many insights in this wonderfully written and insightful book.

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