



JAM #6 PLAY BY INVITATION

Play By Invitation – Inviting more play into our Relationships

The Lover Archetype

SCIENCE

Play, particularly rough and tumble play – wrestling, goofing off, not only grows brains, it builds pro-social brains. role playing, imaginative games where half the time is spent negotiating the rules. I'll be the princess, you be the mean stepmother, etc.

We are social animals and our lives depend on our ability to navigate social situations, create and maintain bonds. We learn how to read subtle cues, cooperate, negotiate and empathise through play.

We're also 30% more likely to play if there's someone to play with! That's why you got play buddies.

It started young. Attachment Play – Attuned play - Our first way of engaging with caregiver develops secure attachment. Good enough attunement is everything! First came attuned play, then exploratory play.

Two essential branches of play – attuned, social play, connects to our sense of fullness, the richness of life and exploratory, object play connects to our sense of freedom.

Original Play - The language of play is universal. It transcends all boundaries and differences, roles, gender, species. Play connects us with our true nature, which is love without borders. Play is the movement of love – Love is integral to play! The playground includes the whole earth community.

Polar Bear & Husky – make the play invitation irresistible enough and it will transcend predator prey relations. Using play to bridge differences – soccer games between Israeli & Palestinian children.

What are we seeing here - Universal Play Bow – I won't eat you and I'm irresistible. No fear. smile, open, mischievous

Cooperation - Self-handicap and sensitive attunement – empathy. Because we need the skills to be part of the tribe. So playing is more fun than dominating. Morality itself has its roots in play.

And play is one of the most important factors in creating healthy relationships.

WHY: The benefits of playful relationships

Courtship – Romantic - Playfulness is consistently in the top ten qualities people look for in mates and friends. Part of why romantic love is so intoxicating, is not just because of the fire hose of oxytocin it provides but because it pulls us out of literal life and into play. Literal life is flat, play is 3D. To be in love is to be in play!

Most couples start out having plenty of fun during courtship, because fun provides the intimacy and strengthens bonds like nothing else does.

Long term – Play keeps couples together. Most relationships start with excitement and play. But for some reason we stop and the life drains out and relationships can dry up. They need to be nourished and play is the best possible fertilizer. In research done recently, among the variables that created the strongest, most enduring relationships – the happiest couples – the amount of fun these partners had together emerged as the strongest factor in determining their overall marital happiness.” This also seemed to be the primary variable distinguishing “super marriages” from just good ones; good marriages became great when they were able to preserve both the quantity and the quality of the fun they had when they started.

Why do we lose the play of courtship? Everything can eventually get stale, lose its luster, become routine. Issues don't get resolved, trust breaks down. We need to consciously address these.

FAMILY

Play enhances family cohesion, reduces sibling rivalry, helps develop communication skills.

WORK – The benefits of play in the workplace are manifold. Playful people make better leaders and managers.

COMMUNITIES – Bridging differences, healing divides.

Play creates connections, then affirms, nourishes and vitalizes relationships, expands them, gives them energy, and freshness.

Exercise: What are your fondest memories of times you've had with someone whether partner, friends, colleagues.

HOW:

So how do we play more and have more fun with our partners, kids, friends, family, and colleagues. EVERYBODY IN OUR LIVES!

It does not take any extra time or money. We can add play to our relationships just by bringing playfulness into situations we're already in.

Presence, Intention, Imagination, freeing ourselves from arbitrary rules! Seeing past the literal!

OBSTACLES

First of all, play takes and builds trust. If you have deep unresolved issues in the relationship, it might be too big a leap to add play without addressing those issues. Some of them are structural – an unsafe work situation. Then again, you can address those issues playfully, but not until you really share your experience without blame or shame and hear the other person's experience with empathy. When there's conflict, I often wrestle with my partner in a mock fight. Doing something playful affirms that the connection is still there and it's worth getting through the conflict so you can play again.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES: Polar Bear/Husky

