

JWT

PLAY

AS A COMPETITIVE  
ADVANTAGE



July 2012

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**A note to readers:** To make the report easy to navigate, we've added hyperlinks to the Table of Contents, so you can jump immediately to the items that most interest you (or, alternatively, you can read the material straight through).

This is a report from JWTIntelligence. Go to [JWTIntelligence.com](http://JWTIntelligence.com) to download this and other trend research.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Play is a vital human activity, as natural as dreaming and as beneficial as sleep. Its emotional and social rewards are numerous. But in today's fast-paced, bottom-line world, adults are pushed to age out of play. We place a premium on productivity, and we've grown increasingly less apt to spare the time for pursuits that don't have specific goals attached.

The paradox is that to compete successfully, we need to embrace purposeless activity. More people are starting to understand this and to act accordingly. Increasingly, adults will seek to balance out their myriad organized and tech-based activities with more unstructured time and recreational pursuits. They'll not only be happier and healthier but find that they've gained competitive advantages.

This report looks at the varied benefits of play and outlines the impediments to play in our always-on culture. We spotlight how companies are injecting the idea of play into their business models, how marketers are advocating for adult play in their messaging, and how people feel about the role of play in their lives.

## METHODOLOGY

All of our trend reports are the result of quantitative, qualitative and desk research conducted by JWTIntelligence throughout the year. Specifically for this report, we conducted a quantitative study in the U.S. and the U.K. using SONAR™, JWT's proprietary online tool, from May 31-June 4, 2012. We surveyed 503 Americans and 503 Britons aged 18-plus. In addition, we interviewed four experts and influencers in the areas of creativity and play.

## EXPERTS AND INFLUENCERS\*



ALLISON ARDEN,  
VP/publisher, *Advertising Age*, and  
author, *The Book of Doing: Everyday  
Activities to Unlock Creativity and Joy*



BERNIE DEKOVEN,  
game designer, fun theorist and author,  
*The Well-Played Game*



STUART L. BROWN, M.D.,  
founder, National Institute for Play, and  
author, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens  
the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*



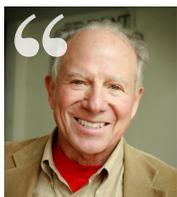
AUSTIN KLEON,  
artist and author, *Steal Like an Artist:  
10 Things Nobody Told You About  
Being Creative*

\*See Appendix to learn more about these experts and influencers.



## PLAY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Adults will increasingly adopt for themselves the revitalized idea that kids should have plenty of unstructured play to balance out today's plethora of organized and tech-based activities. In an age when people feel they can't spare time for pursuits that don't have specific goals attached, there will be a growing realization that unstructured time begets more imagination, creativity and innovation—all competitive advantages.



“The advantage of a playful person or a playful company process is that they're much more nimble. They're really able to enter a competitive scene with lightness and with an ability to respond wisely to the challenges. And if there is otherwise a sense of nonplay, there often is a kind of fixed and rigid and semicompulsive way of problem solving—which doesn't work nearly as well as if there is this ability to give and take with the circumstances.”

—STUART BROWN, founder of the National Institute for Play

# PLAY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE (cont'd.)

**Defining play:** This report defines play in its purest sense, as recreational activity. Play is about doing something simply for the fun of it—no scores or goals attached. No rules and no guidelines. In fact, play is purposeless. To ascribe purpose takes the joy out of it.

“ Play is “a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly.”  
—Dutch historian JOHAN HUIZINGA, *Homo Ludens*

“ The problem is that to insist on [play’s] benefits risks violating the spirit, if not the very meaning, of play. ... One plays because it’s fun to do so, not because of any instrumental advantage it may yield. The point isn’t to perform well or to master a skill, even though those things might end up happening. ... Play, then, is about process not product. It has no goal other than itself. And among the external goals that are inconsistent with play is a deliberate effort to do something better or faster than someone else. If you’re keeping score—in fact, if you’re competing at all—then what you’re doing isn’t play.”

—author and lecturer ALFIE KOHN, “The Point of Play Is That It Has No Point,” *Big Think*, Dec. 3, 2011

“ Play is one of those things we tend to take for granted until we miss it. It is much like breathing or dreaming in the way it fits seamlessly, invisibly, into a healthy life. It is a natural capacity of the human mind. As with breathing, we do it effortlessly. And as with dreaming, while we can be totally immersed in play, we often forget about it when we are done. To try to find the point in play is to miss the point of it. Play, after all, has no point; it’s purposeless.”

—MARK EPSTEIN, M.D., “Play’s the Thing,” *O, The Oprah Magazine*, May 2002

“ An essential component of play is its frivolity; biologists generally use phrases like ‘apparently purposeless activity’ in their definitions of play.”

—ROBIN MARANTZ HENIG, “Taking Play Seriously,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 17, 2008

## PROPERTIES OF PLAY

**Apparently purposeless:** Done for its own sake.

**Voluntary:** It is not obligatory or required by duty.

**Inherent attraction:** It’s fun, and it makes us feel good.

**Freedom from time:** When fully engaged in play, we lose a sense of the passage of time.

**Diminished consciousness of self:** We stop worrying about whether we look good or awkward, smart or stupid.

**Improvisational potential:** We’re not locked into a rigid way of doing things and are therefore open to serendipity and chance. The result? We stumble on new behaviors, thoughts, strategies, movements or ways of being.

**Continuation desire:** We desire to keep doing it, and the pleasure of the experience drives that desire.

*Derived from Play, by Stuart Brown, M.D., founder of the National Institute for Play, with Christopher Vaughan*



## BENEFITS OF PLAY

From an evolutionary standpoint it may seem a wonder that play takes place at all. As a *New York Times* writer put it, “It all seems incredibly wasteful, and nature does not usually tolerate waste.” But play has persisted and remains an intrinsic human activity, as natural as dreaming. “It’s something very fundamental for the well-being and development and maintenance of good things within the human spirit and body,” says Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute for Play.

The trouble is, in many parts of the world, we’ve developed a culture in which adults are pushed to age out of play. Our research found that 53% of American and British adults feel they don’t do things “just for fun” anymore, and 51% find it difficult to be creative and playful in their everyday lives. (See Figure 1A; for country breakdowns, see Appendix, Figures 1B-C.)

“ Play isn’t a luxury—it’s a necessity. Play is as important to our physical and mental health as getting enough sleep, eating well and exercising. Play teaches us how to manage and transform our ‘negative’ emotions and experiences. It supercharges learning, helps us relieve stress and connects us to others and the world around us. Play can also make work more productive and pleasurable.”

—GINA KEMP, MELINDA SMITH, BERNIE DEKOVEN and JEANNE SEGAL, “Play, Creativity and Lifelong Learning: Why Play Matters for Both Kids and Adults,” Helpguide.org, February 2012

# BENEFITS OF PLAY (cont'd.)

For many, adulthood means mastering the art of maximizing productivity and responsibility. This mindset relegates “pointless” activity to the realm of children; activities that don’t contribute directly to a greater goal are seen as not worth pursuing. The paradox is that we need to embrace play if we’re to compete successfully in today’s fast-paced and ever-shifting world. No matter which way you slice it, life is made better through play.

According to evolutionary biologist Marc Bekoff, play is in essence a dress rehearsal for the unexpected. He believes that it builds “mental suppleness and a broader behavioral vocabulary” in animals, as *The New York Times* explains it, helping them to achieve success (e.g., find food or a mate). From building stronger relationships to sharpening problem-solving skills, play is a natural antidote to an array of modern-day ills that affect us across life stages.

Taking a break from goal-oriented behavior recharges us, especially during times of stress. Mental downtime—shooting hoops, doodling, dancing and so on—permits our minds to wander, and subsequently to make the leaps that help us generate new ideas or crack problems we’ve been puzzling over. Indeed, almost two-thirds of our survey respondents agreed that the most playful people they know are the best problem solvers; Americans (68%) were more likely to say so than Britons (61%).

As psychiatrist Mark Epstein puts it, “Play brings balance to our emotional lives. ... [It] helps us make sense of our worlds.”

