

5 STEPS

TO

PLAY YOUR WAY

TO A FULLY

RICH LIFE

5 steps to play your way to a fully rich life



Introduction – How do you do, pleased to meet you!

We have all heard and maybe even used this phrase at times –“ All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” Inferring that work and play are opposites of each other.

In a world where we need to work to feed ourselves and our families, it can then become a forgone conclusion that once we reach adulthood and have to enter the workforce our opportunities to play diminish and so our lives become dull. Relegating play to the distant past of childhood, where our cares were few and opportunities to play abundant.

I beg to differ.....

The opposite of Play is NOT work. The opposite of play is Depression.

Stuart Brown is a Play researcher whose work has shown that play is essential for social skills, adaptability, intelligence, creativity, ability to problem solve and resilience. These learnings do not stop when we leave childhood. The brain continues to have the ability to be molded and taught new neural pathways and PLAY is the most effective way to engage a brain in learning, whether it's academic, life skills, emotional intelligence or physical ability.

Without this capacity for learning, creating, experiencing life does indeed become dull and so depression and lack luster can set in leading to what many refer to as 'Getting Old'.

I love the George Bernard Shaw quote, “We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.”

My experience of life and living and coaching the many wonderful people I have had the honour of assisting, mentoring and guiding, has shown me that there is a fundamental capacity that we can all harness if we are truly going to walk our path with strength, kindness, awareness and trust... This is our ability to choose.

What better way to explore options and opportunities in life than to Play.



1. Move in Fun Ways

At this point I usually get the question – “What do you mean exactly by MOVE?”

Just MOVE your physical body.

It is beautifully simple– JUST MOVE and KEEP MOVING, discover and explore ways to enjoy moving, share your experience of moving with others and then encourage and excite yourself to move more.



When the word activity or movement is used, all too often it is equated with exercise. This brings up pre-conceived ideas about what movement should be. Most people will equate the thought of getting active with having to engage in exercise, such as a gym, aerobics class, sport, getting breathless and sweaty etc etc.

Which then will switch on the belief system held about exercise.

Beliefs like -

I'm too old for that

I can't run because of(insert injury or creaky body part)

I am not strong enough to lift weights

I don't want to get bulky

I am not co-ordinated enough

That is for younger people

If I haven't listed your particular belief around exercise, then take a moment to ask yourself this question.

What is MY least favourite thing when it comes to exercise and why?

Then note the conversation and reasoning you come up with..... THAT will be your limiting belief around movement.

Consider the things you say and believe around movement and exercise and then play a little re-framing game with those things:

*I hate gyms?

-I love being outdoors...

*I don't like exercising in a group?

-I love the 'me time' I get from exercise...

*I can't afford every new gadget that promises results?

-I love the simplicity of just being able to go out and move when and where I want to...

*I don't/ can't/ won't run?

-I love hill walking and skipping, dancing...

*I haven't exercised in years / or ever?

I'm ready to start...

*I am too embarrassed by my body to exercise?

- With support I want to meet myself, my body again...

*I have had a bad experience and have lost my confidence?

-I'm brave enough to challenge myself again bit by bit...



You may have walked the minefield, cut copied and pasted approaches that don't really honour you and have become confused and frustrated with the endless impersonal wave of internet information that is always promising the gains /losses in a soulless fashion. It's not a two-week fix, which deep down you know. I encourage and implore you stop reacting from a place of pain and start rejoicing in and responding to your own adventure!

Exercise has been hijacked by scientists, athletes, personal trainers and marketers, who would lead you to believe that performance is everything when it comes to exercise. Purporting that exercise has to be timed, measured, scored, analysed for effectiveness, and results driven.

This unfortunately leaves anyone who feels they don't measure up, grasping at excuses for NOT being able to do exercise and so opting out of embracing the amazing capabilities of their body.

Many of the exercise systems sold as 'the most effective' or 'the best way to' or 'the only way to,' tend to be effective and beneficial in the short term, but the essence of it is they are not the only option. They ask you to follow. I'm showing you how to lead.

