

Play Doesn't End With Childhood: Why Adults Need Recess Too

AUGUST 06, 2014 4:00 PM ET



SAMI YENIGUN



More and more research suggests that healthy playtime leads to healthy adulthood.

Childhood play is essential for brain development. As [we've reported this week](#), time on the playground may be more important than time in the classroom.

But playtime doesn't end when we grow up. Adults need recess too.

The question is, why? To answer this question, Dr. Stuart Brown says we need to clearly define what play is. He's head of a nonprofit called the [National Institute for Play](#).

“Play is something done for it's own sake,” he explains. “It's voluntary, it's pleasurable, it offers a sense of engagement, it takes you out of time. And the act itself is more important than the outcome.”

So, let's take gambling, for instance. A poker player who's enjoying a competitive card game? That's play, says Brown. A gambling addict whose only goal is to hit the jackpot? Not play.

Brown says that children have a lot to learn from what he calls this “state of being,” including empathy, how to communicate with others, and how to roll with the punches.