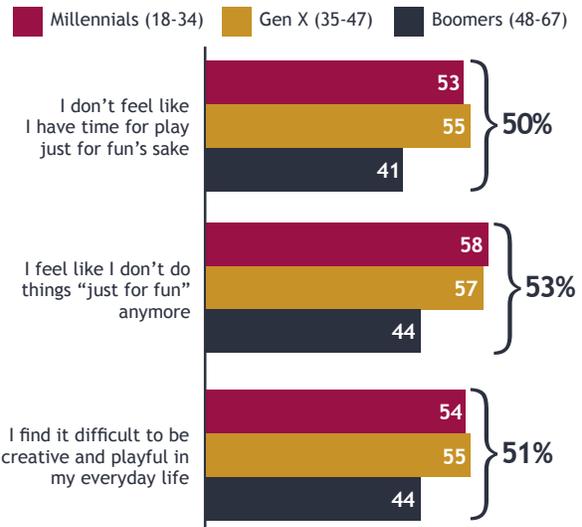
Play helps to spur more creative ideas. Stepping back from a problem and engaging in fun, unrelated activities—letting the problem marinate in the subconscious until all the components have become integrated—tends to result in better, bolder solutions than what’s typically generated when we’re unable or unwilling to give ourselves time to play.

In solo play, we can find new inspirations or motivations that make us more productive in everyday life. And through the give and take of play with others, we learn how to better navigate our complex social worlds. Play helps us reduce fear and embarrassment around social interactions and build trust and bonds with people. And by providing a controlled environment to engage in risk-taking behavior—animals, for instance, play fight while the stakes are low—play makes it easier to act boldly (e.g., throwing out that far-flung idea during a meeting).

FIGURE 1A:

## No time for play

Percentage of American and British adults who agree



There’s this certain confidence that comes from unstructured play. It’s like, ‘I don’t know what I’m doing. It just feels good. I’m just following this thing until it tells me where it’s going.’ A lot of people can’t deal with that because the whole world tells you, when you go to kung fu lessons or violin practice or whatever you do, at the end of it you’re supposed to be better. And the whole thing about creative work is that you just don’t know what’s going to happen ’cause you can’t guarantee that you’re going to have a final product.”

—AUSTIN KLEON, artist and author of *Steal Like an Artist*



“Look at life without play, and it’s not much of a life. If you think of all the things we do that are play-related and erase those, it’s pretty hard to keep going. [Without play,] there’s a sense of dullness, lassitude and pessimism, which doesn’t work well in the world we live.”

—STUART BROWN, founder of the National Institute for Play

## PLAY IS WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

### WORK BENEFITS

- Triggers creativity and innovation
- Keeps you functional under stress
- Refreshes your mind and body
- Encourages teamwork
- Helps you see problems in new ways
- Increases energy and helps to prevent burnout
- Makes you more happy, flexible and resilient
- Increases productivity

### SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Increases trust
- Strengthens group bonds
- Builds empathy
- Builds compassion
- Generates capacity for intimacy
- Builds more meaningful connections
- Fosters cooperation and teamwork
- Teaches social skills through give and take
- Fights loneliness, isolation, anxiety and depression
- Increases sense of community
- Brings joy, vitality and resilience to relationships
- Heals resentments and disagreements

### EMOTIONAL/MENTAL BENEFITS

- Brings happiness
- Improves problem-solving skills
- Teaches perseverance
- Fights off burnout
- Provides clarity
- Builds confidence
- Promotes serenity, calm and relaxation
- Builds motivation
- Fosters creativity

Source: Gina Kemp, Melinda Smith, Bernie DeKoven and Jeanne Segal, "Play, Creativity and Learning: Why Play Matters for Both Kids and Adults," Helpguide.org, February 2012

“Through play, an individual avoids what [Patrick Bateson, a Cambridge University biologist and prominent play scholar] called the lure of ‘false endpoints,’ a problem-solving style more typical of harried adults than of playful youngsters. False endpoints are avoided through play, Bateson wrote, because players are having so much fun they keep noodling away at a problem and might well arrive at something better than the first, good-enough solution.”

—ROBIN MARANTZ HENIG, “Taking Play Seriously,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 17, 2008



“We’re living in a world that is changing so quickly. Things that were the right answer are no longer necessarily the right answer. And so we need to be able to explore the possibilities and be open. If we can bring play more into our adult lives, start moving our creativity into our adult lives, there are some great benefits to that.”

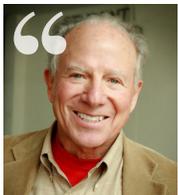
—ALLISON ARDEN, publisher of *Advertising Age* and author of *The Book of Doing*



## IMPEDIMENTS TO PLAY

Who doesn't want to function better and live a happier, more well-rounded life? Given evidence to suggest that we're actually hardwired for play, why is it that we've squeezed play out of our adult lives? To paraphrase Keith Johnstone, the famed improvisational theater coach, perhaps we've got the whole framework backward: Why do we think of "children as immature adults" rather than "adults as atrophied children"?

As we age, the impediments to play are plenty. The common denominator is today's always-on culture, which values productivity over playfulness and leaves little time or space to play just for the sake of it. Sure enough, half our survey respondents said they don't have time for play just for fun's sake. (See Figure 1A; for country breakdowns, see Appendix, Figures 1B-C.)



“ I think there is an assembly-line mentality that if you don't keep the assembly line moving, if you don't keep having very specific guidelines as to work output, if there isn't a clock to punch, people aren't going to get things done. And I think that wise management transcends that.”

—STUART BROWN, founder of the National Institute for Play



“ [Our culture] is not really what I would call conducive to play, so you'd have to make a conscious choice to have fun, and that's very hard. And oddly enough, it takes a lot of discipline, because you have to give yourself permission.”

—BERNIE DEKOVEN, game designer, fun theorist and author

# IMPEDIMENTS TO PLAY (cont'd.)

**Quantifiable me:** Thanks in part to technology, we've become accustomed to measuring or tracking almost every aspect of our lives, from how much we sleep and exercise to "checking in" to restaurants and sharing meal photos online. Almost everything is linked to a quantifiable or "productive" goal, whether it's a faster run or a Foursquare badge. Sixty-two percent of American and British adults agreed that "everything in my life seems to have a goal attached to it today"; the measure-everything Millennials (74%) were more apt to say this than Gen Xers (62%) and Boomers (49%).

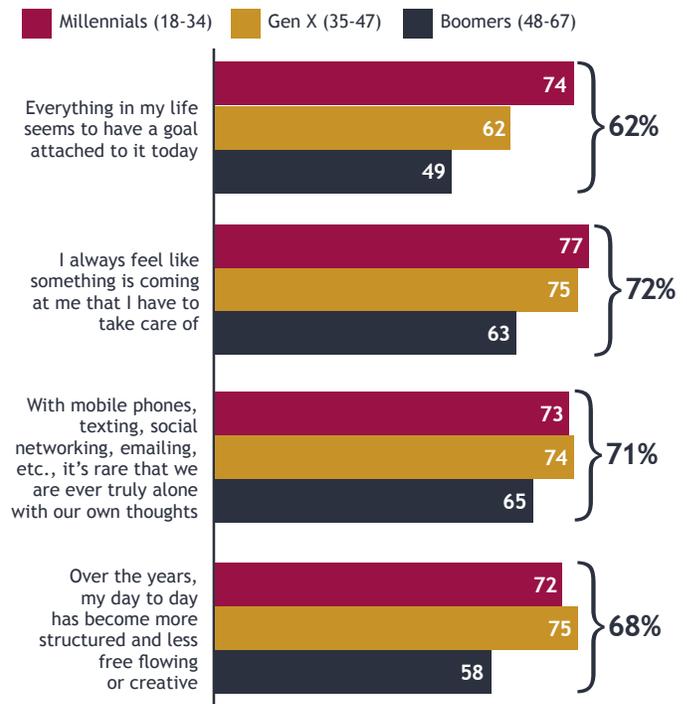
**GTD syndrome:** While there's nothing wrong with "Getting Things Done," as David Allen, an authority on personal and organizational productivity, calls it in a book by that name, it becomes a point of concern when productivity is prized over play most or all of the time. Indeed, 72% of our U.S. and U.K. survey respondents agreed that "I always feel like something is coming at me that I have to take care of." In becoming hyper-efficient machines with a checklist mentality, we are squashing a basic human instinct.