Think back to an activity you used to love doing, no matter how long ago. What was it about that activity you loved? The feeling of using your body a certain way, the freedom and confidence it inspired, the people you met while doing that activity, the control of your body you felt, or that you were just good at it and loved being the best?

No matter how far you feel from being able to do the activity you love, to move toward those feelings again, just begin where you are, how you are and despite where you are now.

The key to creating your lifelong, personal approach to moving more and engaging your body in every aspect of your life is to find “your movement” and experience it again, and again, and again.

The simple act of standing up out of your chair can provide a pattern interrupt in your day that reminds your body that you are not a hedgehog curled in a ball.

Taking a walk around the block is movement that can increase your circulation, open your lungs to more air, lift your eyes and decrease head stress.

Any physical movement will not only impact your physiological state but your psychological state too. One of my favourite Tony Robbins quotes is “Emotion follows motion”.

If you want to change your mood or pull yourself out of a head funk – MOVE YOUR PHYSICAL BODY until it changes. It always will.....

Get Moving and then Keep moving.

When you are present with yourself, you are already here, you are already where you need to be to make a small step and most importantly, value that step as being critical, massive and worthy of reward.

Choose any type of moving and be present with it. Engage with the movement and how it makes you feel – without the judgement of good or bad. Consider for a moment that any feedback your body is giving you is just a conversation that you are having with your physiology. Be kind in that conversation.

How would you feel if you were trying to express a thought or feeling and were being constantly overridden in a conversation? All too often we do this to our body. Start to notice and take movement opportunities.

The people I coach become enlivened and proud of ALL their movement, no matter how small, we throw away the pressure of belittling our small steps and let them become part of the journey, accumulating them towards the bigger picture.

If you stop doing the simple things because you believe they are not important enough and you hold the expectation that you have to be doing more difficult exercise or longer exercise to get any benefit, then you will become more static and end up doing nothing.

You have to start somewhere. Start moving, any way, any time, regularly.

Start to move now. Somewhere, anywhere, any how...you'll love it. It will grow as you do.

And it starts with that conversation you have with your body.....

“Like a tree branching out, leaning into the wind, the divergent benefits of moving more in a way you own and love are bountiful”

The reasons to engage in movement are as abundant as the excuses not to. Here are some facts about the benefits of regular movement / activity / exercise.

I've listed some physical benefits below

1. **Movement improves your heart and lungs. It helps to regulate blood pressure, make circulation more efficient and clean and increases lung function and capacity.**
2. **Movement gets muscles more active – and I don't mean just the 'T-Shirt/show off' muscles. This includes the tiny muscles that support posture, the digestive system, the senses, fine motor skill and global motor skills**
3. **Improvement in muscle activity in the body has a knock on effect to the metabolism, which makes your body more efficient at using the fuel (food) you put in it.**
4. **Movement improves your nervous system, which is how your body relates to itself and the world around you.**
5. **It improves your co-ordination, mobility, flexibility and general awareness of your body and how it moves, thus giving you more confidence.**
6. **Movement improves your body's ability to clear the lymphatic system (get rid of toxins).**



I love hearing how moving more empowers people, enlivens them, helps them become resilient and liberated with a sense of pride, accomplishment and vision. They take the power back and feel a sense of confidence in and control of their body and circumstances.

As you appreciate movement more, you will begin to revel in your given right to freely move and enjoy being a human mover!

Keeping in mind the benefits of moving more, and the things you love to do –

Write a list of all the physical activities you could engage in with little or no financial outlay, and possibly even with very little time commitment at this stage.

It could be

- Stand up from your desk 10 times a day
- Do three specific stretches when you get out of bed
- Brush your teeth while dancing to your favourite song
- Park further away from your destination at least once a day

- Sign up for as many freebie exercise classes as you can find in your area
- Pick somewhere in nature you have not been before and go explore
- Touch your toes 5 times while waiting for the kettle to boil
- Balance on one leg while waiting for the bus...

Oh the list could be endless – but it doesn't have to be boring – it's up to you!

Pen in hand, apply to paper and WRITE...

