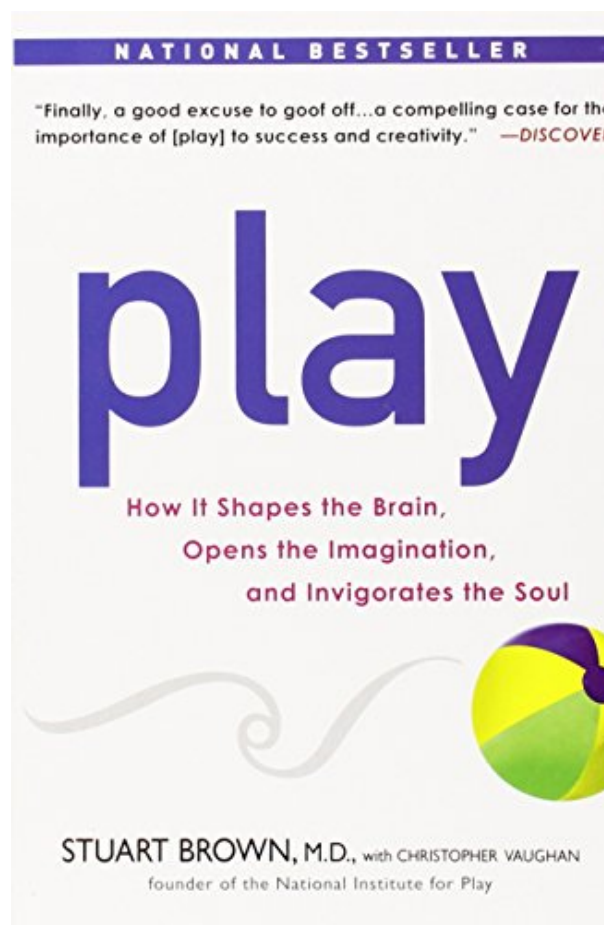


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THE SOUL BY STUART BROWN,  
CHRISTOPHER VAUGHAN**



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STUART BROWN, M.D., with CHRISTOPHER VAUGHAN  
founder of the National Institute for Play

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Read Stuart Brown's posts on the Penguin Blog.

From a leading expert, a groundbreaking book on the science of play, and its essential role in fueling our happiness and intelligence throughout our lives

We've all seen the happiness on the face of a child while playing in the school yard. Or the blissful abandon of a golden retriever racing across a lawn. This is the joy of play. By definition, play is purposeless, all-consuming, and fun. But as Dr. Stuart Brown illustrates, play is anything but trivial. It is a biological drive as integral to our health as sleep or nutrition. We are designed by nature to flourish through play.

Dr. Brown has spent his career studying animal behavior and conducting more than six-thousand "play histories" of humans from all walks of life—from serial murderers to Nobel Prize winners. Backed by the latest research, *Play* (20,000 copies in print) explains why play is essential to our social skills, adaptability, intelligence, creativity, ability to problem solve and more. Particularly in tough times, we need to play more than ever, as it's the very means by which we prepare for the unexpected, search out new solutions, and remain optimistic. A fascinating blend of cutting-edge neuroscience, biology, psychology, social science, and inspiring human stories of the transformative power of play, this book proves why play just might be the most important work we can ever do.

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## Review

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Play Is the Key To Learning, Creativity--Thank Goodness!

By Sandy Carlson

There were days at the middle school where I teach when I just wanted to fold paper with my students to see them interact with me and each other. These are inner-city toughies who really don't respond to much that passes for standard curriculum. They are angry and antsy and difficult and disrespectful. To watch them transform scraps of paper into sublime objects of beauty. To watch them as they reached outside their usual way of thinking to do something very different.

Most days, I just wanted to play. But how to justify this? I am expected to help kids read and write and do well on standardized tests. The kids very often hate me for my troubles. I don't blame them. The dank workbooks of generations gone by are of no relevance to them. Or me.

At the end of the school year, I taught my kids origami as a break from the norm. They relaxed and loved it and were delighted with themselves that they could turn scrap paper into beautiful things. They helped each other by explaining--by taking the story--the instructions--and putting it in their own words to help a peer.

And they were playing.

This experience brought me to Brown's book. He talks about the importance of play in problem solving, social interaction, and, to use a broad brush, surviving this world in a healthy way.

Letting go and relaxing through play free the mind to reach beyond itself and thus find answers. Serendipity.

Brown's book is full of examples of serendipity in action in the science lab, the corporate conference room, the home sweet home. Play unlocks the mind, lets it sample possibilities, lets it seek and find a new level of possibilities. Play makes dreams come true.

Brown makes the statement that we start dying when we stop playing. He's right. His book makes the truth of the statement abundantly clear.

83 of 90 people found the following review helpful.

Play is the key to a successful life

By Y. Scott

This is one of the best books I have read recently. If I could give more than 5 stars, I would!

I've always believed "play" is the key to a successful life. The successful people I know enjoy playing( including my husband who is "the Kinesthete", "The Explorer", "The Collector", "The Artist/Creator", and "The Storyteller" according to Dr. Brown's play personality) even though they are busier than average Americans. On the other hand, the people who have rigid attitude towards "play" (they even make family members feel guilty about it!) are not as successful as above, even though they "earned highest grades at the best schools". This contrast becomes even more prominent when we become middle age. People who enjoy playing are not only more successful, but also happier.

Dr. Brown explains why this "nonproductive activity can make one enormously more productive and invigorated in other aspects of life" with scientific evidence and full of interesting anecdotes. It will persuade you not to feel guilty pursuing your dream or enjoying your life because it will make you and your kids more successful and happier.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Wonderful Read

By Thomas C. Hamilton

This is a wonderful book. Stuart Brown points out something that the modern world desperately needs to hear: to play is to be human. Brown, drawing on a fair bit of recent scientific research, argues that approaching life with a playful attitude is not only important for being a happy person, but it's also important for being a creative person. Children lose the desire to learn when they are placed in kindergarten- where "work" and "play" are very strictly separated- and where play itself is sometimes removed entirely, with recess being cancelled to attend to more "serious" things. Brown's discussion of what constitutes play is especially fascinating. One point that he makes again and again is that true play requires a person to let go of pride. A game of Twister would be horrible if everybody were concerned about what others thought of them. A brainstorming session fails when people are afraid of being criticized for silly ideas. In short, play requires humility. Developing a humble spirit around others allows one to truly play with others- and since play is that which fosters creativity, a culture where humility is the rule is a far healthier culture, economically and socially.

There are a couple of minor gripes I had with the book. The first is the personalization of the brain. Brown sometimes speaks of the brain "doing" this and that, or "accomplishing" an activity. But the brain doesn't act- persons do. The notion that one can "program" the brain is based on the reification of a rather poor analogy

(between brains and computers) and it needs to go. I don't know what Brown's philosophy is, but this is based on an outdated scientific materialism. Related to this is the occasional use of evolutionary psychology. These are all just-so stories- and a little thought usually dissolves them. We aren't just machines programmed to play- we are whole persons, designed to rejoice in this wonderful and beautiful world. Regardless, this element really doesn't take much value out of the book, which is chock-full of wonderful insights and practical applications.

We need to be deadly serious about play.

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