**Life in real time:** Our computer and phone screens provide a constant stream of real-time information, images and conversations, instilling a sense of urgency (often a false one). In this reactive, must-attend-to-now culture, first solution trumps best solution—which often comes with time, space and play. As John Cleese has said, feeling the need to make quick, confident decisions all the time is actually "the most effective way of strangling creativity at birth."

**Vanquished boredom:** In the past, boredom often led us to play, but today we seek out instant gratification whenever we're unoccupied. In theory, we never have to be bored in today's hyper-connected society. Television provides a marathon of content, and our smartphones and tablets—fully charged with Netflix, YouTube and endless apps—are rarely more than an arm's distance away. A world of entertainment is always waiting.

Even when we don't seek to vanquish any hint of boredom, the near constant blinking, buzzing, alerts and notifications coming from our digital devices have made prolonged moments of solitude a rarity. Seven in 10 of our American and British respondents admitted that "with mobile phones, texting, social networking, emailing, etc., it's rare that we're every truly alone with our own thoughts." (See Figure 2A; for country breakdowns, see Appendix, Figures 2B-C.)

**FIGURE 2A:**  
**Impediments to play**  
Percentage of American and British adults who agree



“The question that drives [Millennials'] work is 'What do I need to respond to?' rather than 'What should I create today?' They swat emails that fly at them, sit in meetings that they unthinkingly agreed to two months earlier, take phone calls seeking their approval or advice. But they don't build. They don't sit and think.” —PRIYA PARKER, founder of visioning and strategy firm Thrive Labs, CNN.com, March 2012

## THE TOP 4 THINGS U.S. AND U.K. ADULTS DO WHEN THEY HAVE FREE TIME

70% Watch TV      59% Spend time on the computer  
58% Read      56% Listen to music

See Appendix, Figures 5A-C, to find out what else Americans and Britons do when they have free time.

# IMPEDIMENTS TO PLAY (cont'd.)

Our instant gratification lifestyle comes at the cost of uninterrupted time and space, key components of getting into the play state. By filling each free minute with bits of connectivity, we relinquish any downtime we might devote to play.

**The adultification of kids' play:** In today's hyper-competitive world, many children are being forced to grow older at a younger age. Well-intentioned adults are systematically redefining play for kids, pushing them into organized activities (piano lessons, language classes, sports leagues) and educationally oriented play activities (automated learning toys and e-books). Opportunities for imaginative play and simply getting dirty are fewer and farther between, hindering development of the cognitive, social, problem-solving and intellectual skills that early childhood play fosters.



**Play is just a natural thing that animals do, but somehow we've driven it out of kids."**

—KATHY HIRSH-PASEK, developmental psychologist at Temple University, *The New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2011

## RE-EXPERIENCING PLAY AS A PARENT

Are adults with kids more or less likely to indulge in play? On the one hand, having children means less free time, but on the other hand, it can spur a return to carefree play.

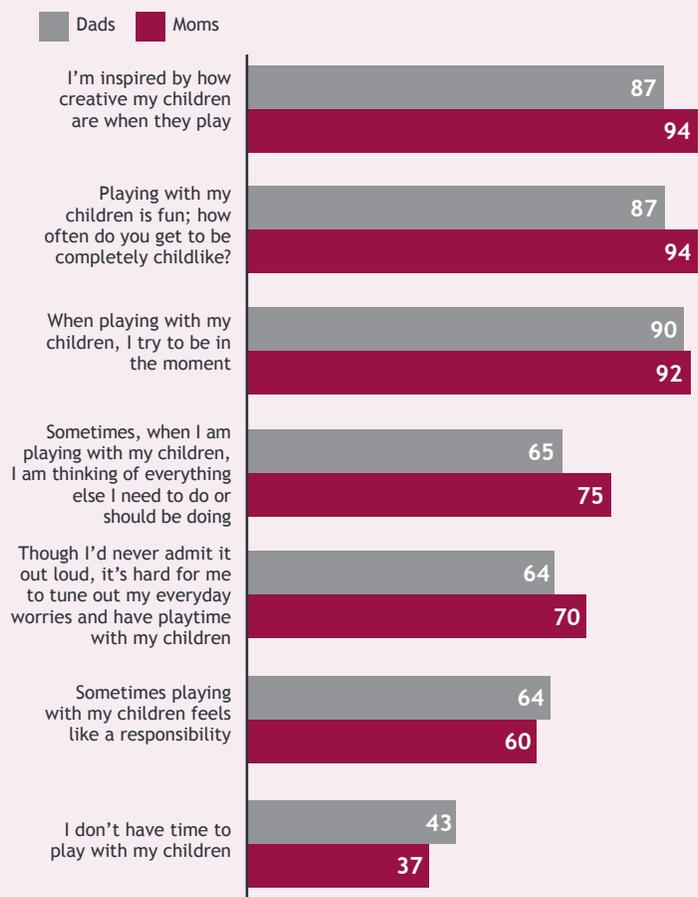
Our research found that, not surprisingly, the parents we surveyed have significantly less time to play than those without kids: a mean of 3.7 hours vs. 5.8 hours on a typical weekday and 5.5 hours vs. 8.1 hours for the child-free on a typical weekend. But while parenthood leaves little time to unwind, 9 in 10 parents we surveyed said they are inspired by the creativity of their children when they play and that playing with their kids is a fun chance to be completely childlike.

It seems to be easier for men to tune out everyday worries while playing with kids, while women are more likely to feel distracted: Three-quarters of mothers say they're sometimes thinking about everything else they should be doing, compared with about two-thirds of fathers. And 70% of women said it's hard to tune out everyday worries during playtime vs. 64% of men. (For country breakdowns, see Appendix, Figures 3B-C.)

FIGURE 3A:

### Playtime with children

Percentage of American and British adults who agree





# MANIFESTATIONS

**Play in the business model:** Recognizing the benefits of play, some high-profile companies inject play into their employees' lives, beyond simply outfitting workplaces with basketball courts or pool tables.

- **Google, 20% time:** Google famously gives its engineers one day a week to work on passion projects not specifically linked to their job descriptions. Gmail and Google News came out of 20% time, validating the idea that letting employees play with ideas and pursue projects just for fun makes business sense.

Other companies have found inspiration in Google's policy. Australian software company Atlassian, for example, has instituted 20% time for engineers, as well as quarterly FedEx Days for its developers: They spend 24 hours working on anything of interest, with a slant toward Atlassian's products, starting on a Thursday afternoon and unveiling the results to co-workers the following Friday afternoon (the overnight turnaround gave rise to the name FedEx Days).

- **Twitter, Hack Week:** Once a quarter, Twitter sets aside a week for its engineers to pursue projects outside the scope of their day-to-day work. With little direction from higher-ups, employees can be as creative as they'd like. The results have included various new products and features.

# MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

- Hackathons:** Whether sponsored or independent, hackathons let programmers collaboratively play around with ideas and approaches without setting any specific goals. The growing popularity of hackathons in the tech world indicates the widespread acceptance of the idea that unstructured exploration is important for growth and innovation in the workplace—corporate, startup or otherwise.
- Pixar:** Famous for its animated films, Pixar has also become known for playful and creative offices that encourage employees to unwind and play with ideas. In addition to game rooms, there are theme rooms and even hidden rooms; there are open, expansive spaces and more intimate areas, such as a cubicle that's a tiny house. One goal is to help create “forced collisions” of employees in the building so that ideas can be generated spontaneously. And in addition to job-specific courses, Pixar also offers classes based around fun, pressure-free activities, such as belly dancing. Classes are open to any employee—for example, an accountant can take a sculpting class.