If your body flags up any pain in joints or restrictions in movement, remember it is a message from your body that something is not working as it should and there are always alternatives. Do something rather than doing nothing.

If you need HELP with connecting to what your movement could be and how your body might move best [CLICK HERE](#).

It's about adapting, modifying, keeping fluid and flowing with what you need, being the master in your movement not a slave, obliged to be performing some drudgery that simply can't be engaging enough to last.

2. Laugh – A Lot

“Your sense of humor is one of the most powerful tools you have to make certain that your daily mood and emotional state support good health.”

~ Paul E. McGhee, Ph.D.

It is proven that food affects mood and that motion affects emotion, so if you are making friends with your eating and achieving regular, consistent motion (exercise) then your mood and outlook on life will generally improve. However it is important to bolster these physiological bonuses with humour and a lightness of spirit.



Laughter is a quick and dependable fix to bring your mind and body back into balance than anything else. It lifts stress, inspires, creates hope, connects you to others and keeps you grounded and focused.

- Laughter is good for both physical and emotional health.
- Laughter relaxes the whole body. A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension

- and stress, and can leave your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes afterwards.
- Laughter boosts the immune system. It decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.
- Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of wellbeing and can even temporarily relieve pain.
- Laughter protects the heart, improving the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Even before much of the scientific and neurological research in to the effects of laughter were done. There was a 'normal' (non- science) guy called Norman Cousins who tested the healing power of Laughter on himself.

He was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, a chronic inflammatory disease that can cause the joints in the spine to fuse. Norman came up with a healing system that combined massive amounts of vitamin C and humor. He recovered from near-paralysis and wrote the book "Anatomy of an Illness." He later used the same method to recover from a heart attack.

His work has been cited in many medical journals since.

What things seem so overwhelming and dire that laughter seems impossible?

I am not saying just laugh off your problems, I am saying laugh while in your problems, while overwhelmed by your problems, while wondering how things could possibly be any worse..... Create the time and space to find laughter. Even if it means just beign around others who are laughing because that in itself can be contagious.

Positivity inspires positivity, laughter creates laughter and if you can't feel it, fake it until you do.

Surround yourself with people and circumstances that make you feel positive about yourself and that make you smile and laugh.

If you are stuck in the part of your brain that is reacting to stress, anxiety and fear (the amigdala), Laughter is a sure fire way to switch off that area of the brain, disrupt that neural pattern and allow you a moment (or more) to connect to parts of the brain that are creative, logical and connected to others.

The support of like-minded people who can lift our spirits is vital. It gives us the signs, information, inspiration, energy and camaraderie needed to fuel our journey.

"Find your smile, your laughter and use it for better health and a more confident you."

3. Join In – Say Yes

How often have you put off doing something 'fun' because you are 'TOO BUSY'? Things like playing with your kids, going out with friends, trying a new activity, doing the art you love, or indulging in the thing that makes you smile.



If you keep convincing yourself that the work you are doing is more important than anything else, it will become the thing that defines you. However what happens when work is no longer enjoyable, when it doesn't give you the buzz it used to, or heaven forbid you have to stop doing that work due to a physical, economic or social reasons.... Who are you then? What are you then?

Most people will admit that their life driver/ inspiration is a human factor – family, friends or relationship. Those who have been through disruptive life changes and have been rediscovering themselves and doing what is termed as 'the internal work' on themselves will hold their own sense of self, their freedom to create and confidence as their inspiration and drive in life. Both of these are human factors.

To connect to the HUMAN FACTOR requires joining in. Saying yes to things that help you experience connection to those people or those feelings, even when it seems that your responsibilities and to do list should get done first.

It is always worth the time to join in, be present, connect and play with other people. Or if you are truly a raging introvert, then commit to spending that time indulging the play you love, that you probably gave up on a while ago for the could, should, must do list. It takes one simple thing to join in...

Just say yes!!!!!!

Say yes when your kids (or someone else's) ask you to play.

Say yes when someone suggests an outing that you would love to do 'IF YOU WEREN'T SO BUSY'.

