



Do OD presents

Play with Purpose

Elevating your OD practice with play

Play explorers:

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Our mission possible!

01
**Anatomy of
play.**

02
**Reframe play as
a strategic tool
in OD.**

03
**Crowdsource and
share play-
based
facilitation
techniques used
by OD
practitioners.**

Intro: Pick your monster



01




02



03





Introductions: **Play-Stations**

15 mins

Introduction: **Playstation 1**

Task 1: Connection cards

Instructions:

- Each person draws a from a stack with a light prompt , for example
 - “What’s one word to describe your OD style?”
 - “What’s something you’ve recently unlearned in OD?”
- Go around in a circle, take turns answering, and lightly respond to each other’s answers (e.g., “That resonates because...”).

Task 2: name your monster (GO WILD!!)



15 mins



Introduction: Playstation 2

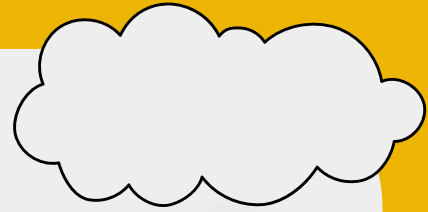
Task 1: 'Metaphor me'

Instructions:

- Each person selects an object (e.g., random toys, office supplies, cards, etc.) from a central pile.
- Then finish this sentence: **"This represents how I see my role in OD because..."**
- Share around the group and ask one follow-up question to another person.

Task 2: name your monster (GO WILD!!)

15 mins



Introduction: Playstation 3

Task 1: 'Chain re-actions'

Instructions:

- Form a circle with your group.
- **The 1st person** begins by saying their name, doing a movement or sound (or both), and saying:
"I'm [Name], and I bring *[Playful OD Superpower]* to my OD practice."

E.g., "I'm Jamie, *[does a shoulder shimmy]* and I bring curious chaos to my OD work!"

- **The 2nd Person:** Name + **repeat the action sequence before them** + **add their own** + and superpower.
- Each person continues the pattern—repeating everyone before them in order—until the final person performs the full chain and adds their own.

Task 2: name your monster (GO WILD!!)

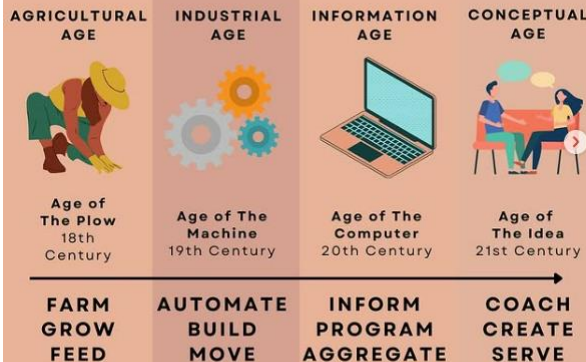


15 mins



A Whole New Mind by Daniel Pink

Did you know we are entering a *new* age?



@HIGHESTSELFINSTITUTE

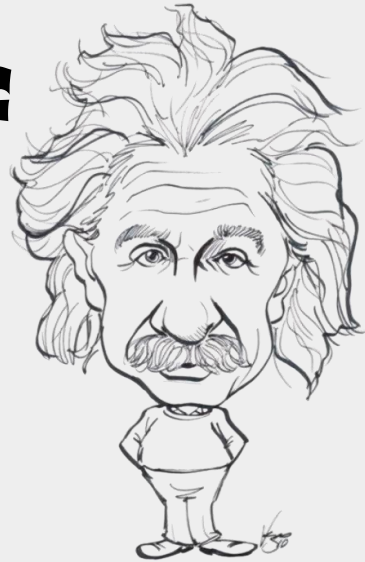
The Shift from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age

We're moving from a society dominated by logical, linear "left-brain" thinking (Information Age) to one that values intuitive, creative "right-brain" skills (Conceptual Age).

Success now depends not just on analytical skills, but on abilities like empathy, design, and storytelling.

**"Play is the
highest form of
research."**—

Albert Einstein



"The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct."

– Carl Jung



**"We don't stop playing
because we grow old; we
grow old because we
stop playing."—**

George Bernard Shaw





01/ 02

Anatomy of Play

How can play influence your OD practice?