- Sketching ideas:** Finding that sketches and doodles can simplify the communication of complicated concepts and improve the retention of less interesting information, companies such as Facebook, Zappos and Citrix provide employees with numerous writeable surfaces (whiteboards, chalkboards, etc.). Facebook has taken to coating most of its office walls with dry-erase or chalkboard paint, allowing for a quick sketch at any time. And Zappos has “graphic recorders,” who sketch meeting minutes and other such info in fun, cartoon-like ways. Similarly, JWT’s Brand Toys are unique and playful visualizations of brands’ images—created using quantitative data (from Millward Brown’s BrandZ study) and real-time online buzz—designed to make it easy for users to compare the character and personality of 3,000-plus brands across the world.



# MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

**Marketers advocating for play:** While brands often want to be associated with lightheartedness and fun, a number of recent marketing campaigns have specifically depicted adults putting some play back into their lives.

- **Kit Kat, “Crane” and Chunky 3 campaign:** Last year Kit Kat, which advocates “breaks,” depicted various types of at-work hijinks. “Crane,” from JWT London, is a TV spot showing crane operators at a construction site coordinating wrecking balls to create a giant Newton’s cradle (the suspended metal balls clicking back and forth often seen on executives’ desks). And in a campaign for the Kit Kat Chunky 3, created by JWT Sydney, co-workers play various games: juggling bricks, practicing golf trick shots. Consumers could also submit their own creative work breaks for a chance to win prizes.

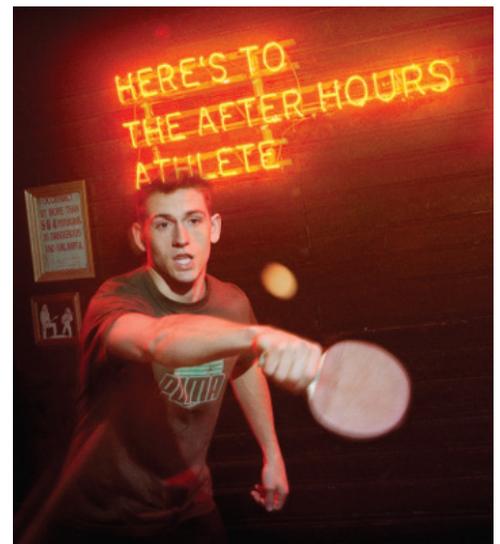


- **Cheetos, “Take a Cheetos break”:** In this U.S. campaign, store employees relax in a fort built out of mattresses, sales associates at a music store repeatedly play “Chopsticks” on a piano, and construction workers have a mini dance party in a house they’re building. These breaks, like the ones in the Kit Kat commercials, are all about taking some time out of the day to simply let loose.



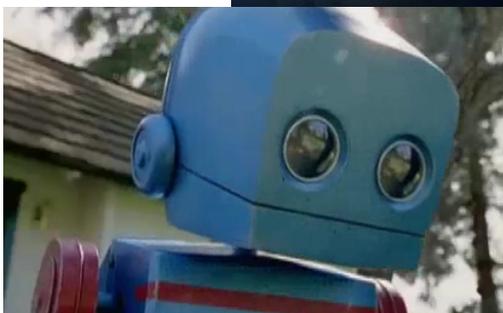
- **Nike, “Tag”:** A prizewinning classic that still resonates today, this commercial was a part of Nike’s 2001 “Play” campaign in the U.S. It shows the mundane morning commute getting a shakeup with a citywide game of tag. When one man becomes “it,” he and everyone he encounters run excitedly from place to place as he searches for someone to tag. It’s a reminder of how much fun can be had from even the simplest game.

- **Puma, “After Hours Athlete”:** An installment of Puma’s “Social” campaign, this spot for the sport and lifestyle brand celebrates those who make the time for fun with an ode to the “After Hours Athlete”—the person who goes out on the town and keeps going until the sun rises. States the Puma Social website’s welcome page: “Forget calorie counting, fitness training, and hydration levels. PUMA Social is all about the playfulness in after-hours sports.”



# MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

- **Cadbury, “Spots v Stripes”:** This two-year campaign, which recently ended, focused on helping Britons rediscover “the spirit of play and lighthearted competition” ahead of the Olympics. British and Irish consumers were encouraged to join a team—either Spots or Stripes—and compete in various competitions and games. The campaign resulted in more than 2.3 million games played and 11 world records broken.
- **Heineken, Pub Rugby Activation:** When Heineken recently sponsored the Dubai Rugby Sevens tournament, the promotional material became a game in itself. Heineken produced 9,000 cardboard coasters that could be turned into rugby balls, while 1,700 tent cards were made in the shape of rugby posts. Instead of just watching rugby, fans could play their own mini-version.
- **Honda, “Leap List”:** In the manifesto commercial for Honda’s “Leap List” campaign, Matthew Broderick, as himself, re-enacts some iconic scenes from *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*. Playing hooky from work, Broderick spends the day doing things like playing carnival games, running around with kids in a museum and practicing tai chi on the beach. It seems that while “Bueller” may be middle-aged now, he’s still fueled by a childlike sense of fun and joie de vivre.
- **Unilever, “Dirt is good”:** This 2008 campaign for detergent brands Persil, Skip, Via and Omo emphasizes that play makes us human. One commercial begins with a sullen robot inching its way out of a house and into the backyard. Timidly at first, it begins to interact with the leaves and grass, gradually transforming into a boy as it romps around. When a summer rain begins to fall, the robot runs to jump and splash in the mud, eventually becoming entirely human.

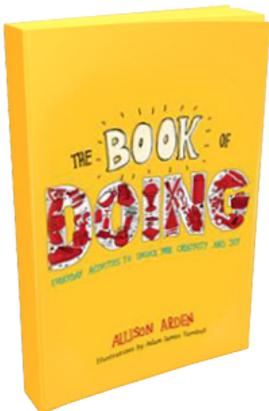
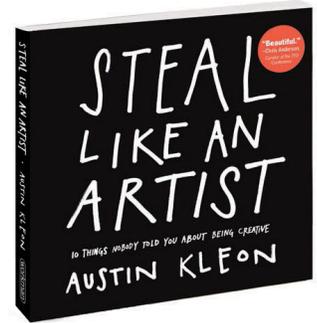


# MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

**Play in culture:** The concept that play is important for adults can be found in books, research and real-life examples that are all helping to inspire people.

- **National Institute for Play:** Founded by researcher Stuart Brown, this California-based institute is “committed to bringing the unrealized knowledge, practices and benefits of play into public life.” Brown emphasizes, for instance, that play creates new connections between neurons and disparate brain centers, and that engaging in activities such as puzzles and reading may significantly reduce one’s chances of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Brown and Christopher Vaughan also explore the topic in their book, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*.

- **Austin Kleon, *Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative*:** Kleon, an artist, outlines ways to become more innovative and creative. One key is creating the time and environment to play with ideas free of distractions or mundane responsibilities. Among other things, Kleon also emphasizes the importance of physical movement to kick-start our minds into action (something that Stuart Brown also advocates) and making the time for side projects, which can often lead to one’s best ideas.



- **Allison Arden, *The Book of Doing*:** Arden lists a number of ideas and activities to fire up the imagination, including some things we used to do as kids (e.g., recapturing a favorite childhood activity or building something out of natural material). Arden’s reasons for writing the book included a desire to live life more fully and to reignite her creativity. In the process, she began to thrive on the “freedom and energy” that resulted from playful activities, which in turn influenced her creativity and efficiency at work.

- **Steve Jobs’ calligraphy course:** Mentioned during his 2005 commencement speech at Stanford University, Jobs’ famous foray into calligraphy as a college dropout helped influence the Apple co-founder’s aesthetic sensibilities—ultimately leading to a tech company that’s distinguished by elegant design. Jobs had attended the class purely out of curiosity—for fun, not out of obligation.

- **“Caine’s Arcade”:** This short documentary-turned-viral video recently captured imaginations by demonstrating a child’s playful imagination at work. Nine-year-old Caine spent a summer building an elaborate arcade out of cardboard boxes in his father’s Los Angeles auto parts store, finding ingenious ways to replicate the games he loves. Filmmaker Nirvan Mullick created the film after a chance encounter led to his becoming Caine’s first customer at the arcade, showing the benefits of being open to inspiration anywhere.