Say yes when you get an idea to do something fun – and say YES quickly and out loud before the Headmistress in your head notices and tells you that you should be doing something 'more productive'.

Say yes to things you have never tried before even if they frighten you a little. There is a very fine line between fear and anticipation - that line is all about perception.

Even if you consider yourself an introvert you can benefit by joining in, saying yes to new opportunities to play. The interaction within a group who are engaging in play can draw you out of yourself, even if you are an introvert.

It is just a matter of finding what floats your play boat, which may take a tiny bit of courage, however PLAY is the best way to test that courage and sample what really feels like fun for you. Because Play is purposeless (in terms of productivity or results) there is no major consequence of failing to perform, not getting it right or winning.

If you think all play is about competition or noise or showing off then you may need to re-think how you view play. There are many types of play and many ways to engage in them. That is for another e-book though.

However I will say that if you have not yet found the fun that makes you smile, come alive and get excited about taking time out from your schedule, have a quick think back to how you most enjoyed playing when you were a child and therein lies the clue to how you will best join in when it comes to finding your way of play.

The same applies if you are an extrovert or someone who likes competition – find the play that makes you come alive with the kind of people that will engage in that with you, then choose to be present in that activity and find your flow.

Playful interaction teaches us social skills and adaptability, giving us opportunity to test stuff out without taking it too seriously or with too much consequence. For example if you are playing a physical game and accidentally (on purpose) bash into someone that is pushing your buttons a bit, or that you want to create connection with, it can be excused as part of the game. However in a work setting that same interaction may have had far reaching consequences or potential embarrassment. It helps us get the measure of people and circumstances without threatening our social or economic standing.

But you will never know this if you don't take the time to join in.



4. Take a Breath and Change Your View

This is the Step that I consider to be the jumper cables for the PLAY BATTERY....

If you have read the first 3 steps and are thinking this is not for you, that your circumstances don't allow for the freedom, time, energy, finance to create movement, laughter and joining in – then this 4th STEP is for you.

I will be the first to admit that sometimes life can be so overwhelming that it seems the most appealing thing in the world to curl up in a comfy hole and avoid it all, but the responsibilities and expectations keep you plodding on.

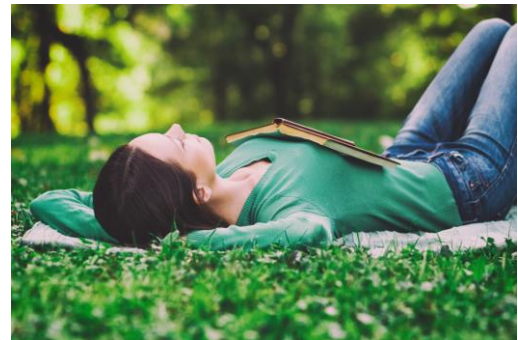
There are two things you can do right now to shift that overwhelm and open the window of possibility just a smidge to let the fresh air in.

FIRST

Inhale through your nose, allow yourself to feel your lungs and belly expanding as you do, then let your mouth drop open and let the air you just inhaled seep from you like air from an electric heater. DO that a few more times, listening and feeling what your body does as you inhale and exhale.

SECOND

Look out of the window. Let your eyes travel off as far into the distance as they can. Lean back in your chair (I'm assuming you are sitting) and lift your chin slightly. If you are not near a window then you will have to get up and go find one or go open an outside door so you have a view of outside. (Then you are actually engaging the 'movement' step first and the view change second). But Potayto / Pohtahtoe. Both will do wonders for lifting your spirits.



WTH does this have to do with being more playful?

The breath thing is to get you to activate your parasympathetic nervous system. Stay with me, I am about to explain the importance of this.

Your Sympathetic nervous system is the fight, flight or freeze response in your body that helps you react to the environment around you, get stuff done and stay safe in uncertain circumstances. It is that adrenaline rush when things are frantic, it is also the on switch that get us through the to do list, the scrabbling to remember things when we know we are meant to be doing something but can't quite put our finger on it and get frustrated, it is the constant pace when we are at work, sport, exercise, chores. The sympathetic nervous system response is based in your survival mode. Blood goes to the limbs and muscles to help us get stuff done, or run away. Our body restricts digestive processes so that we don't soil ourselves if in an emergency situation. Releases hormones that give us heightened awareness and responsiveness to the things around us – it is also part of the orgasm process. But don't get too excited about that yet, because the parasympathetic nervous system is the body response that stimulates sexual arousal. That why when you are experiencing periods of stress and overwhelm you may feel like you have lost your sex drive.

