

play

What it is

One definition of play we like is: *'to employ oneself in amusement, diversion, or recreation for enjoyment rather than a serious or practical purpose.'* Play is self-directed, intrinsically motivated, imaginative, and characterized by a non-stressed frame of mind.

Why we need it

Throughout history, humans have worked to earn money and ensure survival. Paradoxically, headlines tell us that working is increasingly hazardous to our health. One recent study estimated that over 120,000 deaths each year are attributed to job stress. This epidemic of overwork means that people are literally dying for a paycheck.

Rebalancing from work through play has many benefits, including:

- Enhances oxygen levels and breathing capacity
- Boosts immune system resulting in fewer infections
- Helps alleviate stress by reducing secretion of cortisol
- Decreases social isolation, loneliness, and depression
- Stimulates creativity and problem-solving capacity

How to do it

One of our favorite ways to practice play is laughter yoga, which involves four steps:

1. Clapping to activate acupressure points in the hands
2. Breathing and stretching to oxygenate the body
3. Cultivating childlike playfulness through chants such as *'ho-ho-ha-ha-ha'* and *'very good, very good, yay!'*
4. Laughter exercises (some based on traditional yoga) while moving, singing, or humming

Our productivity-driven culture has prioritized work based on the false belief that time equals money. The time has come to rebalance – and play is a powerful tool to get us there.