In June, Caine participated in “JWT Junior Worldmakers: What Three Kids Can Teach Us About Creativity, Business, and Imagination,” a seminar at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity that focused on the importance of raw creativity. “We all were born creative. But through the process of growing up, we lose our unfiltered imagination and the fearlessness that makes us kids,” said Jeff Benjamin, JWT’s chief creative officer in North America.





## WHAT IT MEANS

There's a real desire to see unstructured play extend from childhood well into adulthood. Nine in 10 American and British adults agreed that "play should not only be a part of children's lives but adults' lives, too." No wonder: There's a wistfulness and nostalgia attached to play and everything that it suggests, with 78% saying they wish they could recapture some of the imagination, fun and creativity of childhood and 74% saying they miss being able to play like a child with no rules, boundaries or restrictions. (See Figure 4A; for country breakdowns, see Appendix, Figures 4B-C.)

Society has become so automated and results-oriented that most of us don't have the time or inclination to take forays outside the structured framework. But in a quickly changing world, people who aren't afraid to rewrite the rules or rethink the status quo are those who get ahead. Explains Allison Arden: "When you go through the shorthand of creating things based on what other people have done, you oftentimes miss the opportunity or lose the recognition of what you have the capability of doing yourself."



**You need to not know what the end stage is in order to get somewhere new."**

—AUSTIN KLEON, artist and author of *Steal Like an Artist*

## WHAT IT MEANS (cont'd.)

Injecting play into everyday life—doing things that bring joy, regardless of how closely these activities are aligned with an end goal—can help to foster discovery and exploration, both essential for creative economies. “Play is the greatest natural resource in a creative economy,” declared Laura Seargeant Richardson, an experience designer at Frog Design, in a keynote speech at MIT’s Sandbox Summit in 2010. She expanded on this in *The Atlantic* last May:

*In the future, economies won't be driven by financial capital or even the more narrowly focused scientific capital, but by play capital as well. I predict countries that take play seriously, not only nurturing it in education and the workforce but also formalizing it as a national effort, will quickly rise in the world order. This is not Twister in the boardroom. Rather it's what Jeremy Levy, a physics professor at the University of Pittsburgh, would call “a highly advanced form of play.”*

Marketers that speak to the value of play are tapping into an innate human desire. Brands can help people reimagine their world and become more active participants in it through play. This may mean helping consumers see their day-to-day environment through a more playful lens—as Kit Kat has done—or encouraging people to dial down the constant stream of information, images and digital conversations so they can focus on real-world doing.

Employers seeking to foster play in business need to move away from product without process—focusing on each layer of the problem at hand instead of trying to steamroll through to a specific result. The willingness to abandon a creation in favor of new, better ideas and solutions, crucial to the play mentality, is a key to nurturing innovation in the business world.



Never turn down an opportunity to have fun. Have faith in fun. If you're really enjoying yourself, then entertain the possibility that you might be doing something that's good for yourself.” —BERNIE DEKOVEN, game designer, fun theorist and author

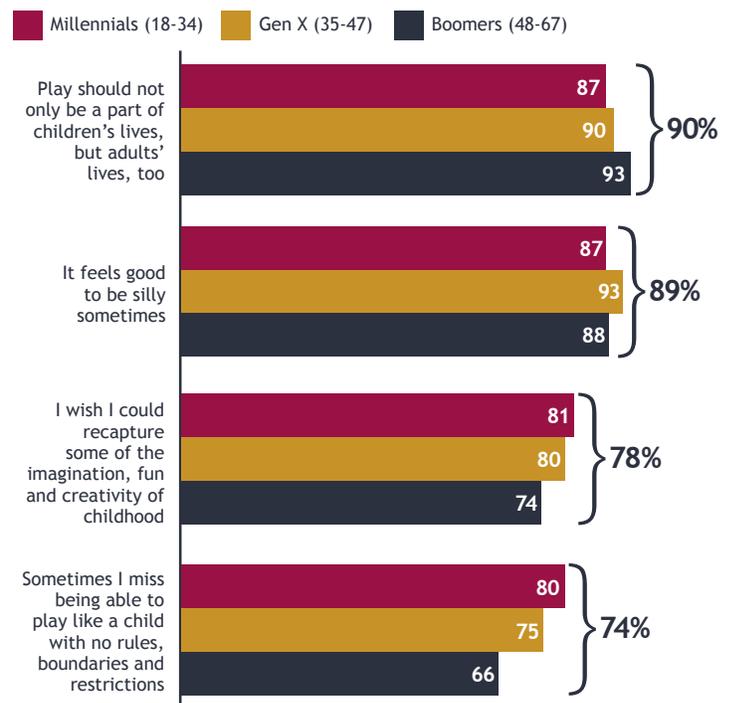
“Play isn't just for children. The idea of play is closely related to imagination, inventiveness, and that deep sense of absorption. ... Read virtually any account of creativity, in the humanities or the sciences, and you'll find mentions of the relevance of daydreaming, fooling around with possibilities.... The argument here isn't just that we need to let little kids play so they'll be creative when they're older, but that play, or something quite close to it, should be a part of a teenager's or adults' life, too.”

—ALFIE KOHN, author and lecturer, “The Point of Play Is That It Has No Point,” *Big Think*, Dec. 3, 2011

FIGURE 4A:

### The case for play

Percentage of American and British adults who agree



# APPENDIX: MORE ABOUT OUR EXPERTS/ INFLUENCERS



## APPENDIX: MORE ABOUT OUR EXPERTS/INFLUENCERS



**ALLISON ARDEN**, VP/publisher, *Advertising Age*, and author, *The Book of Doing: Everyday Activities to Unlock Creativity and Joy*

*Advertising Age* publisher since 2007, Arden is on a mission to raise the value of creativity and help others embrace their personal creativity for success in business and life. Arden and her team have expanded the way *Advertising Age* serves the community with products and programs including Ad Age's LookBook, Ad Age on Campus and Ad Age Insights, a new division helping marketers better understand the industry's changing landscape. Arden also worked with the Effies to create the GoodWorks Effie, which recognizes brands using their platforms to affect positive change. Arden previously served as associate publisher and general manager, interactive, for *Advertising Age* and Creativity.

Prior to joining Crain Communications in 1996, Arden launched *3DDesign* magazine and its website as national sales manager. She serves on the board of directors for the American Advertising Federation, Advertising Women of New York and VCU Brandcenter, and was inducted into the AAF's Advertising Hall of Achievement in 2009. Learn more about her book at [bookofdoing.com](http://bookofdoing.com), and follow Arden on Twitter @allisonarden.



**STUART L. BROWN, M.D.**, founder, National Institute for Play, and author, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*

Trained in general and internal medicine, psychiatry and clinical research, Brown first recognized the essential contributions of play to human development by discovering its absence in the life stories of murderers and felony drunken drivers. His years of clinical practice affirmed the importance and need for healthy play throughout the life cycle, and Brown's evaluations of highly creative individuals revealed the centrality of playfulness to their success and well-being. The National Geographic Society sponsored Brown's exploration of animal play in the wild, resulting in an *Explorer* TV program.

Brown's exploration of the evolution and neuroscience of human and animal play have helped to focus a central commitment to bringing the promises and stories of play into general cultural consciousness. He established the National Institute for Play, which aims to establish a new discipline, the Science of Play. The NIFP has produced a three-hour PBS series, *The Promise of Play*; published a companion book to the PBS film *Where Do the Children Play?*; and conducted a conference on play science at Stanford University. Learn more about his work at [playnovation.com](http://playnovation.com) and [nifplay.org](http://nifplay.org).



**BERNIE DEKOVEN**, game designer, fun theorist and author, *The Well-Played Game*

DeKoven is a fun theorist, game designer, international lecturer, workshop facilitator, author and award-winning game designer. In his book, *The Well-Played Game*, he voiced a philosophy of "healthy competition" that was incorporated into the core teachings of the New Games Foundation. He's a lifetime member of The Association for the Study of Play and winner of the 2006 Ifni-Raynolds award for "outstanding achievement in the field of fun" from the North American Simulation and Gaming Association. He is the author of the [deepFUN.com](http://deepFUN.com) website.



