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Playtime: How It Has Changed Over The Years

By Amy Thomas

Children begin to learn through playing and since the beginning of time children have played. The toys they have played with have changed and advanced through the years and so has the manner in which children play. This is a cause for some debate since many people think the changes are not beneficial to children and can actually cause some problems growing up by not allowing children to run outside and play and to use their imagination. Parents can use the tools that are available, though, to help children become expressive and have fun.

One of the changes that are most notable in playtime is the use of technology in toys. There are videos, video games and robotic toys. The majority of these toys are designed for indoor use. Children are quite entertained by these items but there is also a propensity for fewer outdoor activities and exercise. In previous generations, there was more of an emphasis on going outside to play and using the imagination. People also did not purchase as many toys for their children so kids used what they had and imagined various types of play.

Many adults remember the times when a cardboard box could open up an entire world of cars, houses, castles and tunnels. A cardboard box that was used to ship something could provide hours of entertainment for a child. Add a few markers to decorate and the box could be transformed into a complete toy. Children used to use their imaginations more than they do today. They would take the supplies that they had and open up a fantasy world.

Today, toys and games are so technically advanced that children no longer need to use their imagination as much as they used to. The complete story lines including sounds and graphics are already supplied to them. They are entertained, certainly. But, the question remains are they using their imagination to play?

Another change in the way children play is the amount of physical activity that they have. With the abundance of videos, video games and indoor activities designed to keep a child entertained, there is not as much of an opportunity or desire for a child to go outside to play. Children used to play ball, ride their bike and play on the swings. Who doesn't remember the times of tag and Red Rover? Today, children are more interested in getting to a higher level on their video game than they are about going

out in the fresh air to play.

The level of imagination used in toys is something that parents should be aware of and can balance with other toys that will stimulate a child's imagination. Reading books is a great way for this to occur. For younger children, parents can read to them and get them involved. Asking questions after a story is read that sparks the imagination and enhances reading comprehension is a great way for this to happen. Playing house or make believe with your child is another way to ensure a child uses their imagination.

There is nothing wrong with the toys of today and nothing wrong with a child enjoying them from time to time. It does entertain the child and there are benefits to the toys. Where parents need to be careful, though, is making sure there is a balance between the technological toys and those meant to stimulate the imagination. Make sure that the technological toys are not simply being used as a crutch but that they are used to supplement other toys.

The lack of physical activity is also a concern for parents and may be contributing to the numbers of overweight and obese children in today's society. Children need physical activity and exercise and there is nothing better than getting outside to play to help accommodate this. Younger children need to be supervised and older children should be aware of safety issues if they are going out alone. However, parents should encourage their children to play with something that encourages physical activity.

Some toy manufacturers are recognizing this as a problem and are taking steps to change somewhat so that children can have the best of both worlds. There are now video games that encourage children to get up and move. There are dance programs and karaoke programs that give the child a sense that they are playing a video game but they also have to get up and move in order to do it. This can be an ideal solution to the family so they can have exercise as well as the video aspect of the game. When choosing toys and activities for a child, balance is the key. There is no reason the play methods of yesterday can not be incorporated into today's technology.

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are making a comeback in today's society. If your child is into

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we suggest one of our JellyCat toys!

Reclaiming Your Inner Child

By Ida Byrd-Hill

Remember when you were a child. Everyday seemed to be an adventure filled with laughter and giggles. There was humor all around us. Children laugh 400 times a day up to 4 years old, while adults

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laugh 15 times a day. Unfortunately, the cares of life weight most of us down. We turn to alcohol, sex and drugs to relive that silly time of our lives. We can reclaim our inner child without the pain of sex, drugs and alcohol.

How does one reclaim their inner child??? First by realizing it is ok to step outside of our sophisticated selves and play. Given our career image, we must uphold it is hard to just play. We develop sophisticated hobbies such as golf, sailing tennis and horseback riding, but do we just wrestle and play? Playtime and laughter keeps us young and joyful. We need play to escape stress, heart attacks and strokes.

Our lack of play explains why Halloween has become the second largest holiday after Christmas. It is one of the few days where it is socially acceptable to dress up in a costume and become whom ever we choose. We can be Spiderman, a gangster, a witch, a bar maid or a goblin all day without strange looks. We can role play and laugh at others who role play with joy and glee. For one day, we can gallivant throughout the neighborhood with the children and grandchildren collecting treats or delivering tricks. We can party and dance all night in our new role. We can play make believe again. It is our day to be a child again.

Let your playtime begin this Halloween. But don't stop there. Reclaim your inner child at least once a month all throughout the year. The quality of your life and your health will truly improve as your laughter and play grows.

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. She was the

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