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HERALDING THE INTEGRATION OF MEDICINE WITH PHYSICAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL & SOCIAL ASPECTS OF HEALTH

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Answer to
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Play:

Games Allow Us to Explore New Ways of Being

By Edward Rosenfeld

“TAG: YOU’RE IT,” you exclaim as you run from the room. Going through doors, room to room, she’ll never find you here. Quick, behind the curtains, she’s already in the next room. That was too close. Should you still hide or move while you can, while there’s still time?

We all have played and some of us continue to play. In the beginning of our lives we play spontaneously, with ourselves, with others, with objects, even with figments of our imagination. As we age and grow into adults, our childish notions of play are curtailed, and we reserve play for things like sports, drama, and games. More recently, with the rise of computer and video games, more and more adults are spending more time playing than grownups did in the past.

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How do these new playtimes affect adults? Are they making us happier? Calmer? Yes, play often does. There are many benefits to play, both psychological and physical.

- Physical sensations abound: adrenaline flows, breathing is altered, and heart rates change as our blood flows through our bodies.
- Play is fantasy made manifest, with unfettered imagination spontaneously summoned into action.
- Games are safe spaces to explore new ways of being, to take risks, to be adventurous, to explore new dynamics with our peers.

In 1938, Johan Huizinga, a cultural theorist and historian from the Netherlands, wrote a groundbreaking book titled, *Homo Ludens*—The Play Element of Culture, with a new theory of the nature of play in the development of culture and, as a result, society. Huizinga views play as a major basis of human experience. The book's title is a play on *Homo sapiens* (roughly: "wise man") and *Homo faber* ("man the maker"); instead, with "ludens," Huizinga posits man as a player. While the personal benefits of play are important, Huizinga also notes its essential role in society: "Civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come from play like a baby detaching itself from the womb: it arises in and as play, and never leaves it."

Huizinga defines some five aspects that characterize play: play is free; play is not like "real life"—it is nonordinary; play is different from ordinary life in location and in duration; play creates its own order; play is not-for-profit, i.e., it has no "material" interest.

Homo Ludens has inspired many theorists and philosophers and is at the root of contemporary game theory. What's more, with automation now threatening more and more jobs, and the definition of work being reworked continuously, play becomes a much more important aspect of our future lives.

Go play: Go outside, jump rope, jump up and down, play tag, play hide and seek, play with life's mysteries. Don't think, be like a child. Be like an adult: Stay inside, play a game, go online, play with others. To all: Be players, at any time, be *homo ludens*. Δ

"Play" is excerpted by permission from *The Book of Highs: 255 Ways to Alter Your Consciousness without Drugs*, by Edward Rosenfeld (Workman Publishing, <https://www.workman.com/products/the-book-of-highs>). Copyright © 2018. Illustrations by Nate Duval.



WiFi Signals & Bio Mass

A ninth-grade student biology project, investigating the effects of Wi-Fi signals on plant germination, has attracted the international attention of renowned biologists and radiation experts. In a twist on the traditional plant science experiment, five schoolgirls from Hjallerup School in Denmark used garden cress to test potentially negative health effects of wireless technology. "We all think we have experienced difficulty concentrating in school, if we had slept with the phone next to our head, and sometimes also experienced having difficulty sleeping," noted Lea Nielsen, one of the students in the study. To test their hypothesis, the students separated trays of cress seeds between two rooms, one of which contained routers emitting radiation comparable to an ordinary cellphone, and the other router-free. Both groups were controlled for light, temperature, and humidity, and monitored over the course of 12 days. By the end of the experiment, results were evident—the cress seeds placed near the routers were either mutated or had not grown, while the seeds planted in the control room thrived. "None of us sleep with the mobile next to the bed anymore. Either the phone is put far away, or it is put in another room. And the computer is always off," concluded Nielsen.

Adapted from "Student experiment sheds light on the potential dangers of Wi-Fi," by Meg <https://www.shared.com>