



Who doesn't want joy in their lives?

Today we will focus on joy and how the playful engagement with our children can change our lives and theirs!

But first of all, what is joy?

It's defined as a feeling of great pleasure and happiness.

Studies have shown that joy and play are powerful tools for helping children deal with their personal challenges, especially children that have come from hard places. Joy and play also helps promote a healthy brain and ways of relating to others.



It may happen to us often that, in the midst of all the appointments, classes, extracurricular activities, etc., we forget to deliberately enjoy joyful moments. We may focus on diagnosis, the problems we see in our children, (or the ones that their teachers & doctors tell us they have), in our finances, time management, etc. and leave aside the importance of building a joyful relationship. We forget to have fun with each other. And we need reminders, like this one, that the relationship we're building, and the time and love we invest in our children is the most important thing we can do for their good (and ours too!)

A joyful connection with the primary caregiver supports an optimal emotional development.

What does joy do?



It calms the primitive brain that's thinking "I need to protect myself, I need to keep myself alive, I need to control the situation". Joy brings calm to the brain, and helps the child or teen to feel safe and secure in your presence. When the brain is relaxed, it can grow and learn.

Joy will bring healing to your child, and to your family

Living at warp speed won't.

We do not want to look back to our children's childhood and only remember that we were busy driving them to different therapies, taking them to specialists appointments or pushing them academically. We, as the

caregivers, want to remember the joy of playing with our kids, gathering around the table, reading great books, laughing —We want precious memories to hold on to, and we can only make them if we SLOW DOWN.

When the child is struggling, the whole family struggles. But, if after acknowledging the feelings of anger or disappointment because your child did not fulfill your expectations, you CHOOSE to love, to connect and to invest in the relationship, healing starts to happen for both parts!

No matter the background or current situation, joy brings peace, calm and a space for communication and growth.

It is not easy, but it is good & FUN. When you choose joy with your child, you'll notice how your own mindset will start to change, with your spouse, boss, coworkers, etc.

How joy can help children?

—**It reduces anxiety.** Anxiety and joy cannot coexist. When they experience joy it relaxes them and can relieve their mind and/or body.

—**It boosts learning.** When the brain is calm, it allows the person effectively receive information and learn.

—**It helps children try new things.** Stress and fear inhibit exploration and creativity. When they feel happier, they feel safe. They don't feel like they need to protect themselves, so they are freer to explore, open up and share with others.

Joyful interactions with safe and loving adults build psychological resilience If there's one thing you can do to help your son or daughter or the children you work with it's this: experience joy with them.

But how can you bring joy to the table?

- Find moments for you to be still to rest, and be kind to yourself. Acknowledge your needs and do what you need so that you can be fully present with your child.
- Set time everyday to leave technology aside. GO OFFLINE. When you're with your child be fully present. Go outside, pay attention to the little details. Whether it's the sunsets beautiful colors, the creativity behind the designs of insects and butterflies, the warm breeze, or just how they reach out to touch your hand and how it feels.
- Look at each other gently, relax, and breathe.
- Follow your child's lead in play: All children, regardless of age, will be interested in something:
 - A baby may be interested in the sound a rattle makes, or how it feels when she bites it.
 - A toddler may be engrossed in building a block tower and knocking it down over and over again.
 - An older child may enjoy learning the rules of a new board game.
 - A teenager may like nail art designs or watch basketball or the Fifa World Cup!

So, when you see your child gravitate to a particular toy or object, observe what he/she is doing. Then pause some more and listen. Before you jump in with your adult agenda, give your child some space. See what they are interested in and interact with them.

Join In And Play!

Yes, just like that! Get down on the floor & start interacting.

If your child is playing with a car, grab

another car and drive it alongside his. Depending on the age of your child, you can make fun sounds.

Think back to when you were a child and even if you didn't have a fun safe childhood, this would be a good time for you to let your inner child play and heal as you bring healing to others.



Despite how simple this seems on the surface it can be quite difficult for some parents, but kids love this. They will become more engaged, so let it out and be playful! It might be a much-needed time for stress relief.

Notice what you did or didn't do today, so you can take the necessary actions to improve tomorrow!

Success is not found in how fast they finish school, having the best grades, but in the love and connection that happens through the many interactions that you share with each other. Love and truth transforms lives.

Let us connect with the children in our lives in a new way, let us sing, laugh, play, dance, jump, hug more

What does the Word say?

"You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

Psalm 16:11

The Greek word for joy is *chara*, and it is related to the word *charis* which means grace or a gift. *Chara* is the normal response to *charis*. We can be joyful because we recognize God's grace or gift to us.

We can let our joy out through our actions, but we have to learn that it is a choice to be joyful. We can choose to value God's presence, promises, gifts and work in our lives.

Let us be thankful for the children God rescued from the pit of despair, and placed into our families and lives. Let us be thankful for the opportunity to change a life, and to have our lives transformed by it. Let us remember all the goodness of God and how He has allowed us to know Him, to come this far, and let us remember He is also a God of joy, that rejoices with his children.

And our prayer for you all is found in Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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