- **Presence:** I'm here! Ping! Be together!
- **Emotional Safety** – Your attitude I'm not going to eat you. Or compete with you. I want you to feel good, succeed! Disarming, non-aggression, appreciation. Your authenticity and innocence invites their innocence.
- **Permission** – Our inner child really wants to come out, it's an expression of our true nature, but it's been suppressed, prohibited, and it's shy, it doesn't trust it's safe. Sometimes all that is needed is permission, permission that you can trust.
Modeling play is the best permission.
- **Invitation** – THE INVITATION IS CRITICAL – It's important to realize that sometimes we're not in the mood to play and not to force it.
 - o The play bow –I'm not going to eat you, this is going to be fun. Mischief, surprise, energy!
 - o **Meet people where they are** – pace, pace, pace, lead. Once we're met, we can move. Stand next to them and sway.
 - o **Ventral Vagal** - We are trained to read the micro muscles in the face to discern how safe someone is. Ventral Vagal system controls that facial muscles that are used for social engagement.
- **Encouragement** – feed the play with your energy and enjoyment.

Exercise: Think of a time you offered a successful invitation. What made it work? Who would you like to invite to play? What might work?

MORE ABOUT INVITATION

Play inventory with partner – This is probably the best first step to take if you want to create the most playful relationship with your mate.

Make a list of all the things that the two of you like to do to have fun both together and separately.

List what you enjoy about the activities you chose. Is it because they are mentally or physically challenging? Make you laugh? Release tension? Do they have a lot of structure or a little? Do they involve words, or making things with materials?

In inviting a reluctant partner, it's much better to tempt them with a type of play they enjoy.

HOW TO BRING PLAY INTO RELATIONSHIPS

Fun is an atmosphere more than specific acts:

- Your mood and state of mind are critical. get yourself onto the playground by playing by delight, by design, and on demand.
- Your imagination for what's possible that's not present and energy for changing the mood.
- Your intention

Adding play

- **Lace the communication with play** – add a playful flourish to emails, notes, VM's
- **TRANSITIONS** – bedtime, work/school, hellos goodbyes. The first 5 min. and the last 5 min. are most important! Set the tone and leave a positive memory. Daniel Kenneman, the behavioral psychologist tells us that how an experience ends is the dominant note in our memory of it. leave a good last impression.
- **Surprise and delight** brigade – gifts under the pillow at night, love bombs,
- **Turning Daily activities into play** – Dinner, traffic jams, Wake up calls. Meeting. Play a game! Partner hid her journal before bed and left a clue so she'd get up at 6AM and write in it.
- **Play dates** – Take a class together, something you both like.
- **Making occasions special** – Bring a game idea.

Exercise: How do you bring play to your relationships? What relationships do you want to make more playful? What are some ideas for doing that?

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WORK & COLLEAGUES

Exercise: Best work experiences?

Research firm Ipsos surveyed employees, and those who rated their manager's sense of humor "above average" said there was a 90% chance they'd stay at the job for more than a year. Employees who rated their manager's sense of humor as "average" or "below average" rated their chances of staying at only 77.5%

Harvard Business Review indicates that executives described by co-workers as having a good sense of humor climb the corporate ladder more quickly and earn more money than their peers.

A study of 737 CEOs of major corporations found that 98% would hire an applicant with a good sense of humor over one who seemed to lack one.

The accounting and finance staffing company Robert Half found in a survey that people love a leader who can laugh – 65% of workers surveyed said it was very important for managers to have a sense of humor.

John Cleese says, "If I can make you laugh with me then you like me better, which makes you more open to my ideas."

Playfulness is a lubricant in productive work-relations" (Proyer & Ruch).

HOW –

1) Improv theater tool – Make each other look good! Scenes work better when we really listen to others, accept and build on (yes, and) offers, recognize and build on the contributions of others. Make each other look good. It's clear that the habit is to try to be clever, compete, not really build on each other. If we shift to not just yes, anding, but turning the other person into a star.

4 Strategies to unleash productive play at work

1. Find play in the system (see the funny, nurture the game changers)
2. Give Permission to Play (it's ok to paly at work, it starts with management)
3. Pursue Productive Play (watch for 'playground' moments)
4. Extend Play Boundaries (involve your customers, take play home)

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Closing note:

"Life, this ongoing panoply of thousands of miracles constantly occurring inside and around us, is not to be lived in boredom or in quiet desperation, but full out, alive, filled with awe and wonder.