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TEXT 1

Cultivating a culture of play in our children nurtures the path of liberal democracy

Mark Tomlinson

1. Most of us have some understanding that play is not only about fun, but that it might also be part of something much bigger and more important – particularly for young children.
2. Play is that thing you do when you are not working, and for many, it is all about fun, without real purpose, and, perhaps, according to Gopnik, even useless. But for Gopnik, play is all about being useless on purpose – she sees play as the most sophisticated and important characteristic of human abilities.
3. Play is fundamental to child development, and creates powerful learning opportunities – intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. Through play, children make connections with others, build leadership skills, develop resilience, navigate challenges, and conquer their fears.
4. Play is also ubiquitous across the animal and even insect kingdoms. Anyone with a dog will appreciate the extent of play between sibling dogs, but few people know that baby wasps engage in a form of rough and tumble before leaving the hive. Rats engage most frequently in rough and tumble. If rat pups are denied the opportunity to engage in play more generally and rough and tumble more specifically, they are unable in later life to tell the difference between “fighting and courting”. But perhaps even more interesting was the fact that the brains of rat pups deprived of play have less brain plasticity, a key capacity to re-wire in an ever-changing environment.
5. The first-ever International Day of Play takes place on 11 June 2024. In preparation for this, UNICEF partnered with the Lego Foundation to outline some key components of the science of play.
6. They describe how the seemingly harmless act of a child building a tower of blocks involves an understanding of spatial understanding, physical skills and even a rudimentary sense of turn-taking and patience as they decide when and how to place the next block.
7. It is through play and engagement with peers that children learn to “read the mind” of their peers and to problem solve. It is also a key domain where children begin to learn how to regulate their emotions and about the give and take of relationships.
8. Psychologist Peter Gray makes the case for the importance of consent in play. Unless all children engaged in a game are prepared to resolve conflicts – and keep the other “players” sufficiently happy – the game will end. If one child has been hurt or needs a break, she may

signal her need for a short break. A playing partner that fails to read the signal, or even worse, uses this as an opportunity to gain some advantage, will quickly learn that the next time they want to play, their friend will be a little less likely to agree. Flexibility and not always being able to have your “own way” are foundational to the kind of cooperation that is so integral to a healthy, functioning society.

9. The economist Steven Horwitz argues that unsupervised children’s play is an essential element of a functioning democracy. For Horwitz, it is through unsupervised play that children learn informal rule making as well as what is needed to follow rules without coercion.
10. Following rules by coercion is a key hallmark of authoritarian societies, while liberal democracy is built on the capacity for informal rules and enforcement.
11. One of the reasons (among many others) for the declines in democracy and liberalism that we have seen in the last 10 years, might be linked in some way to the decline in free play coupled with children “playing” on mobile phones.
12. Jonathan Haidt describes the wiping out of “play-based childhoods”, resulting in what he calls the “rewiring of childhood”. In-person, play-based spaces have constricted our children (and us). We are becoming increasingly atomised, sitting alone at home on our devices with fewer and fewer opportunities for human connection where we can test out our limits and test the limits of others.
13. The loss of free play means fewer opportunities for practising rough-and-tumble play; for the types of interaction that help us learn that sometimes keeping everybody somewhat happy may be better than everybody trying to have all their needs met – and the lesson that sometimes holding your tongue in an interaction may be a good thing.
14. For the strong men of global politics, like Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, the loss of free play and the rise of “phone-based childhoods” are heaven-sent.
15. Without the creativity – the slow and nuanced learning that takes place during unsupervised play – and the sophisticated give-and-take that emerges from countless interactions in the real world, people will increasingly depend on them, the so-called “strong men”, to tell them what to believe (irrespective of the facts and reality); what to do (storm the Capitol); which groups to marginalise (migrants), and which groups to dehumanise. Coercion over cooperation every time.
16. Liberal democracy is terrifying to the authoritarian and goes beyond the ballot box. Like play, liberal democracy acknowledges the deep uncertainty and complexities of everyday life. Liberal democracy offers questions; authoritarians provide answers.

As David Graeber says, “Play is the ultimate expression of freedom for its own sake.” DM

[Source: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2024-06-10-cultivating-a-culture-of-play-in-our-children-nurtures-the-path-of-liberal-democracy/>]

TEXT 2A

How can we incorporate mental health education into schools? Consider the 5 T’s.

Authors : Yunsoo Park , Jennifer Nakamura

Mental health is a critical part of students’ overall health and well-being.

Students today face a range of demands that can impact their mental health. From meeting high academic expectations to navigating the world of social media to maintaining relationships with their peers, students often have busy schedules that result in a lack of sleep and self-care. Many students are also dealing with distress, crises, and trauma in addition to typical life stressors. Mental health challenges can negatively impact all areas of functioning in students, contributing to social, emotional, behavioral, and academic problems.

