



PLAYING WITH INTENT VOL. I

curated by Susanne Heiss
The Texturalists

WHY PLAY?

PLAY IS FUN. PLAY IS LIGHT. PLAY IS JOY. THE ANSWER TO MANY THINGS IS PLAY.



Dear reader,

Is there a place for play in business? Well... if there has not been a place in your business so far, there definitely should be one in the future.

Play is a great way to learn and to engage. Play creates community and bonds.

Play in business is Playing with Intent, and it should be a well-crafted approach for employees to participate, reflect and share in a safe and brave space. Inviting them to laugh about themselves and at others. To fail forward with joy. To embrace uncertainty with a smile. To learn while enjoying the company of their colleagues.

This ebook outlines the benefits of Playing with Intent, and it includes inspirations as well as questions to reflect, exercises to run, and resources to check out.

There are many opportunities to intentionally include play so that teams and leaders better collaborate, communicate, and innovate; better create, grow, and explore.

I am sure you will find the right opportunity where it will serve your purpose.

Playfully yours,
Susanne

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1 THE ANSWER IS PLAY

Play & Spontaneity	5
Play & Learning	6
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Play & Collaboration	8



PLAY & SPONTANEITY

WOULD YOU CALL YOURSELF A SPONTANEOUS PERSON?
HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE MAKING CHOICES WITHIN SECONDS?
THE ANSWER IS: PLAY!

Play gives us the chance to be spontaneous and to react quickly to a new situation. Whether we decide to play out this card or make a different move, whether we would add something to a scene or work with the resources we have been provided: we learn to make quick moves and fast decisions through play and to be more spontaneous than we might be in a regular working situation.

Play helps us practice spontaneity and making choices - in a very unobtrusive way. We hardly even notice or realize it.

Next time, you engage your team members in play, be assured that they will “not only have fun” but that they will massively enhance some of their skill sets.



PLAY & LEARNING

HOW CAN YOU ENCOURAGE LEARNING IN YOUR WORKPLACE?
HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE THE COMMUNICATION WITHIN
YOUR TEAM? **THE ANSWER IS: PLAY!**

Play nurtures development and fulfils our need to learn. This is as much true for children as for adults. Whether you play alone, with one other person or in a group: You will discover so much more so much faster than if you “just learn” in a more classic manner i.e. reading articles, books, watching a video. It is the interaction that is boosting our learning curve.

Also, and this is what I am particularly fond about the power of play:
Play encourages us to communicate with each other. By giving ourselves the opportunity to play, we will better understand each other, our perspectives, our ideas and will also expand our personal growth.

As a saying goes: “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”

Yes to that!



PLAY & FAILURE

HOW CAN YOU FAIL FAST WITHOUT REMAINING STUCK IN ANY NEGATIVE INNER STATE? HOW CAN YOU ENABLE YOUR TEAM MEMBERS TO SPEAK MORE EASILY ABOUT MISTAKES, FAILURES AND LEARNINGS? **THE ANSWER IS: PLAY!**

Failing within a playful setting is a psychologically safe way to fail. We are even encouraged to fail, to laugh about it, to do things over again, to fail again. And to still laugh about it.

Failing is an incremental part of play, as it allows us to increase our ambition to do better next time, to help us learn from why and how something previously went wrong, and to readjust.

I would even like to go as far and say: Playing is the fun form of failing.

Would you agree?



PLAY & COLLABORATION

HOW CAN YOU INVITE TEAM MEMBERS TO WELCOME DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER EMPLOYEES MORE EASILY? HOW CAN YOU ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION AND ALIGNMENT? **THE ANSWER IS: PLAY!**

Play teaches us patience and understanding. Not everything will work out the first time we play. We may need to do certain steps again. We may need to wait for other players to have finished their move. We may need to understand their insights or tactics before we can make our next move.

Play gives us a wonderful opportunity to challenge each other in the way we think, speak or act, and to help us understand ourselves and each other much better. Play will even have a lasting effect on the team as the team member can refer back to a shared experience - to a newly created joint memory. Win-win-win on all sides!



2 QUOTES & QUESTIONS

"Play is the Beginning of knowledge."	10
"Play is our brain's favorite way of learning."	11
"Life is more fun if you play games."	12
"Almost all creativity involves purposeful play."	13



“PLAY IS THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE.”

