

What do Plato and Einstein have to do with PLAY?

Littlefeet Yoga®'s Moving with Meaning through Natural Play

We live in an age of abundance of resources, easy access to information, increased organized sports settings and equipments, better standard of living, yet children's statistics on mental and physical health are alarming: feelings of stress, anxiety, fatigue, obesity, juvenile diabetes, etc.

What I hear kids say about PLAY	How I see and hear adults live/view PLAY
We want to have fun	Not enough time to play
Not always competing	Fear and risks- need to organize and supervise
Don't want to have to play to get marks or something like that	Need to focus on academics and learning. Play used for learning a skill
Want to be leader, creator	Get active: one size-fits-all PLAY model: organized movement/formalized sports
(not said in words but ways of expressing emotions, what is going on inside)	Play often viewed to let out exuberance

Before	Now
Played more often in natural environments (muddy terrain, creeks, forest. Lead to wild imagination	Human-built playground with more pre-determined play outcomes, more indoor play
Risk-taking lessons due to natural environment	Fear of danger, hurt, law suits, controlled settings
Spontaneous play with self-directed activities	Pre-determined outcomes or objectives, directed play
More experienced-based activities	Speed dominance, physical literacy/skill overload
Bigger sense of community	Less ties with community beyond family and less playtime with family
Healthier diet of play experiences	Emphasis on diet of facts, abstract knowledge not always meaningful in the world of children
Active in play- whole body engagement	More passive play through watching, moving only parts of body- body gets weaker in certain area
Less toys, less technology = more creativity through play, use of imagination, self-reliant	Replicate more images seen through technology, less independent in creative process

Because children desperately need adults who:

- ♥ Value NATURAL play as the essence of children and BEING
- ♥ Allow expression of play through exploration and freedom
- ♥ Understand play as not being beneficial only when determined by rules
- ♥ Value play without needing to teach a lesson or with an agenda
- ♥ Trust that natural play allows growth and health at the intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual levels of children and ADULTS
- ♥ Believe play is natural to each of us to and allows us to integrate intricate aspects of our lives, especially for children
- ♥ View the use of imagination through play as beneficial for growth
- ♥ Are willing to give them a voice about their choice
- ♥ Understand the need to reset the balance between organized/unorganized settings
- ♥ ♥ ♥ Believe in their important role as facilitators of play

Littlefeet Yoga® responds to an increasing need to move with meaning for deeper engagement and healthier lifestyle + a desire from children to express themselves in various forms + a wish for young souls to be inspired + an urgent push to preserve children's innocence + an environment free of competition without pressure to perform = a fresh and innovative holistic movement model, engaging children AND ADULTS

Littlefeet Yoga® believes in fostering, supporting, empowering children and adults with a healthy balance of play experiences through a sensory-rich cooperative environment, where freedom to explore with no pressure to perform and the use of imagination and creativity are highly valued!

THE KIND OF PLAY WE PLAY!

Powerful
Liberating
Awesome
Yogatized

PLAY IS FREEING, PLAY IS BEING!

HOW TO START THE JOURNEY TOWARDS VALUING PLAY? WITH A-B-C!

- **ATTITUDE:** By being open and aware to the benefits of play, not only physical benefits (often related to a reduction of health risks, such as heart disease, diabetes, etc.) but also emotional, social, developmental, spiritual benefits
- **BELIEF:** By believing in our own ability to be active and playful
- **COMMITMENT:** Through committing to practice being open and having confidence in our abilities and letting go of constant external expectations to justify the right kind of PLAY.

LITTLEFEET YOGA® NATURAL PLAY!

- Allows children to explore without the pressure to perform to rigid and external standards in a cooperative setting
- A balanced-diet of different types of play settings (symbolic, socio-dramatic, games with co-creative rules, play with props, free play)
- Balance between structure and spontaneity, between active and reflective activities
- Presence of parents as co-partners and explorers of activity with children
- Play with and in nature
- Allowing an element of risk as healthy component of play and learning
- Play inspired by imagination and creativity

- Space and time to explore, move freely
- Experienced enhanced by integration through relaxation

B.K.S Iyengar equates a form of spiritual practice in the play of children in *Light of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Sutra 3.1*, with the passion and wonder in children as they become totally absorbed in a task, oblivious to their surroundings which fuels their concentration.

WHY CHOOSE NATURAL PLAY AS CORE ELEMENT OF OUR PHILOSOPHY?

- Because life is movement, movement is life, play is movement and movement is a basic human need
- Our bodies are designed to move and it is a way of communicating with the world. Littlefeet Yoga® is about moving with meaning, movement through yoga using play, creativity, cooperation.
- Because all children strive to explore their world and connect authentically with the people around them and play allows them to make meaning in their own way of their world.
- Because all children of all ages love to engage in a variety of movement experiences for self-discovery and interaction with others and play becomes a springboard to those elements.
- Because play and movement are central to a child's development and are their favourite modes of expression.
- Because play lies at the heart of children
- Because play = meaning for children and we need meaning to make connections. With connections, we inherently want to engage and dive deeper in the experience.