Schools have a unique and critical role to play in supporting student mental health and well-being in proactive, comprehensive, and collaborative ways. The just-released Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems report provides insight from national experts to help guide local, state, and national efforts in advancing comprehensive school mental health systems.

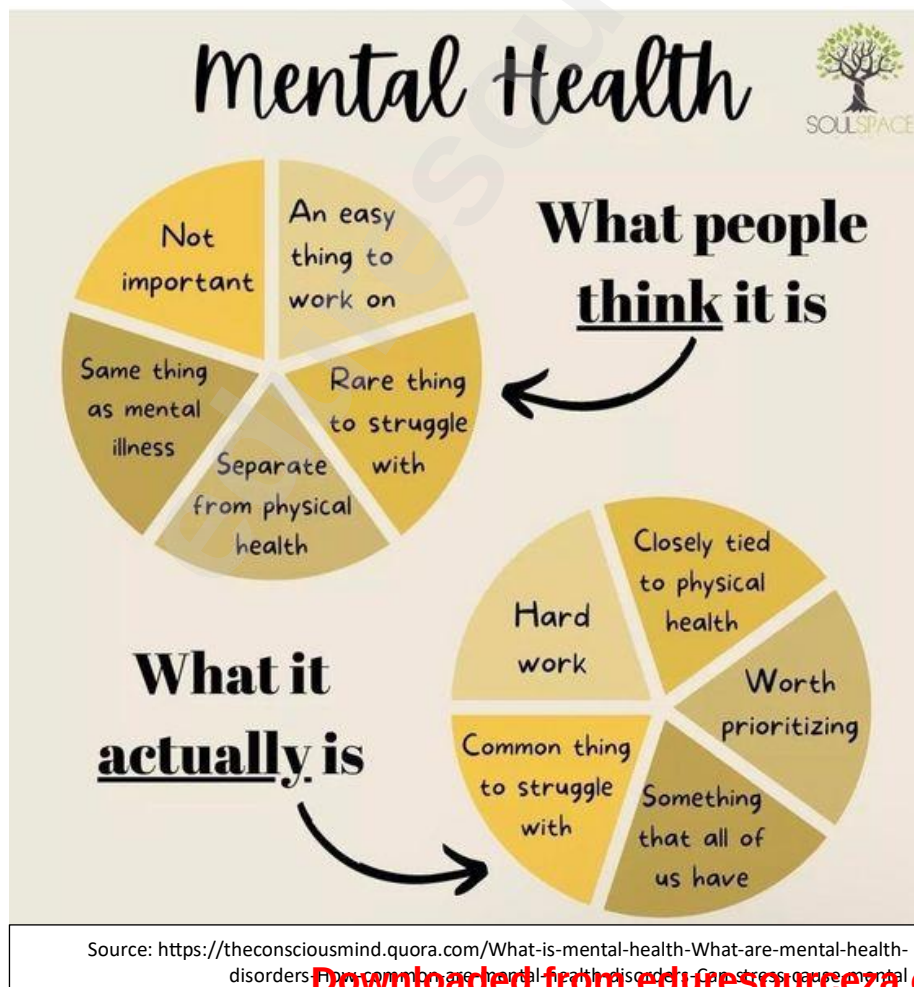
Mandated mental health curricula is one significant systematic step to address and improve student mental health and well-being at school, but what this actually looks like can vary greatly. We’ve identified 5 “T” strategies for states, districts, and schools to consider as their educators join the movement to promote and support student mental health:

T Strategy	Why is this important?
1) TALKING	Students need open and ongoing conversations to help decrease the stigma surrounding mental health. The earlier these conversations start the better, since around 50% of all mental health illness begins before the age of 14, and many cases go undetected and untreated. School-wide strategies to increase awareness, such as providing mental health and well-being tips in the morning announcements or assemblies, can go a long way in promoting productive conversations.
2) TRAINING	Educators need training to appropriately identify and respond to signs of mental health issues. Teachers are often the first adults that students turn to in times of distress or crisis, but many report feeling unprepared to support students directly or refer out for additional services. Schools need resources to provide in-depth training and on-site mental health support services to comprehensively and effectively address student needs.
3) TEACHING	Mental health education can be integrated into academics and classwork in a way that doesn’t overly burden teachers. For example, a Social Studies lesson may identify and discuss mental health topics (e.g., trauma, stigma) in books that students are reading. Younger students may learn about how to identify, describe, and manage emotions, while

	older students may learn about and discuss social implications of different mental health issues.
4) TOOLS for students	School counselors play a central role in providing direct services to students in need. However, the average student-to-school-counselor ratio is 482:1, nearly double the 250:1 ratio recommended by the American School Counselor Association. Without easy access to a counselor, educators might consider other mental-health building tools that can be incorporated into the school day, such as: - Mindfulness - Relaxation techniques - Physical exercise - Art (visual arts, theater, music) "Break" or "Time Out" space allowing students a quiet area to manage their emotions or de-escalate
5) TAKING CARE	In addition to addressing students' mental health needs, schools also need to make sure to support educators' mental health needs. Teachers experience high levels of daily stress, which also has a negative impact on students' social adjustment and academic performance. Various organizational and/or individual-level programs, including workplace wellness programs, teacher mentoring, and practices like mindfulness can help.