George Dorsey

IF PLAY LEADS TO KNOWLEDGE, THEN US KNOWING
THIS WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO PLAY... WHICH WILL LEAD
TO KNOWLEDGE LEADING TO PLAY... A CIRCLE OF JOY!
AN ITERATION OF MAGICAL INSIGHTS!

Here are some questions for you to reflect on:

- When was the last time you played?
This may have been a purely fun play in the family or with friends, or it may have been a business game or serious play...*
- What did you learn?
This may have been something factual, an insight gained about the other player(s), or the exploration and expansion of a (soft) skill...
- How did playing impact your own mood as well as the atmosphere in the room?

Maybe there were some reservations beforehand, some tensions – or maybe pure joy, laughter and curiosity...

*If you cannot remember the last time you played, there is something going seriously wrong here...



“PLAY IS OUR BRAIN’S FAVORITE WAY OF LEARNING.”

Diane Ackerman

THE EASIEST WAY TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW IS THROUGH PLAY. WHY? BECAUSE WE FEEL FREE TO EXPERIMENT, TO TEST, TO FAIL, TO DO BETTER. AND BECAUSE EVERYONE IS INVOLVED. **YOU CANNOT NOT PLAY!**

Here are some questions for you to reflect on:

- What is something you would like to learn or become better at?
- How can you make learning happen through play?
- What sort of gamification do you need, and what triggers you to reach the next level?
- Who can play and learn with you?



“LIFE IS MORE FUN IF YOU PLAY GAMES.”

Roald Dahl

WE LAUGH, WE PIVOT, WE LAUGH AGAIN. LAUGHTER IS A KEY
ELEMENT OF PLAY. **HOW FUN!**

Here are some questions for you to reflect on:

- What role does fun play for you when playing? If it is not fun, what is it?
- How does fun look like for you?
- What is your desired outcome of fun – or, of play?
- What is the opposite of fun?
- What is the opposite of play – and is that fun?



“ALMOST ALL CREATIVITY INVOLVES PURPOSEFUL PLAY.”

Abraham Maslow

ALMOST ANY PLAY COMES WITH THE JOY OF CREATION.
DO YOU AGREE?

Through play we create - be it a new shared experience, a new way of working better together, a new tool to test. Play sparks imagination. Imagination leads to creativity. Creativity leads to the magic of life. Easy!

Here are some questions for you to reflect on:

- What will emerge through purposeful play?
- What will you create for yourself and for the whole group when playing?
- How will you make best use of play and the results of it?
- When will you play next?



3 INSPIRATIONS

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WHAT CAN I DO WITH IT?

WHAT IS IT? AND: WHAT CAN I DO WITH IT?

Have you ever found yourself to be satisfied after having been given an answer to the first question? I certainly have. I did not ask the second question: What can I do with it?

Why not?

Let us look at the picture of this post. What is it? A toilet paper roll. Easy. Nothing else to do add, right? Right?!

Asking: 'What can I do with it' opens the door to ideation, imagination and inspiration. A wonderful, magical world. What will you find in answering this question?

As you may know from the past, I love IDEO - I am a big fan. I believe, there is a must-watch TedTalk with the one and only Tim Brown.

Watch it. Enjoy it.

My favorite essence:

"You can be a serious professional adult and, at times, be playful. It's not an either/or; it's an "and." You can be serious and play."

Yes!



SHIRI... WHAT? SHIRITORI!

I ALWAYS ADMIRE HOW OTHERS COME UP WITH GREAT IDEAS.
DO YOU, TOO?

In this quick and simple talk, Shimpei Takahashi, a toy developer, shares a simple word game that you can use to combine two seemingly unrelated words/objects and to see how they could build a connection. He calls it Shiritori.

You take turns saying words that start with the last letter of the previous word: football, love, e-mail, looping... Now you pick two and think how these could form something new.

You can also throw various words into a jar and pick two and combine them. Ideo proposes a similar ideation technique called Mash-up which I also love, love, love.

As you can see: Play can be (and is) everywhere. In fact, it is only a matter of allowing ourselves to play.

When will you give yourself permission to play?



BUILT TO PLAY, AND BUILT BY PLAY

THE GO-TO-PERSON FOR RESEARCH ABOUT PLAY IS DR. STUART BROWN, A PIONEER IN RESEARCH ON PLAY AND FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PLAY.