Your Parasympathetic nervous system is your rest and digest system. This is when your body responds to itself and acts upon its own systems. Your digestion, lymphatics, and creativity are stimulated by your Parasympathetic Nervous system.

When you are in constant stress reaction, it is quite difficult to process thought with the human part of your brain (the pre-frontal cortex). People tend to operate from the part of the brain scientist call the 'animals' that control basic function and process to keep us alive and connected to our world.

It is important to give yourself the physiological and psychological shift away from stress to be able to operate in the 'human' part of the brain, which is where reasoning and creativity are.

So why the breathing?

When we are stressed or in fight, flight or freeze mode – we breathe shallowly. Getting in oxygen and getting rid of co2 as quickly as we can so we can move fast. To be constantly breathing this way, keeps us in stress mode, the feeling of shoulders up near your ears, stiffness in the upper back and a rigid neck are all indicators of a shallow breather.

However quick fix to get you into PNS and away from the stress system is to breathe into your belly, inhaling through your nose and relax your mouth and jaw on the exhale. If the pursed lips persist either do a horse blow or using your index finger and thumb, gently pull on your upper lip.... Or do a really big yawn, fake it if you have to.

So why the Looking Out the Window?

There are two reasons for shifting your visual field. Again, one is physiological and one is psychological.

The eyes are the initiators of movement in the neck muscles. To constantly have your eyes focused at one level and one fixed distance – usually 30-50cm from a screen and slightly downward, creates a stiffening and potential weakening of the neck muscles. When the neck muscles stiffen this has a knock on effect directly to the low back and eventually the whole movement mechanism of the body. The head turning to see what is around, above or below us is essential for our body to feel safe in the spaces we find ourselves, when our body doesn't feel confident in a space or situation it will create compensatory patterns to keep us safe and functional.

To change your visual field on a regular basis will in fact keep your whole body more mobile.

(The next time you roll your eyes at someone and they tell you off for it, let them know that you are just keeping yourself active and healthy!)

The psychological effect of lifting your gaze and looking off into the distance is quick way to lift your brain into that all important pre frontal cortex if you find yourself struggling to reason through something, find a creative solution or do creative work.

We often think that if we are sat gazing out the window, day dreaming, blanking out or thinking of something completely unrelated to what we are doing, then we are wasting time. However this may be just what your brain needs, to get you back to a place of creativity and allowing the world to seem a less formidable place.



5. Your Choice

Whether you are taking time out regularly to play and feeling the benefits of discovering your inner smile and inspiration.....

OR

You are still chained to your to do list and feel like there is just no time for you.....

It is your choice.

It may feel like outside circumstances, other people, finances, the past, a certain skill set are holding you in a rut, or stopping you from being free to do the things you dream of doing and leading a fully rich (in every area) life.

However being stuck, feeling run down, overwhelmed, and gradually losing your will to play IS YOUR CHOICE.

But but but but but but I can hear the rebuttals (pun intended) resounding in a flurry of 'you don't know my circumstances, you don't understand what I'm up against, etc etc...

What I do know is that regardless of the circumstances you CAN choose how you respond. You may not be able to stop emotions as they arise and I wouldn't necessarily advice a tight control of emotions, but you can choose how to acknowledge your own emotions and direct them in a way that serves you best. You can choose to re-write your neural patterns, limiting beliefs, habits and reactions.

There is a lot of research into neural plasticity. This is the ability of the brain to learn and re learn activity, thought, experience and response. It used to be a well held theory that once a person left childhood that our brain patterns and pathways were fairly set. Ever heard the saying, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks"? Well that is just not true! The expanding field of brain science has discovered that the brain can continually be re-molded and trained.

