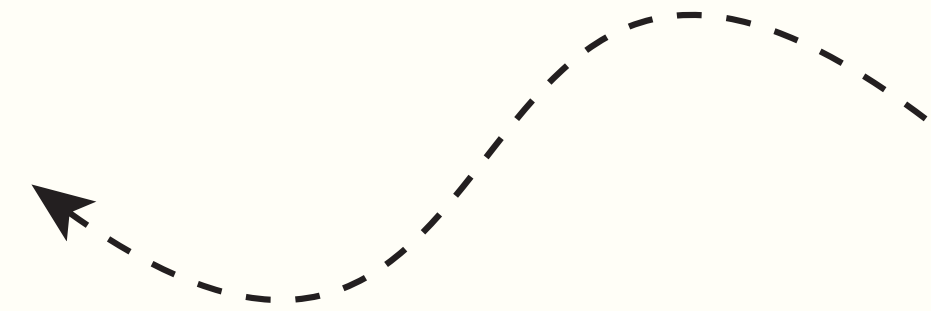
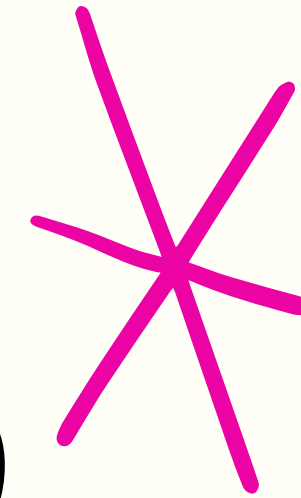




Born to play?



Georgia Natsiou
PhD, early childhood teacher





Contents



- * Wired to play from childhood
- * Adults' playfulness
- * Reclaiming play for adulthood
- * The playful teacher



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Why It's More Than Just "Child's Play"



The Linguistic Link

α τ
λ γ
paidi

paízo
paichnidi

In Greek, the words for play (paízo) and toy (paichnidi) derive from "paidi" (child).

Cultural & AI Bias

When prompted to imagine play, both humans and AI almost exclusively visualize children.



The "Play Industry" Focus

Media and markets reinforce play as a tool for development specifically for young learners.

Societal/Cultural Perspective

Primary Focus: Childhood & Education

Key Driver: Development & Learning

Biological/Neuro Perspective

Primary Focus: All Mammals

Key Driver: Evolutionary Instinct



A Universal Mammalian Instinct

Animals like bears and dolphins play despite the risks of injury or predator exposure.

The "Laughing" Rat Study

Research by Jaak Panksepp showed rats produce high-frequency vocalizations—essentially laughter—during play.

Hardwired in the Brain

Play is rooted in subcortical, evolutionarily ancient brain areas shared by all mammals.