In his well-acclaimed TedTalk on play, Brown outlines some research on play and invites us to not differentiate between work and play. Or, as he puts it: „So I would encourage you all to engage not in the work-play differential – where you set aside time to play – but where your life becomes infused minute by minute, hour by hour, with body, object, social, fantasy, transformational kinds of play. And I think you’ll have a better and more empowered life.”

To have a better and more empowered life – what a beautiful goal to have!

Among the benefits of play, Brown lists in another article key items such as trust, empathy, optimism, flexibility or problem-solving.

As children we are encouraged by our parents to play because they know how beneficial this is to our growth, learning, and development. As adults, we pass on this advice to our children – yet seem to forget to apply it to ourselves. Why should we not continue to grow, learn, and develop?! Exactly! There is no reason not to.

And again, as Brown writes: „Our heritage as humans is to... play.”



PLAY MODE

SWITCH YOUR PLAY MODE ON! THIS ADVICE WAS ONCE SUGGESTED TO JAKE KNAPP, **AUTHOR OF SPRINT AND THE MASTERMIND BEHIND DESIGN SPRINTS.**

As he outlines in his post, we sometimes need to get into our Play Mode in order to get unstuck and to be OK with not using everything we produce. In fact, we may not use any of our ideas! And this is totally OK. Because we were in our Play Mode!

So next time you are stuck, also try the Play Mode and free yourself up to some fun!



4 EXERCISES

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EXERCISE 1

HAVE YOU EVER...

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO ASIA? HAVE YOU EVER ORDERED SOMETHING IN A RESTAURANT **BECAUSE SOMEONE ELSE TOLD YOU SO?**

“Have you ever”-questions are a wonderful way to quickly and easily get to know each other better, to bond, and to play with the unknown and the surprises.

This is how you run the activity:

- As workshop leader or facilitator, prepare a few “Have you ever”-questions.
- For onsite meetings: Read out the questions one by one. For each statement the participants stand up if they could answer the question with yes.
- For online meetings: Have the participants cover their camera with a sticky note and uncover it when they answer yes to the questions.
- Play various rounds. Share and pause for laughter and reflection.

Click below to be inspired by „Have you ever“ questions.



EXERCISE 2

3 QUESTIONS MINGLE

HOW EASY DO YOU CONNECT WITHIN A (LARGER) TEAM OR RECONNECT WITH YOUR TEAM **AFTER A CERTAIN PERIOD OF TIME APART (AKA THE PANDEMIC)?**

The “3 questions mingle” is a playful exercise to support workshop participants to get to know each other through a set of questions that they create themselves

This is how you run the activity:

- Take 5-10 minutes for every participant to write down three questions they would like to ask the others.
- Depending on the size of the group allow a good amount of time for participants move around and meet each other one-on-one with each asking their three questions. Or include several times during breaks.
- This works particularly well at the beginning of an event or during a large team event that may run over several days. Who manages to ask every other participant their three questions? Gamify!

In need of some good examples for questions to ask? Click below! However, I would advise to have participants come up with their own three questions they'd be curious to ask.



EXERCISE 3

THE UGLY THING

DO YOU WISH TO **ADD SOME FUN TO YOUR MEETINGS** WITH TEAM MEMBERS JOINING THE SESSION FROM THEIR HOMES?

This is how you run the activity:

- Ask everyone to take a couple of minutes (limit to max. 5') to get the most ugly thing in their room/home and to bring it "into the session".
- Share one by one by holding the object into the camera: What is it? Why do you think it is ugly? And most importantly: Why do you still own it and have not gotten rid of it yet?

Sharing the ugliest thing in the room will for sure create some laughter and lead to wonderful stories of every team member.



EXERCISE 4

CREATING MEMORIES

HOW CAN YOU CREATE A FUN MEMORABILIA FOR YOUR TEAM WHEN WORKING REMOTE? SIMPLE: TAKE A PICTURE BY ASKING THEM **TO FIND SOMETHING THEY HAVE IN COMMON.**

Certain occasions are worth remembering because a shared experience was created and a picture taken. Creating a memory is a powerful act and can be of playful intention.

