

CHAPTER 6

Play: Letting the Sparks Fly

Play is the highest form of research.

- Albert Einstein



Playing. Something so instinctive in childhood, that somehow gets squashed out of us as we grow up, until many of us just forget how. Or even that we can. {And actually should, although I'm not a fan of the 's' word.}

When I watch my three year old niece going about her business, it's all play. Everything is chosen for the fun factor, for the joy of doing it. A three year old does not wonder if they 'ought to be doing this', or worry about that other thing they have to do, or feel silly. Play is their default setting, it's how they operate in the world, whether eating, in the bath, walking down the street or making art. There is nothing they do that isn't play. Even tantrums are an exploration of possibilities. Creating requires play. My years spent as a Montessori teacher taught me also that play is perhaps the best way to learn.

So I say, let's be more like three year olds. Let's reacquaint ourselves with our own inner three year olds in fact. We were all three once, we all knew what it was to live by playing. Let's bring back play into our lives wherever we can, and remember that it's all a game.

Abraham, the collective entity channelled by Esther Hicks, repeatedly expounds on the fact that whatever we may think, we are all here in earth school to be happy, to feel good, to have fun. And when you think about it, if we're not doing those things we are not only holding down our own light, but we are also denying it to others. This is not to say that things don't happen that require a period of grieving, or sadness, or anger {and if we are going to view this life business as a game, they are still play in the sense of exploring facets of life}. But fundamentally, I don't know anyone who wouldn't like to incorporate a bit more play into their life. After all, as the saying goes; "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly."

What better place to begin to play, then, than in the art room? {I use that word loosely; it may be the kitchen table or a corner of a room, or a bed even. I am really referring to the metaphorical space in which we make art.} The place where there are no rules, no mistakes, no grades or stern authoritative faces judging and assessing. The place of total expressive freedom, of inspiration, sparkles of light and happiness, and a deep, nourishing fulfilment.

It can be all too easy, especially when starting out or rekindling our creativity, to get bogged down in results. We can get frustrated with what we feel is limited knowledge or ability. When several pieces in a row come out 'wrong' we can become frustrated and angry with ourselves. In short, it all gets a bit serious.



I would like to invite you to start to consider the possibility that this is all just a game. A delicious, undefined game of discovery with no outcome and no rules {like life!}, just the sheer pleasure of the creative process. I encourage you to make a mess, to use your fingers, to close your eyes, turn it over, cut it up, start again, if you like. Whatever gives you the most pleasure in the moment is the biggest gift you can give to yourself. If it seems like it might be fun, do it. Maybe you want to try using kitchen utensils to make marks; maybe you want to see what happens if you paint over crayons; maybe you only feel like using black today. Go for it! See what comes up. If you hate it, throw it out, try something else. {My art teacher at school used to tell us never to throw any of our work away; I disagree. I kept it all for a long time and a lot of it was just taking up space. By all means keep your art if you wish – it can be fun to see how far you've come – my main point is not to feel constrained. It's your art, you decide.}

As Jeanne often reminds me, "Do you want to be right, or happy?" Let's go for happy shall we?

Affirmations for remembering that this is about having FUN:

“I give myself permission to play in ways that are inspiring to me.”

“I am not the sum of what I create, it is just an expression.”

“Whenever I allow inspiration I work for the greater good of all.”

“Let me not limit myself with rules that I have made.”

Taking the Sparks Further

- In what ways would you like to bring play into your life or your art?
- If you have children, or access to some, let them show you!
- Buy some cheap craft or poster paints, brushes and paper and make as much mess as you like.

Try these playful ways to make art:

- Drawing with the non- dominant hand, so we actively have less control over the outcome
- Painting with our hands
- Using wax crayons {there is something deeply satisfying about a box of Crayolas}
- Colouring in - going outside the lines whenever you feel like it!
- Scribbling
- Mixing colours on the page
- Scrubbing paint around with old brushes
- Potato printing – this can actually produce fantastic results!

So in this chapter we discovered:

- ~ that play isn't just for kids!
- ~ that bringing more play into our creativity brings a lightness to the process
- ~ that there are many many ways to bring play and FUN into our art



Don't be afraid to make a mess!

Each of us possesses a creative self.

Claiming that is a transformational art.

*When you begin to act on your creativity, what you find inside
may be more valuable than what you produce for the external world.*

*The ultimate creative act is to express what is most authentic
and individual about you.*

- Eileen M. Clegg