

Play is a Necessary Mindset

Do not rush towards maturity. Getting older can ruin the best parts of who you are. Some of your elements that you are so eager to get away from now will be needed later to temper the callous effects of age. Personal evolution is not a change from one thing into another. It is an accumulation of traits complementing each other, the new ones stacking atop the foundation of youth that came before. To be as effective as you can be, you need all of yourself working as one.

Experience brings wisdom. It also has the unfortunate tendency to erode gaiety and jest, which are seldom given the credit of their worth. The playful behaviors of childhood are a natural expression of our exploratory urges. They are the visible symptoms of unabashed curiosity, where testing limitations is still fun. As we get older, we need less exploration to remain satisfied. The variety of our actions grows smaller. We become weary of trying anything new at all.

Play prepares us for life because it exposes us to the behaviors we will need to thrive as adults. Some of the basics never change. We all need to be able to use our bodies to a relative degree of efficiency. We all need some way to communicate. Yet new categories of action show up with every generation. When old minds cannot see the relevance of emerging facilities, they are ignored. Parents disservice their offspring by coaxing them to repeat lives already lived, back when the world was a very different place.

Playful activity is the doorway to personal growth. Guard yourself against losing this precious gift as you develop. Ignore the cries of the more experienced and retired players around you. Retaining the benefits of childhood does not disqualify you from the advantages of adulthood. Wisdom is not in opposition to tomfoolery. Finding the balance between the two is a task that few have the presence of mind for, but it is essential for activating the best parts of your identity.

Play is not any specific action. Play is a mindset, the ability to tap into enthusiastic emotions when you experiment with whatever you are doing. If you are dedicated to things happening a certain way, you will feel frustration when they do not. If you are acting for the joy of seeing what will happen, every experience is a blessing. Every novel detail builds your internal architecture. As long as you can expose yourself to new things, you can use the playful mindset to grow. You only stop when you die.