It takes repetition of the desired activity, thought, behavior for it to become set in our neural pathways. The same is true for the negative or unhelpful patterns, habits, actions, thoughts, interactions – the more we use it the stronger it gets.

For the things that serve us well and that we want to encourage in our lives, the phrase – USE IT OR LOSE IT is paramount to success.



Choose to do more of the activities you want to get better at.

Choose to practice a different thought pattern in situations that are causing you stress.

Choose to respond differently to certain people.

Choose to put better alternatives in place when faced with habits.

If you feel or believe you can't choose differently or don't know how to choose differently and reframe a sticking point as a choice, then it is time to Gamify these things.

Instead of seeing the circumstance as an either / or type situation, lay it out like a game.

- Note the people involved
- List the activities that happen
- Mark the locations that are important
- Categorise the feelings that come up
- Imagine as many alternative outcomes as you can (list them of course)
- Note down any other aspects that are key to this particular situation that makes you feel like you have no choice.

At this point, knowing what kind of learner you are can come in handy. Are you kinaesthetic, visual or auditory? If you don't know the answer, then think of it this way. Do you learn or understand things best if you see them visually represented, if you have a chance to be shown and try it out yourself and interact with the learning, or if you can think about it and process it in your head?

Using the list that you have created you can now link it to the way you learn and experience best and create a game around this choice you feel you are stuck with.

You may want to create a picture diagram of how all these things sit in relation to each other, using connecting lines or circles or specific colours. Maybe just drawing them all out on paper will help you see another option you hadn't thought of.

You could create an interactive game whereby you make the characters out of objects on your desk and get them to act out scenarios, rewriting the story in whatever imaginative way you want – because it is YOUR game.

Whatever mash-up or re-invent you choose to create from the characters, activities, locations, feelings outcomes that you noted down, remember that this is just a game so you can make believe and make up anything you like. It doesn't have to be realistic or achievable or sensible. Go a little wild and off on a tangent. In that space of what seems like nonsense and make believe, may just be a little creative reasoning that your were missing by keeping yourself stuck in reality.

Go Choose to Play – it will change things.

(Conclusion)

There it is the 5 Steps to bring more play into your life and live a fully Rich life.

It is all a little chicken and egg (which came first?).

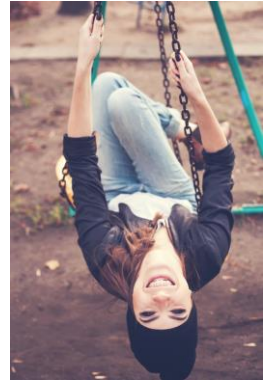
If you include these 5 steps in your life you will create more playfulness in all you do.

If you are struggling with any of these steps, the sure fire way to make it easier, more doable, and less scary – is to play. Make the steps less intimidating or un-achievable by turning them into a game.

MOVE * If you can't find the time to move – make movement a game by attributing points, rewards, or competitions with friends to any and all movement that you perform in a day. When in doubt – there's an App for that.

LAUGH * If the giggle has disappeared from your life, find it! Consider it a game of hide and seek and leave no stone unturned until you find what or who makes you laugh.

JOIN IN * When you are feeling isolated, worn out, and seem to have lost your drive for what used to be the thing that sparked you to life – find a game to join. Tapping into other peoples play, becoming part of a group activity or game, interacting with others is a key way to help you out of a funk and onto the metaphoric playing field.



TAKE A BREATH AND CHANGE YOUR VIEW * Inhale, sigh, roll your eyes! Yep that's how simple these steps can be. Shift your perspective and allow yourself room to breathe and suddenly play doesn't seem so impossible or nearly so intimidating. It is downright beneficial and I would even venture to say essential.

CHOOSE * The mere fact that you have read this far indicates that you want to make a change, want to experience life in a more light hearted and flowing way. Well congratulations you have already made your first choice toward that by reading this. Over the next week you will receive from us more ways to play and bring playfulness into every area of your life, without it seeming like a chore or stress.



THE LINK IS PLAY.... Wanna play?