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- Because play can allow children to focus on the means and not on the result, it allows to solve problems, share, connect, explore, and so much more.
- Because play respects and responds to WHO children are: curious, social, spontaneous, imaginative, kinaesthetic, connected to nature.
- Because we all live and think through our bodies, emotions, thoughts, and playing reaches the depths of all 3 and connecting them through the act of letting go and experiencing from within
- Because just like creativity, play finds inspiration from inside, not only motivation from outside.
- Because play allows children to explore their feelings, explore the depth of their physical abilities and limitations, explore their creativity, explore their spirituality
- Play is the antidote to hurrying which has great health benefits!!!
- Because natural play empowers children in the following ways:
 - helps resilience and development of positive attitudes towards challenges
 - increases self-esteem and well-being
 - is freeing, fun, inclusive of all
 - leads to ease, slowly moving away from dis-ease
is the seed of creativity
 - allows freedom and wonder to flow and nourishes children's souls
 - **PLAY IS ACCESSIBLE AND ENJOYABLE BY BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS!!!**

- HIGH value at LOW cost!
- Provides the ability to feel strong and capable in their bodies
- Helps prevent anxiety
- Builds independence

BUT THE KEY ISSUE TO REMEMBER, in every movement experience, it has to be perceived as FUN to have lasting effects!

“Children’s well-being is enhanced by play: bodies are exercised, imagination stimulated, cognitive skills developed, rest afterward”. Sally Jenkinson, The Genius of Play.

HOW WE CHOOSE TO USE NATURAL PLAY AND HOW ENGAGING IT IS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

YOGA → YOGA FOR CHILDREN, as opposed to yoga for mini-adults. Yoga for children being creative, co-creative, playful, cooperative, social, dynamic, educational, relaxing.

YOGA for CHILDREN: medium to engage and create meaningful and playful movement experiences so we feel happier, healthier, stronger.

YOGA for CHILDREN: an experienced-based as opposed to result-based activity so all can explore their own potential and enjoys BEING as opposed to DOING.

YOGA for CHILDREN: multifaceted, sensory-rich experience supporting the use of various media: music, props, science, art, animals, danse, nature, etc. where play finds meaning.

YOGA for CHILDREN: children are encouraged to use their bodies as a vehicle for self-awareness and to discover the connections between the macrocosm of the environment and the microcosm of their bodies which creates meaning thus more interest to explore.

YOGA for CHILDREN: there is balance between structure and spontaneity, education and exploration, motion and relaxation.

YOGA for CHILDREN and for ADULTS: Children and families move and play through guided-discovery and self-discovery processes, feeling a wide variety of yoga experiences. Yoga allows for the activities to be age-specific and based on developmental and individual needs, without previous skills or experience required, simply just as we are!

YOGA for CHILDREN and for ADULTS: experiences are open and flexible to provide opportunities for creativity and interactions with caregivers and parents, for deep engagement.

YOGA for CHILDREN and for ADULTS: We become, we imitate, we pretend, we share, we show, we move high, we move low, we touch the sky, we touch to earth, we stand in between, we find our place, we belong, we bond for quality family time.

YOGA for CHILDREN and for ADULTS: parents and children become co-players, co-partners, where we preserve the autonomy of children, where children find new way to connect and bond with parent

WHO DO WE SERVE?

Children and families of all walks of life, ready to experience a different, creative, non-competitive way of playing, a way of exploring that engages the body while touching the heart and soul.

Children and families wanting to move and play using yoga as a medium to create meaningful movement experiences that creates a ripple effect onto others around them.

Children and families moving and playing as partners, as co-players, supporting and extending together the play activities while preserving the children's freedom and autonomy to develop the play.

Adults who want to explore the art of getting it out of the way and looking through children's eyes!

Adults who want to age YOUNG!

WHAT FORMS OF PLAY WE PLAY? THE ART OF PLAYING THROUGH YOGA!

- We play with breath, we play with poses, we play with art, we play with movement and colors, we play with space around us, we play with closed/open eyes, we play with balance, we play with partners, we play with images and sounds, we play with relaxation
- we strive for a balance of play EXPERIENCES to nourish different types of needs, thus learning more about ourselves, our interests, our abilities and limitations:
 - we explore with symbolic play, socio-dramatic activities (we remake ourselves through animals, nature, poses), with props, with stories, words, ideas, with games with rules where children can co-lead, we play in pairs, we play in groups, we play solo.
We play for elation, for participation, for finding solutions, for collaboration, for exploration, for relaxation, for cooperation, for concentration, for meaning, for creating.
- **The only agenda we have is to learn about ourselves which leads to freedom and when mind and spirit are free, we can accomplish anything.**

WHAT CHILDREN NEED FROM ADULTS

- Adults learning the art of getting out of the way and looking through children's eyes
- Time and space to explore, dream, move, design their own play time
- Permission to experience some risks in their play so they can develop resilience and possibilities to challenge themselves
- Listen beyond hearing and look beyond seeing what children have to say about PLAY
- A healthy balance of adult-led and kid-led playing time
- Time to play outside, in natural environments as opposed to man-built environment
- Develop a playful attitude by engaging in play too!

