



**Joe Robinson** ♥ Become a fan

Stress management, productivity trainer, speaker, author, "Work to Live"



# The Key to Happiness: A Taboo for Adults?

Posted: 01/18/2011 9:19 am EST | Updated: 11/17/2011 9:02 am EST

When a 40-year-old goes headfirst down a water slide, that person is not 40 anymore. A few decades have been knocked off, because something inside has come alive again. It should be pretty obvious that the animating spark of play is the fast track to happiness. There is no quicker transport to the experiential realm and full engagement than through play, which brings together all the elements you want for the optimal moment.

1. Play is 100-percent experience.
2. It's done for the intrinsic pleasure, for the participation.
3. With no judgment or outcomes needed, play grounds you in the now.

Researchers say that the more absorbed we are in activities we like to do, the happier we are. Abraham Maslow and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi pinpointed the power of full involvement in the moment to produce optimal experiences. Maslow called optimal moments the time when we are most attuned, "more integrated and less split, more perfectly actualizing." He argued that these instants of sublime activation had all the hallmarks of the religious or mystical but were triggered by intensely felt, secular experiences.

Linda Imle, a cyclist, computer technician and grandmother in Fairbanks, Alaska, told me that when she's on the road with her bike, "it's a coming together of mind, body and spirit. It's one of the highest of all highs." Imle cycled the entirety of Route 66, Chicago to Santa Monica, on her 66th birthday.