



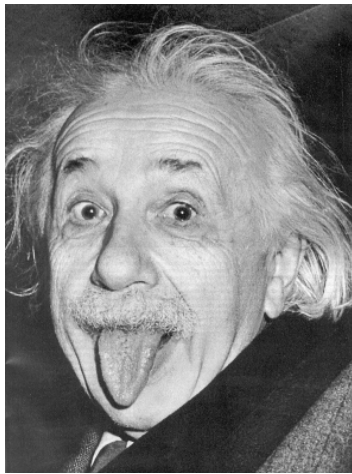
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SYNERGISTIC EMERGENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

PNE Inspirations

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Powerful Phenomenon of “PLAY”



“You can find out more about somebody in an hour of PLAY than you can in a year of conversation.”

-Plato

Our spotlight this issue shines on the powerful phenomenon of “PLAY.”

Almost no one thinks of play as a phenomenon, let alone powerful. However, upon closer inspection, play *is* in fact a phenomenon and *is* an access to great power.

Play has clearly gotten a bad rap.

Statements like “quit playing around and get to work” seem to indicate that the two are mutually exclusive! On the contrary, Webster’s defines play as *to engage in or occupy oneself with; recreational activity, especially, the spontaneous activity of children; absence of serious or harmful intent*. Mark Twain said, “Work and play are words used to describe the same thing under differing conditions.”

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-Mark Twain

Why can't there be play in work? Why do only the children and the elderly have time to play? What's happened to all the people in between? If they're not taking time out to play, what are they doing? Why do they have to have a drink in order to relax and play? Why is life so serious in the middle? Why is life so serious?

Have you ever thought of what would happen if the countries that are in dispute took the time to play full out? For that matter, what would happen if you could engage someone who you currently dislike in a game of play? Really consider it. What would happen? What *could* happen? Elementary school teachers know that if they can get two disagreeable students to start playing, conflict easily resolves.

In this context of powerful play, we use Webster's definition of the synonym to power, energy. It is defined as *a dynamic quality; the capacity of acting or being active; a usually positive spiritual force; and a fundamental entity of nature.*

This is much different than the kind of power that comes to mind when addressing worldly interests. The power involved in play gives life. Nothing can be bought with this kind of power; it can't even be owned. Power emitted when play happens opens all of life up.

“Man is most nearly himself when he achieves the seriousness of a child at play.”

-Heraclitus

In the Academy Award winning movie, Citizen Kane, Orson Welles is remembered by the famous last word, “Rosebud!” That was the name of Kane's sled. He had every material thing in the world, and on his deathbed all he wanted was the experience of play he had as a kid on his beloved Rosebud.

Webster's goes on to define phenomenon as *an exceptional occurrence, an observable fact, an aspect known through the senses rather than by thought.*

A recent phenomenon, there's the real life story of young children in Africa who live near a contaminated river in a town strewn with AIDS corpses. The children were seen going down a slide made of garbage into the river. It was said the children were genuinely **playing**.

Play wants to happen. If children in such squalor and desperate situations as the ones in Africa could create play in their circumstances, what's possible?

Could it be that the best things in life *are* free?

If you are a child or elderly person ... keep playing. Have a ball. Laugh a lot. Keep smiling.

If you are one of the ones in the middle and you haven't *really* played in a while, ask yourself why are you hanging on so tightly? Are your worries really that important? You might want to even go up to a sweet child/elderly person and ask them to play a game with you. You'll be surprised how easily it all comes back ... it's like riding a bike, only easier.

“We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.”

-George Bernard Shaw