AND WHAT ADULTS NEED FOR THEMSELVES

Is playfulness exclusive to childhood? Do rites of passage into adulthood prevent us from remaining playful?

- Learning to get out of their own way, remember how to they played when they were children to best understand children's love of play and inherent need to play
- Pay attention - root is "attendere" = to stretch forward: What do you want your children to stretch forward to? Competition, stress, or resilience, creativity, self-regulation?
- Reflect, explore: as children, how did PLAY affect your body and soul?
- Playful adult thinkers are more inclined and able to think outside the box ("The Genius of Play" - Sally Jenkinson)

*"We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing."
George Bernard Shaw.*

*"The thing is to become a master and in your old age to acquire the courage to do
what children did when they knew nothing" Henry Miller*

Life is a game, play it!" Sai Baba

WHERE WE PLAY AND WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN OUR NATURAL PLAY MOVEMENT?

We play as families because families are the roots of growth and catalyst to more play:

- Family yoga in studios and community centres
- Special family yoga events
- Seasonal family yoga events following and honouring the rhythm of nature
- Online Little SuperYogis resources coming soon

We play as adults because play allows us to grow free and age young!

- Abracadabra MaJic Yoga playshops - (see littlefeetyoga/workshops)
- Children's Yoga Teacher Training and Continuing Education (Level 1 to 3)
- Teacher conference and presentations in schools and communities

We play

- For the health of our children and our family
- For creating quality space to share quality time with our children
- For reducing stress and anxiety
- To feel a new-found energy
- To feel more rested, refreshed relaxed
- To find new ways of BEING with our children THAT DOES NOT ADD TO OUR "TO DO" LIST
- To experience fun moments at LOW cost but with such HIGH value

So What do Plato and Einstein have to do with PLAY?

"Play is the highest form of research." Albert Einstein

"You can learn more about a person in one hour of play than in a year of conversation" and "Life must be lived as Play" Plato.

Einstein

$$E \text{ (energy)} = M \text{ (units of mass)} \times C \text{ (speed of light)}^2$$

Littlefeet Yoga®

$$E = \text{Engagement in activity} = M \text{ (meaning through play)} \times C \times 2 \text{ (creativity} \times \text{cooperation)}$$

To be engaged, we need meaning. Play provides plenty of meaning to children, combined with creativity and cooperation

This equation points out how a small amount of meaning can release a huge amount of energy -engagement

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THIS MANIFESTO

- Knowledge gained through many personal experiences of my own with play as well as with children of all backgrounds through many years of teaching
- Insights from those experiences
- Accumulated wisdom gained through listening beyond hearing, observing beyond seeing the magical expressions of children through movement. See here the experience and value supporting my passions:

- Many years of practical, hands-on, field experience with children as a teacher and mother, sharing, co-creating, questioning, observing, learning, analyzing, integrating, growing with them.
- Passion for movement, passion for children
- Leaving a stable profession as a lawyer to pursue my passion and belief of learning through movement, play, creativity.
- Values developed over years of personal stories through movement, play, creativity, connection with nature and the benefits felt from that.
- In-depth experience as a preschool, elementary, high school, PE teacher in schools for 6 years, part of 17 years of teaching experience in schools and communities through the creation and implementation of movement programs and yoga
- Experience in teaching children of different milieu and different background: native, english, french, up north in tundra as well as urban areas
- Stories of struggles to find my path from law to education to moving with meaning through yoga and re-discovering the art of playing, creating as a means to my freedom.
- Remaining a student first and foremost
- Ongoing education and learning on playing, children, creativity through movement, yoga.
- Through my years of teaching and learning, I have read and enjoyed many inspiring resources, here are just **very few** of them (there were plenty):
 - The Genius of Play, Sally Jenkinson
 - Why learning is not all in your head, by Carla Hannaford

- - The Well-Balanced Child and The Genius of Natural Childhood
by Sally Goddard Blythe
- Spinning Inward, by Maureen Murdock
- Light on Life, B.K.S. Iyengar
- The Gift of an Ordinary Day, by Katrina Kennison
- Mitten Strings for God, by Katrina Kennison
- SARK's resource
- The Tao of Pooh, by Benjamin Hoff
- Le Petit Prince, by Saint-Exupéry

GO PLAY, CREATE, COOPERATE!™

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Connecting families and children through movement and creativity

www.littlefeetyoga.com and www.littlesuperyogis.com