**AUSTIN KLEON**, artist and author, *Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative*

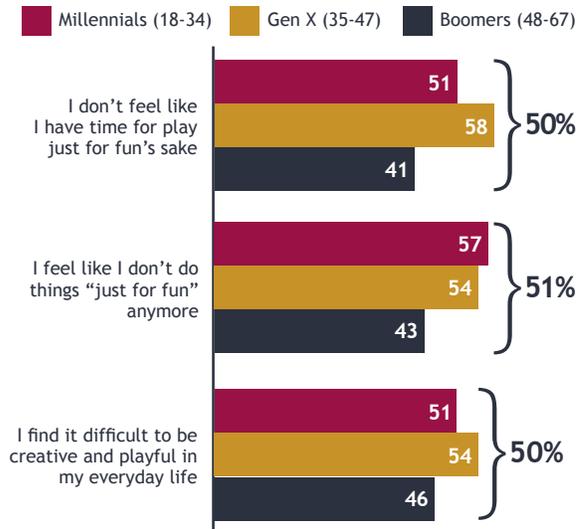
Kleon is a writer, artist, speaker and *New York Times* best-selling author. He's written two books: *Steal Like an Artist*, an illustrated manifesto for creativity in the digital age, and *Newspaper Blackout*, a collection of poetry made by redacting newspaper articles with a permanent marker. His art has been called "brilliant" by *New York* magazine, and *The New Yorker* said his poems "resurrect the newspaper when everyone else is declaring it dead." His work has been featured on [20x200.com](http://20x200.com), NPR's *Morning Edition* and PBS' *NewsHour*, and in *Time*, *The Atlantic*, *Forbes* and *The Wall Street Journal*. He's spoken about creativity, visual thinking and being an artist online for organizations such as Pixar, Google, SXSW, TEDx and *The Economist*. He lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife, Meghan, and their dog, Milo. Visit him online at [austinkleon.com](http://austinkleon.com).

# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS

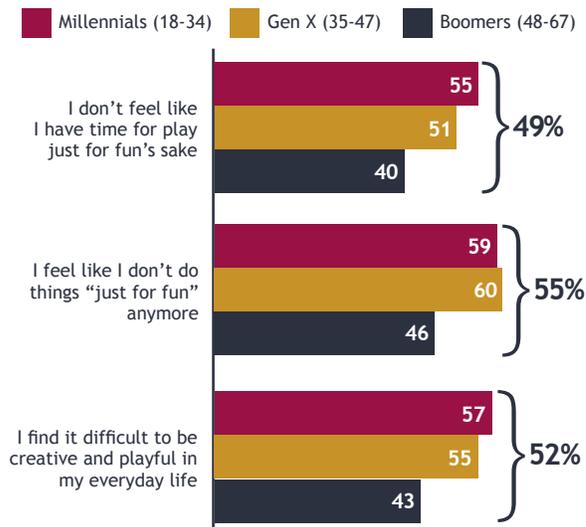


# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS

**FIGURE 1B:**  
**No time for play (U.S.)**  
Percentage of American adults who agree

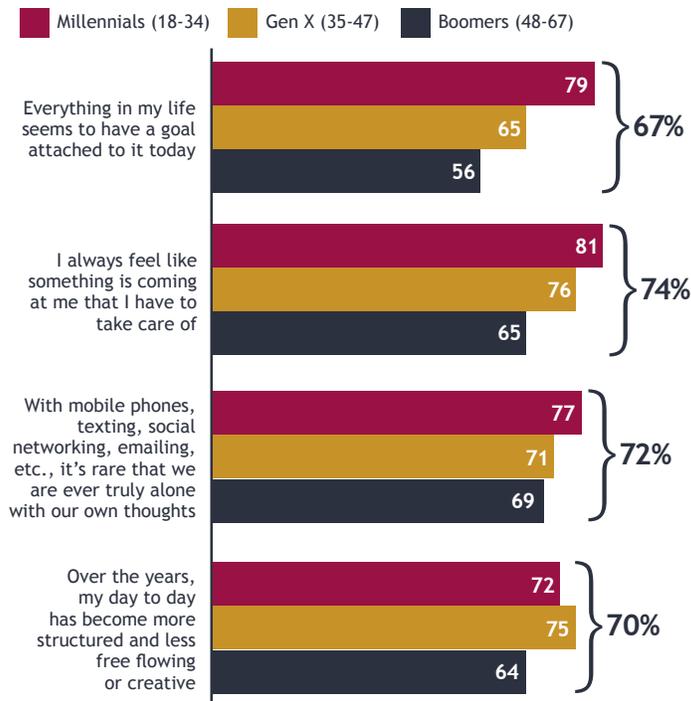


**FIGURE 1C:**  
**No time for play (U.K.)**  
Percentage of British adults who agree

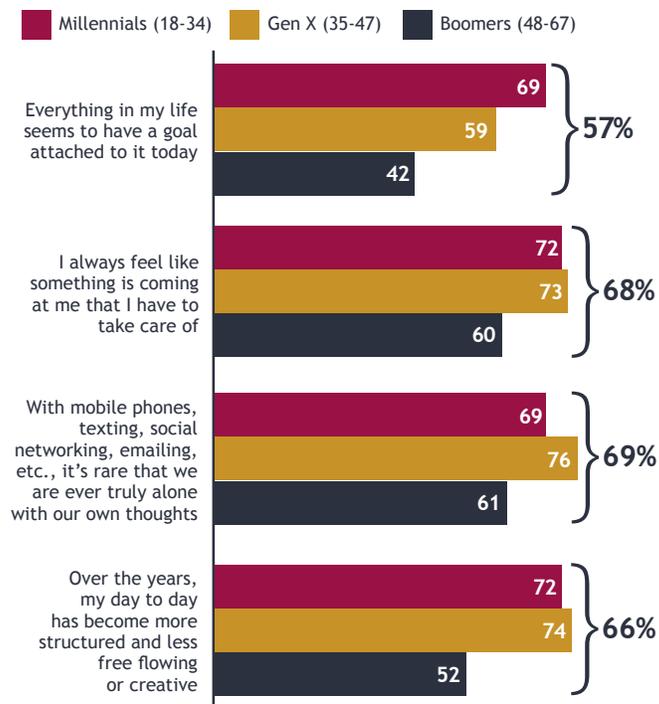


# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS (cont'd.)