25 mins



Anatomy of play

01

Brainstorm (3 mins)

- Use Post-its to **write one characteristic of play per note** (e.g., "fun," "creative"). Aim for 6–8 notes.
- **Nominate an observer (also the speaker)** for the group, to take notes of discussions

03

Discuss the question at your table & make some notes (5 mins)

02

Create "Play" as a Living Being (10 mins)

- **Assemble (Draw/ build) a body for Play** showing how characteristics connect (e.g., base = foundational traits).

04

Gallery Walk & Reflection (5 mins)

- Display models around the room.
- Walk through and observe each model
- Speaker feedback on the discussion in your groups





Q1

How will you define 'play'?

What are the characteristics that
makes play, PLAY??





Q2

In what ways could **PLAY (or what it represents) enhance the way you design or lead OD interventions?**

(Prompts: thinking about energy, adaptability, emotional intelligence, etc.)





Q3

**How can we use play as
a strategic tool in
Organisation
Development?**





Q4

**Where do we already use
play without calling it
that – and what if we
named and amplified it?**





Q5

**What gets in the way
of using **play** more
strategically in your
practice or context?**





Q6

What organisational challenges could benefit from a more playful or creative approach?





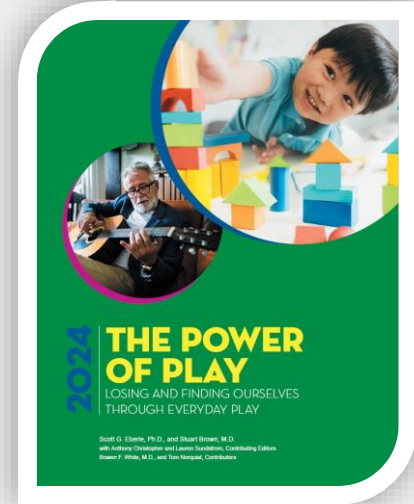
Defining play

Play is an ancient, voluntary, pleasurable episode or set of events that we (and other species) engage in for its own sake that meanwhile strengthens our muscles, instructs our social skills, tempers aggression, releases stress, deepens our positive emotions, and enables balance

(Eberle 2014).

NIFP – We are optimistic!

At the **National Institute for Play**, we maintain that play is an urgent public health necessity. The pandemic and its aftermath, our nation's extreme political polarization, global geopolitical conflicts, and the climate crisis contribute to unprecedented, widespread levels of anxiety, depression, addiction, and hopelessness. Play is part of the solution. As NIFP identifies the latest advances in neuroscience, biology, social science and psychology to better understand and explain the role of play in brain development and social integration—**we are optimistic!**



Source Report :
National institute of play

The Power of play



Play is an ancient, biologically embedded drive that—when freely chosen and regularly engaged—yields profound benefits across our physical, neurological, emotional, and social lives.

In other words, play isn't just a frivolous pastime or something we “grow out of.” It's a fundamental human need—hardwired into our brains from infancy through old age—that:

- **Builds and strengthens our brains by promoting new neural connections and neurochemicals** (like BDNF and dopamine) that underlie learning, creativity, stress resilience, and joy.
- **Forges deep social bonds through early “attunement”** (the mutual smiles and baby talk with caregivers) and later through cooperative and competitive forms of play that teach empathy, fairness, teamwork, and trust.
- **Sharpens physical, emotional, and executive skills**—from balance and coordination to impulse control, concentration, and emotional regulation—across the lifespan.
- **Releases stress relieving neurochemicals (endorphins, endocannabinoids, oxytocin)**, combatting anxiety, depression, and burnout in an increasingly pressured world.
- **Sustains curiosity, exploration, and resilience**—priming us to navigate the unexpected and to innovate both personally and professionally.





02

Play as a Strategic tool

Play a serious tool in OD?

Play: the strategic ally of OD

✿ Building Psychological Safety

- creates **low-risk environments where people feel safer** to express ideas, experiment, and make mistakes.
- OD practitioners can use playful exercises early in interventions **to build trust quickly within teams or groups.**

✿ Reframing Problems and Systems

- invites **reframing: seeing challenges through new metaphors, stories, or lenses.**
- **Systems thinking exercises (e.g., Lego Serious Play, improv games)** help teams visualise and rethink complex organisational dynamics creatively.