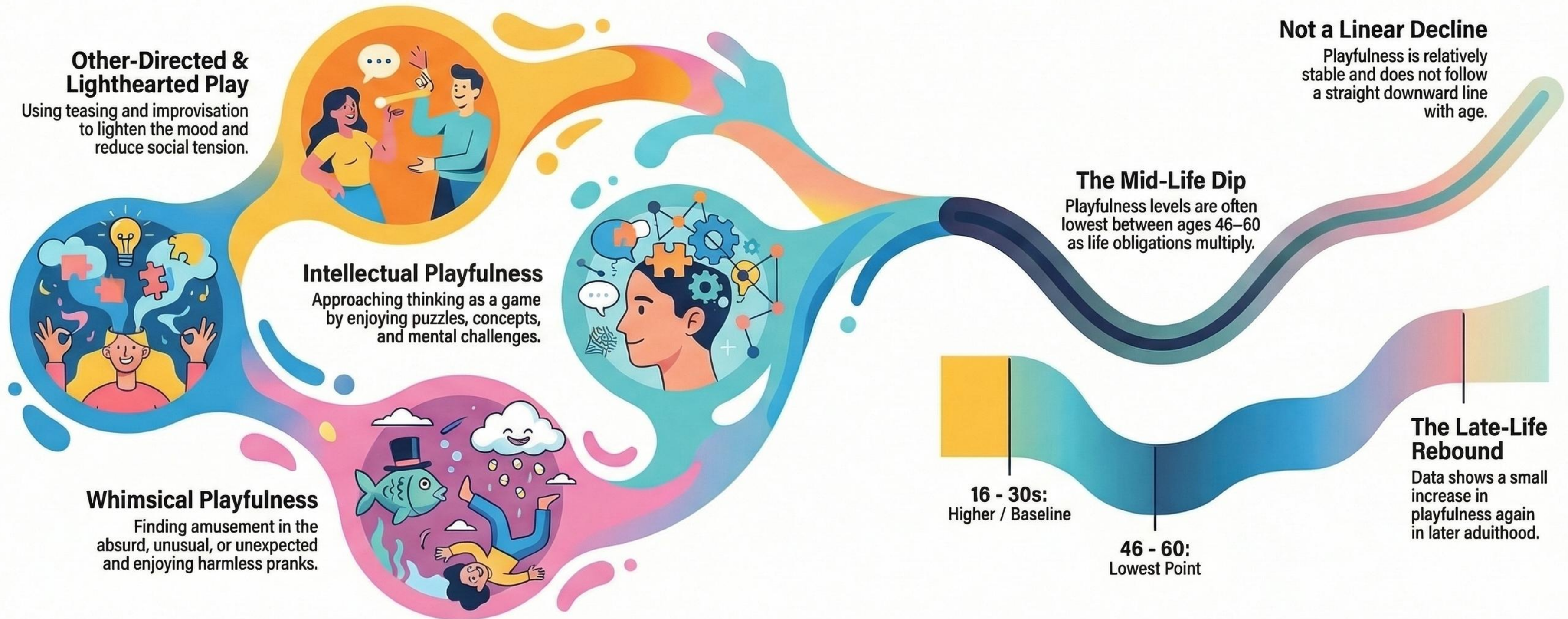


Born to Play: The Truth About Playfulness in Adulthood

While play is often associated with childhood, research shows it is a stable instinct that persists throughout adulthood. Using the OLIW model, scientists measure how adults express playfulness through social, mental, and creative outlets across their entire lifespan.

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF ADULT PLAYFULNESS (OLIW MODEL)

PLAYFULNESS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN



More Than Child's Play: Reclaiming Play for Adulthood

THE POWER OF PLAY AS A SURVIVAL FORCE



The Industrial Shift: Work vs. Play

Before the 18th century, work and life were intertwined; modern productivity culture labeled play as "unproductive."



Survival Through Play

Ancient Lydians used games to distract from famine, while modern designer Jane McGonigal used game mechanics to recover from depression.

Play is Regulation, Not Just Entertainment

In times of crisis, play serves as a vital tool for mental regulation and societal resilience.

THE SCIENCE OF ADULT PLAYFULNESS

Playfulness Can Be Grown

Research shows childhood playfulness does not dictate adult playfulness; it is a trait we can choose to practice.



HIGHER LIFE SATISFACTION

A Catalyst for Healthy Aging

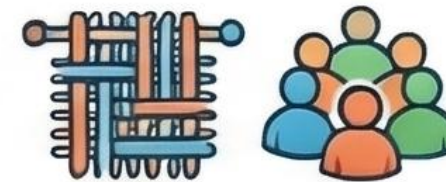
Playfulness in adults is directly linked to higher life satisfaction, happiness, and successful aging.



The Modern "Playful Shift"

Cities and workplaces are increasingly integrating gamified elements like interactive spaces and collaborative gaming to boost well-being.

Comparing the perception of play across different eras



Pre-Industrial

View of Play: Intertwined with life/work
Primary Focus: Community and Festivity



Industrial Era

View of Play: "Unproductive" / For children
Primary Focus: Productivity and Fixed Schedules



Modern Era

View of Play: Tool for Resilience/Well-being
Primary Focus: Work-Life Balance and Mental Health

The Playful Educator: Why Your Mindset Matters

The Impact of Educator Playfulness

Research shows that an educator's playfulness is contagious, directly influencing the playfulness and engagement levels of children. Rather than adding more games to a curriculum, a "playful mindset" transforms the tone of the classroom through humor, curiosity, and imagination.