**FIGURE 2B:**  
**Impediments to play (U.S.)**  
 Percentage of American adults who agree

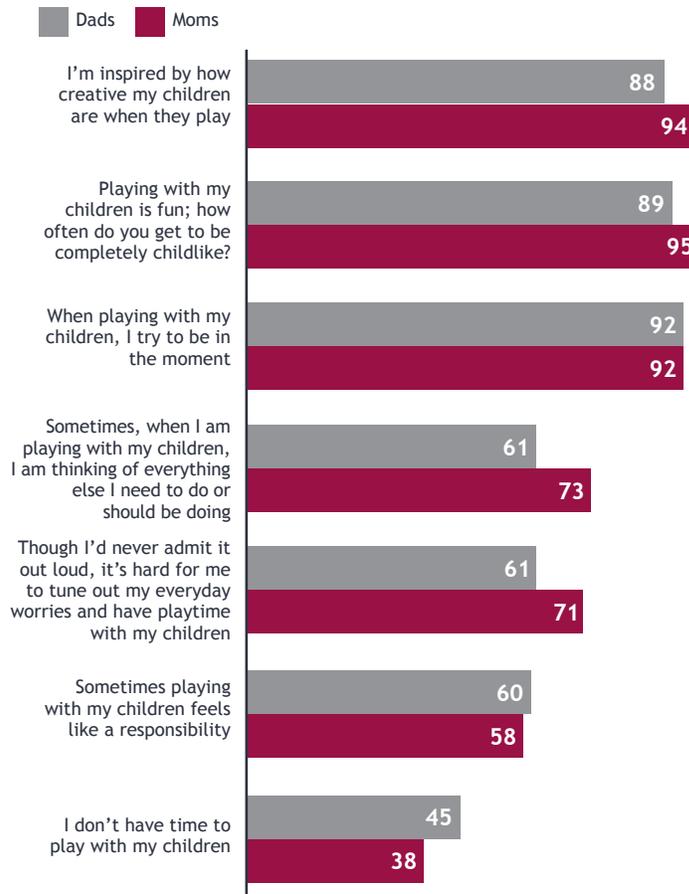


**FIGURE 2C:**  
**Impediments to play (U.K.)**  
 Percentage of British adults who agree



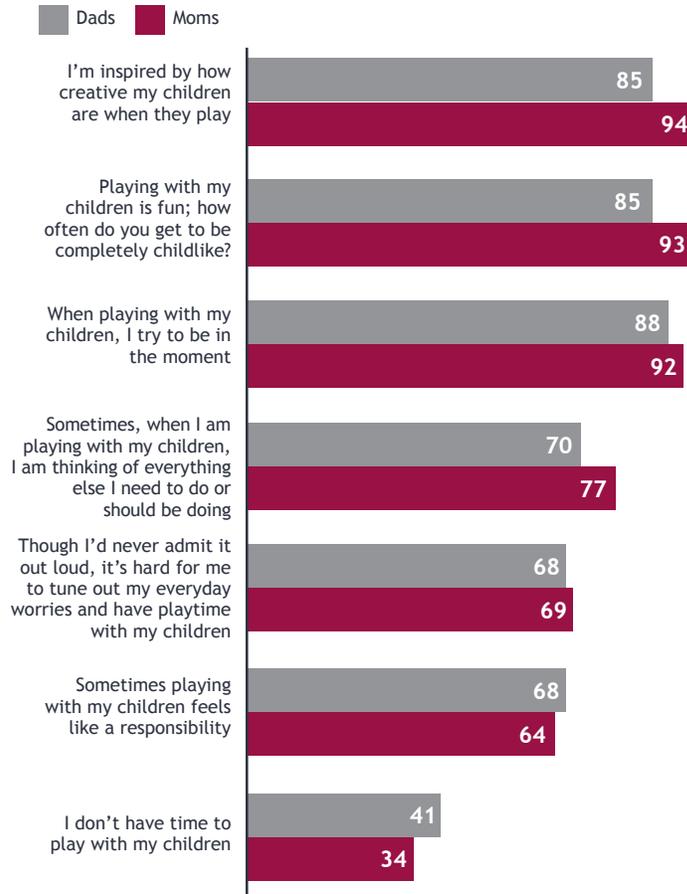
# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS (cont'd.)

**FIGURE 3B:**  
**Playtime with children (U.S.)**  
Percentage of American adults who agree



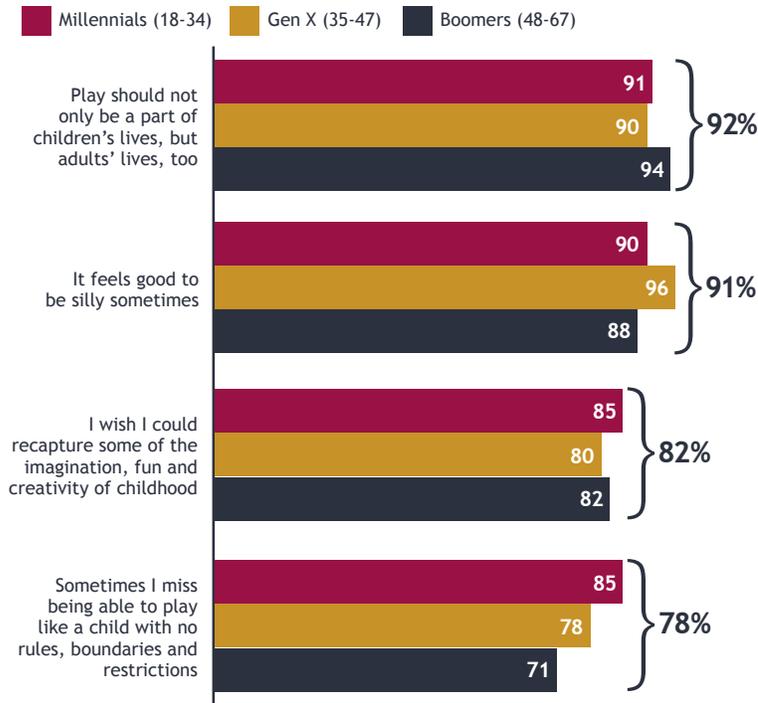
# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS (cont'd.)

**FIGURE 3C:**  
**Playtime with children (U.K.)**  
Percentage of British adults who agree

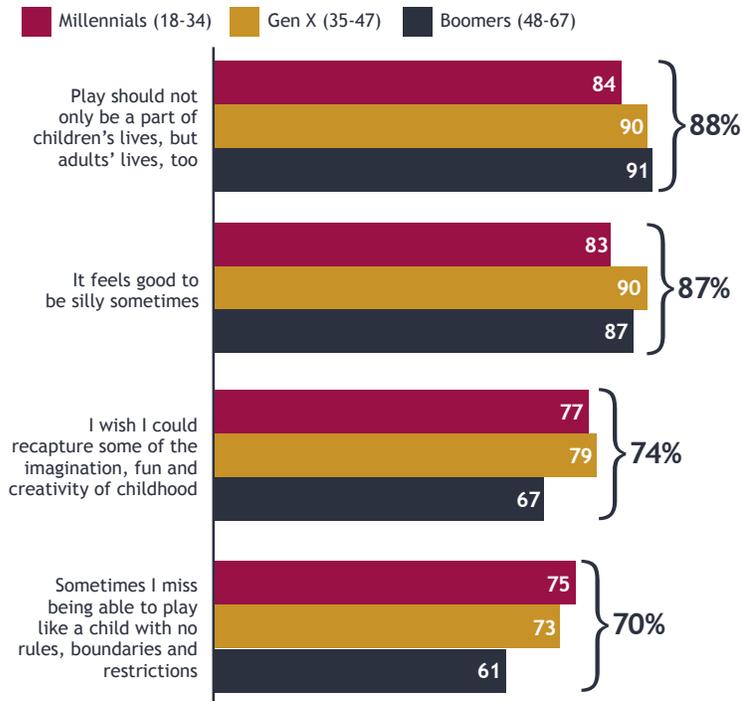


# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS (cont'd.)