✿ Unlocking creativity and innovation

- **disrupts habitual thinking patterns** and invites imagination.
- In strategy sessions, design sprints, or culture change work, playful methods **spark new perspectives and breakthrough ideas that logical, linear approaches often miss.**

✿ Enabling Deeper Learning

- Learning through play is more **embodied, memorable, and emotional.**
- OD practitioners can design development programmes where leaders **"learn by doing"** through playful simulations, rather than just passively receiving content.

✿ Energising and reconnecting Teams

✿ Facilitating adaptability and change

- simulates real-world **change dynamics in a light, experiential way.**
- Games and playful role-plays allow teams to **"rehearse" flexibility, collaboration, and navigating the unknown**—core capabilities needed during organisational change.

✿ Challenging Power Dynamics Gently

- Play **flattens hierarchies temporarily**; everyone can contribute equally.
- Used wisely, playful activities can **surface hidden dynamics, amplify unheard voices**, and enable more democratic and inclusive participation.



03

Crowdsource **Play-based** **facilitation techniques**

Liberating Structures

15 mins



The Play Share Shuffle:

One play-based facilitation technique you've used (or seen used) in OD practice that really works.

Step 1:

Write Your Idea (2 min)

- On an index card, anonymously write:
 - 💡 **One play-based facilitation technique you've used (or seen used) in OD practice that really works.**
- ! Be bold, simple, and practical
! 1-2 sentences is perfect

Step 2:

Pass & Score (3 rounds – 6 min)

- When we say “Go,” start passing your card around.
- When the music stops:
- Read the card you're holding
- Score it 1 (meh) to 5 (amazing!)
- Write your score on the back
- Pass again – repeat for 5 rounds

Step 3:

Top 10 Reveal (5 min)

- We'll total up the scores and reveal the
- Top 10 most loved ideas from the room

**“Be the change
that you wish to
see in the world.”**

- Mahatma Gandhi



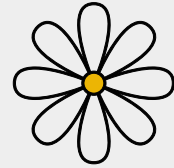
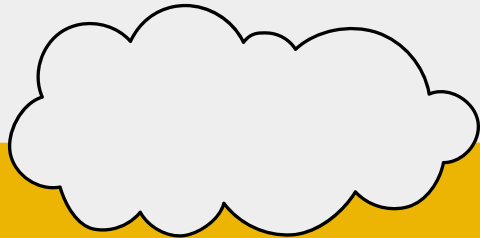


How can you invite more **play** into your life?

"What small, light-hearted action could you take today
that would bring a sense of joy or curiosity to your work
or life?"



Supporting resources





Recommended Sources for Deeper Reading

1. "Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul" – Dr. Stuart Brown
2. "The Power of Play: Learning What Comes Naturally" – David Elkind
3. "A Whole New Mind" – Daniel Pink (talks about the value of play and creativity in future work)
4. IDEO's Design Thinking for Educators & Playbook – practical examples of play as a tool for innovation
5. Karl Kapp's work on Gamification – especially for workplace learning
6. "The Art of Gathering" by Priya Parker –for thinking creatively about how you design gatherings and why play and meaning matter.
<https://www.priyaparker.com/gathering-toolkit>



Resources for Playful facilitation



SessionLab	Massive library of facilitation methods, games, energisers, warm-ups	sessionlab.com/library
Gamestorming	Toolkit of visual, creative, and playful workshop techniques	gamestorming.com
Mural / Miro	Online whiteboards with built-in templates for playful collaboration (e.g., mind maps, games)	mural.co , miro.com
Liberating Structures	Simple group structures to unlock participation (some very playful, e.g., Improv Prototyping, Drawing Together)	liberatingstructures.com
Kahoot!	Create quizzes and playful competition in sessions (good for energy)	kahoot.com
Chad Littlefield	Creative facilitation techniques	https://www.youtube.com/@chad.littlefield

Techniques for Playful facilitation



Drawing Together	(Liberating Structures) – participants draw concepts instead of describing them verbally.
Improv Games	(e.g., “Yes, And...”) – brilliant for energy, spontaneity, and creative thinking.
Metaphor Cards	(e.g., Dixit cards) – use abstract images to spark metaphorical thinking.
World Café	playful, café-style group discussion with table hosts and rotating participants.
Story Cubes	dice with images on them; use them to co-create stories or design playful strategy discussions.
LEGO® Serious Play®	structured building with LEGO to explore ideas, strategy, and team dynamics.



Thank you!

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A care system support
organisation

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