- **Playfulness is Contagious**

Research shows teacher playfulness is directly linked to higher playfulness in children.

- **Shifting the Classroom Tone**

Humor & Curiosity

Bringing humor and curiosity into lessons transforms the energy of the learning process.

Cultivating a Playful Mindset

- **Mindset Over Materials**

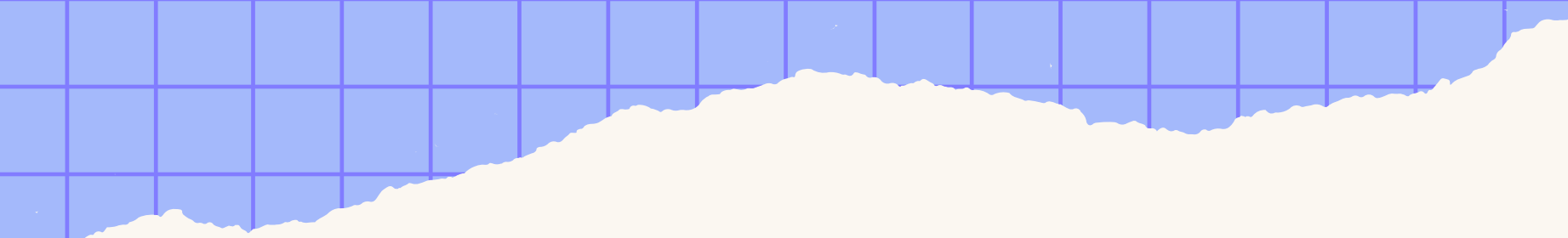
It is a tone shift using fictional scenarios, characters, or even playful mistakes.

- **Work with Willing Players**

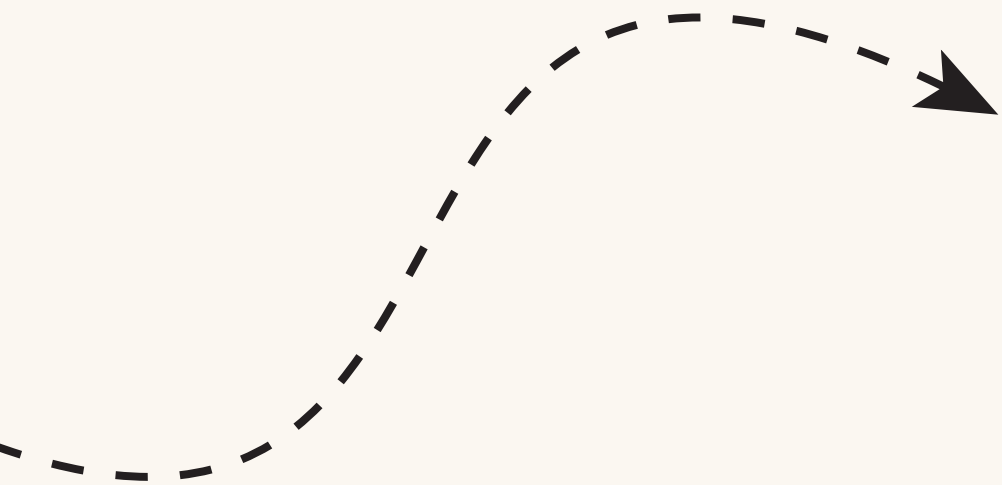
Educators work in playful environments with children who are naturally ready to play.

Have Fun!

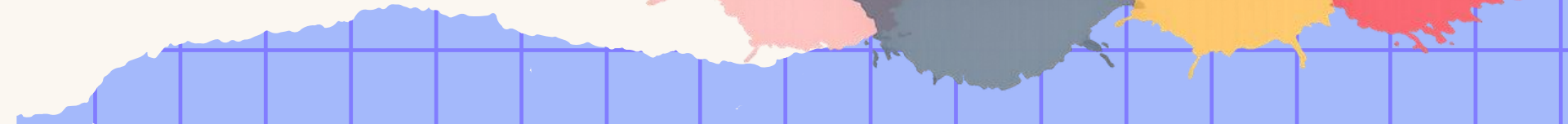
Enjoying work in natural ways is the ultimate takeaway for professional development.



HAVE
FUN!



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