[Source: <https://studentbehaviorblog.org/how-can-we-incorporate-mental-health-education-into-schools/>]

TEXT 2B



TEXT 3A

Remember

BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Remember me when I am gone away, 1

Gone far away into the silent land;

When you can no more hold me by the hand,

Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.

Remember me when no more day by day 5

You tell me of our future that you plann'd:

Only remember me; you understand

It will be late to counsel then or pray.

Yet if you should forget me for a while

And afterwards remember, do not grieve: 10

For if the darkness and corruption leave

A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,

Better by far you should forget and smile

Than that you should remember and be sad. 14

TEXT 3B

For Oom Piet

By FINUALA DOWLING

When I was least happy in life 1

my daughter led me across the road

to a neighbour whom I did not know

with the purpose of a toddler

who does not see gates and fences 5

but the ducks and puppies

on the other side.

You spoke to me in the same low murmuring tones

you used for lame horses and bilious dogs.

Crops, flowers and poultry were our theme: 10

you made me tea and wiped the counter,

you said 'Foeitog' and 'I don't hope so.'

You guessed.

You told me I was beautiful,

In the courtly way of an old man. 15

One day when it rained

you phoned from your side and said 'I'm sending some ducks for Beatrix' - you always called her 'Beatrix' - out the window we saw them, waddling over, in the way of ducks when directed by Oom Piet.	20
You moved and I moved, but one thing stays: the sense of rescue, somehow being saved.	25

TEXT 4

Flag BY JOHN AGARD	
What's that fluttering in a breeze? It's just a piece of cloth that brings a nation to its knees.	1
What's that unfurling from a pole? It's just a piece of cloth that makes the guts of men grow bold.	5
What's that rising over a tent? It's just a piece of cloth that dares the coward to relent.	
What's that flying across a field? It's just a piece of cloth that will outlive the blood you bleed.	10
How can I possess such a cloth? Just ask for a flag my friend. Then blind your conscience to the end.	15

TEXT 5A



All you glass-half-full,
don't-take-no-for-an-answer
go-getters who come to the
party by thriving under the pressure
of bringing your A-game while
pulling all-nighters doing the
lion's share of picking the low-
hanging fruit when the ball's in
your court before upping the ante
and touching base with the men who
matter down on the factory floor,
go get a job somewhere else.

Free-thinkers wanted. vw.co.za/careers.



Das Auto.

[Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/glass-half-full-6f829455-7586-4975-b69d-8da3dd2e5d31>]

COPY AT THE BOTTOM: Free-thinkings wanted. Vw.co.za/careers. [VW Das Auto.]

TEXT 5B



[Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/toilet-37667c97-7699-4a0f-baf8-99696c25b3b61>]

COPY: *You are not alone. [Domestos]. Kills all known germs. Dead.*

TEXT 5C



[Source: <https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/stand-for-something>]

COPY AT THE TOP: *Stand for something. Since 1945. [Dr. Martens. Airwair. With bounding soles.]*

COPY AT THE BOTTOM: *1989: Tearing down of the Berlin Wall, Germany.*

TEXT 5D



COPY: If you're not an organ donor when you die, you take someone else with you. Sign up and save as many as seven lives. [Organ Donor Foundation. Save seven lives]

TEXT 6

Tobacco Use Among Kids and Teens

American Lung Association

1. Cigarette smoking during childhood and adolescence causes significant health problems among young people. This includes an increase in the number and severity of respiratory illnesses, decreased physical fitness and potential effects on lung growth and function.
2. This is when an addiction to smoking takes hold and it often lasts into and sometimes throughout adulthood. Among adults who have ever smoked daily, 87% had tried their first cigarette by the time they were 18 years of age, and 95% had by age 21.

Key Facts about Tobacco Use among Children and Teenagers:

3. Every day, almost 2,500 children under 18 years of age try their first cigarette, and more than 400 of them will become new, regular daily smokers. Half of them will ultimately die from their habit.

4. A person who starts smoking young, such as children, are more likely to develop a severe addiction to nicotine than those who start at a later age. Of adolescents who have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime, most of them report that they would like to quit, but are not able to do so.
5. If current tobacco use patterns persist, an estimated 5.6 million of today's youth under age 18 eventually will die prematurely from a smoking-related disease.

[Source: <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/tobacco-use-among-children>]