**FIGURE 4B:**  
**The case for play (U.S.)**  
 Percentage of American adults who agree



**FIGURE 4C:**  
**The case for play (U.K.)**  
 Percentage of British adults who agree

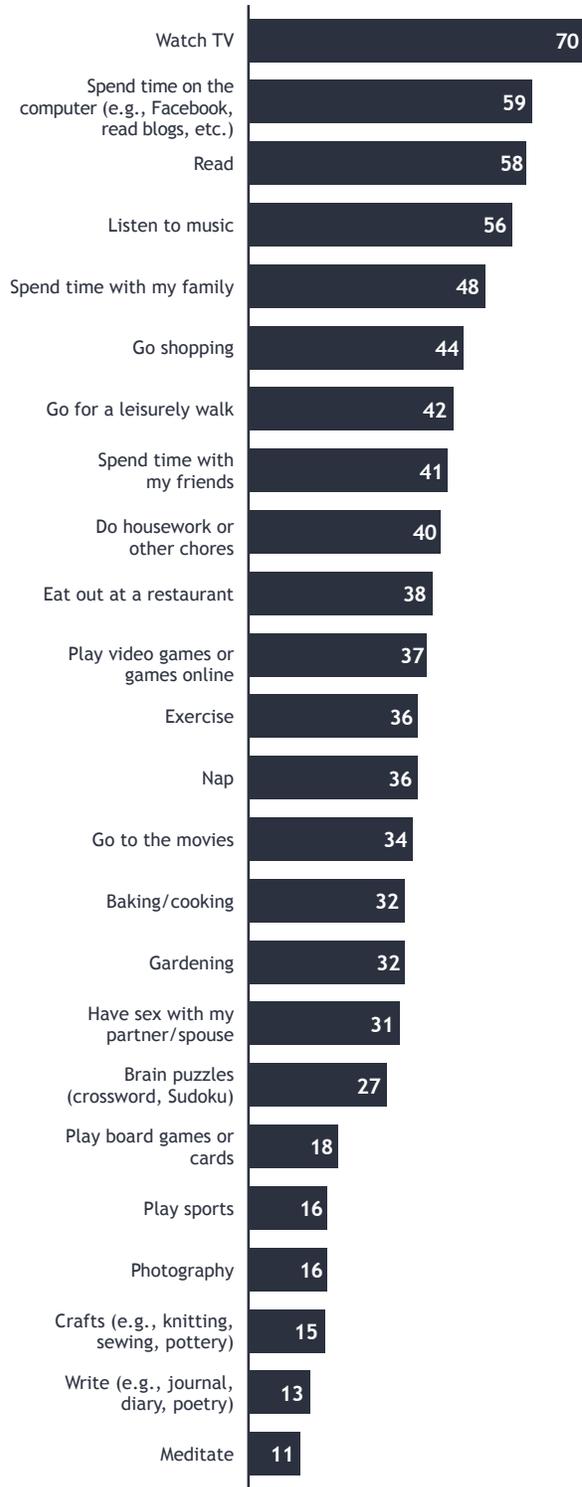


# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS (cont'd.)

FIGURE 5A:

## Free-time activities (U.S. and U.K.)

Percentage of American and British adults who do the following when they have free time

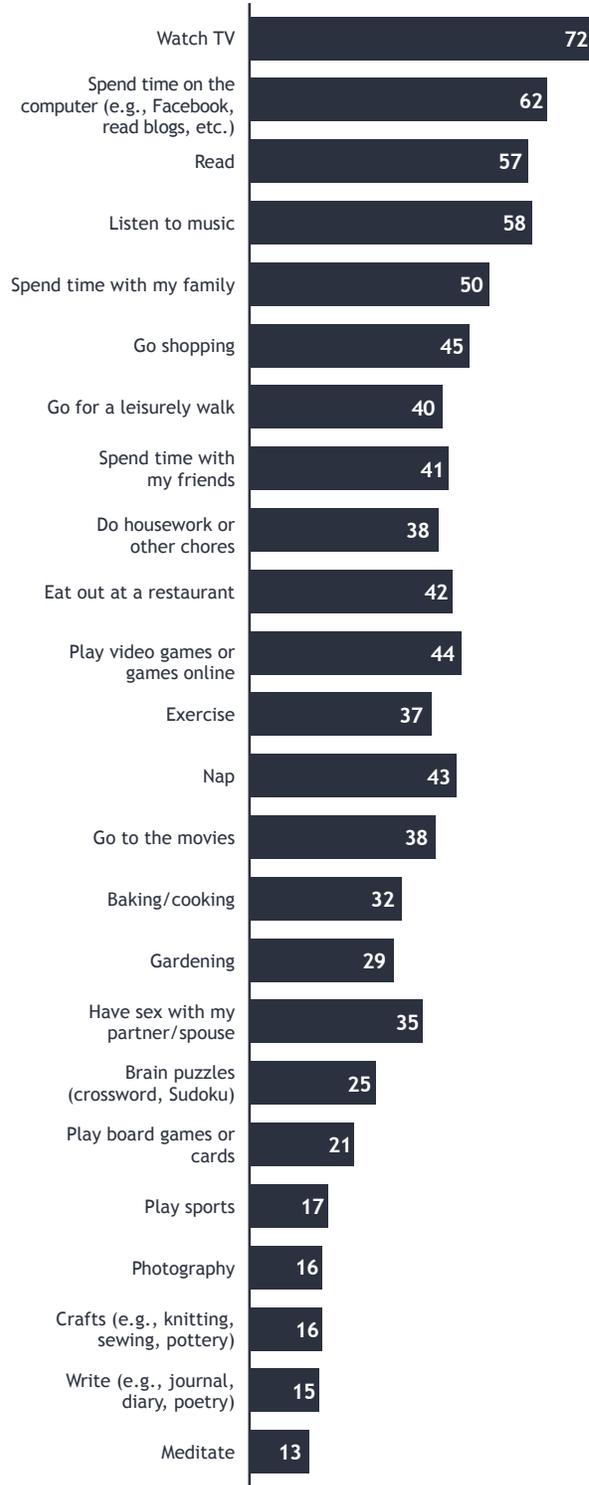


# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS (cont'd.)

**FIGURE 5B:**

## Free-time activities (U.S.)

Percentage of American adults who do the following when they have free time

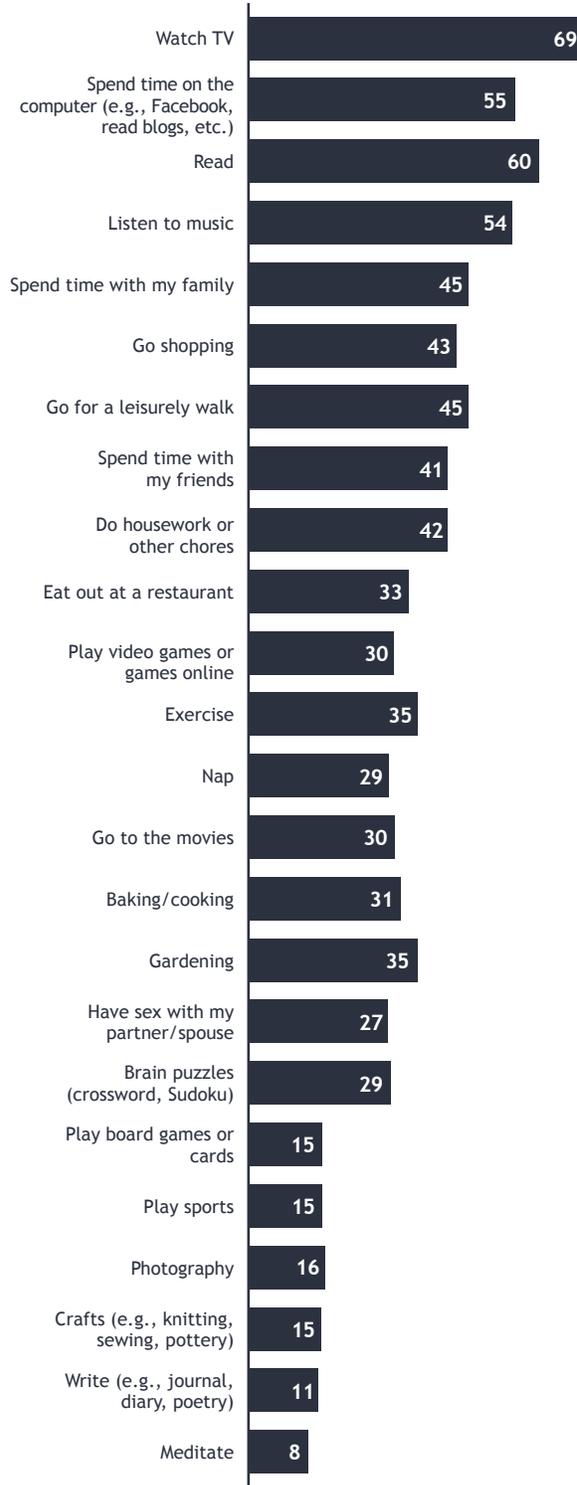


# APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL CHARTS (cont'd.)

FIGURE 5C:

## Free-time activities (U.K.)

Percentage of British adults who do the following when they have free time



# THANK YOU

**JWT:** JWT is the world's best-known marketing communications brand. Headquartered in New York, JWT is a true global network with more than 200 offices in over 90 countries employing nearly 10,000 marketing professionals.

JWT consistently ranks among the top agency networks in the world and continues a dominant presence in the industry by staying on the leading edge—from producing the first-ever TV commercial in 1939 to today, developing award-winning branded content for brands such as Johnson & Johnson, Diageo's Smirnoff, Macy's, Ford and HSBC.

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We focus on identifying changes in the global zeitgeist so as to convert shifts into compelling opportunities for brands. We have done this on behalf of multinational clients across several categories including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food, and home and personal care.

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## Play As a Competitive Advantage

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