This is how you run the activity:

- Have the group (plenary or in break-outs) discuss something they have in common and can show into the camera when taking a screenshot.
- This can either be something in relation to their same interest, to their favorite color, to the mood they are in etc.
- They can also create a picture by aligning themselves in the webconferencing tool building a heart or any other “bigger” picture.
- Whether done in the plenary or with smaller groups, share the images, add a title, save on your team drive and reflect back on it a few weeks later.



EXERCISE 5

SCAVENGER HUNT

GO WITH YOUR TEAM ON A VIRTUAL SCAVENGER HUNT - MAKE IT BUSINESS SPECIFIC OR AS OPEN AS YOU WISH. NO IDEA, HOW? **WELL, LET'S GATHER SOME IDEAS!**

In a virtual scavenger hunt or online treasure hunt you have teams compete against one another to complete challenges and find things. Instead of using pen and paper, you use smartphones and PCs.

Give each team the same challenges. The group that fulfills them first, wins.

If you want to make them more generic, include things like hunting for coffee machines, home office set-ups, adult coloring books, movie tickets, coupons, something you cannot live without etc.

If you think they should more business-specific, you can ask the teams to take a picture of the latest annual report, mimicking a famous product, find a specific guideline, hunt for specific facts & figures etc.

The sky is the limit for these scavenger hunts! Have you played one yet?

In need of some ideas to create your own and very specific team virtual scavenger hunt? Then click below.



EXERCISE 6

REMOTE PLAY

HOW CAN YOU ADD MORE PLAY WHEN WORKING REMOTE?
HOW CAN YOU BOND WHEN YOU ARE **NOT IN THE SAME ROOM OR EVEN TIME ZONE?**

Here are three ideas:

- Meet respectively for lunch, tea time or dinner - rotate, if time zones require.
Have a “cook off”-event. For this, build teams of 3-4 players and cook a 3 course meal. Each course has to be cooked by at least 2 people. You will need to agree on dishes that everyone can cook based on skills and ingredients they have at home. First cook, then enjoy the meals you have cooked!
- Build 2 teams and play Taboo. You can either play a regular online version of the game (simply search for ‘taboo online game’) or you can come up with 5-10 words of your business or environment which someone from the other team has then to explain to their team. Fun!
- Counting to 20. Although this is a big favorite of mine for F2F meetings, I think it works really well for online as well. The group must count to twenty, going in numerical order, taking turns at random. If any two people speak at the same time, even if it’s just a noise, the group must start over again at number one. It will probably take a few rounds until you succeed but once it does, it is a great horray.

ABOUT SUSANNE

“... TRY TO LOVE THE QUESTIONS THEMSELVES LIKE
LOCKED ROOMS...”

Rainer Maria Rilke

texture, noun. / 'tekstʃə /

The way a company culture feels when you experience and live it, for example how engaging, open, collaborative, giving or forgiving, inclusive or diverse it is. The texture is the character of your company.

texturalist, noun. / 'tɛkstrɪrəlɪst /

People and teams who care not only about what they are working on but also about how they engage and want to feel when sharing, growing, exploring or innovating.

Susanne Heiss is the founder of The Texturalists and a Facilitator for Change & Culture. She enables teams & organizations to create their own textures so that they know how they want to collaborate, engage, and innovate. Susanne does not only care about what teams & organizations are working on but how they want to feel when sharing, growing or exploring.

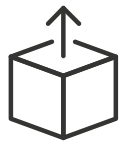
Susanne is a Theory U Facilitator, a Pro Elephant Rider Facilitator of the Emotional Culture Deck, a Cultural Assessment Trainer at Barrett Values Centre, Facilitator of Lego® Serious Play®, ActeeChange Certified Consultant as well as a Certified Design Sprint Master.

Susanne is just a digital doorstep away from you and lives with her family in Heidelberg, Germany.



Photo by Sylvie Gagelmann

WHAT I DO



CHANGE

Guiding teams and leaders through resistance & transformation



CULTURE

Engaging employees in open conversations & behavioral shifts



CREATIVITY

Nourishing learning & innovation



COMMUNICATIONS


Exploring possibilities of collaboration & connections


WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?


REACH OUT AND BOOK US SOME TIME TO DISCUSS, EXPLORE - AND PLAY!

[CLICK HERE TO SCHEDULE A CALL](#)



 +49 179 322 811 7

 susanne@the-texturalists.com

 www.the-texturalists.com

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Graphic Design: Linda Luk, linda@freiform-medien.com, www.freiform-medien.com

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