

Give yourself permission to play a little everyday and stay well!

By Tami Duke

The North Shore Mental Health Group, in cooperation with Lake County Mental Health Task Force, Silver Bay North Shore Area Partners and other community organizations are sponsoring a year-long project to support a more resilient community.. This is based on the Yellow Zone initiative from Stearns County, Minnesota. The "Yellow Zone cultivates well-being through five basic pillars: Helping, Socializing, Learning, Playing and Spirituality.. All five are components that nurture the psychological, emotional and social aspects of mental health.."

The first pillar we are focusing on is "Play" since it goes hand in hand with the upcoming geocaching event on Saturday at Tettegouche State Park. Research has proven that play is actually a core need for overall well-being.

Play contributes to flourishing by optimizing healthy brain development and managing stress.

What is Play? It can be hard to define and many scholars have argued over the definition, but the mental state of play is sometimes referred to as flow. Attention is on the activity itself, and there is reduced consciousness of self and time, and it is self-chosen and self-directed, it's what one wants to do, as opposed to what one feels obliged to do.

Scientific studies continue to show that play and fun activities can have several major benefits. For example, play has the power to help:

- Improve how your brain works
- Heal, establish or maintain relationships
- Improve our mental and emotional well-

being

- Extend your life and improve your physical vitality.

Play isn't only for children! Playing with children adds value for adult caregivers as well, and then they can re-experience the joy of their own childhood. Play can also result in decreases in parental experiences of stress and enhancement in the caregiver-child relationship.

Making time for play may take a conscious effort, since many of us have been taught to work first, then play. However, sometimes we never get to the play part and that's when we suffer burnout and are not flourishing. Give yourself permission to play a little everyday and stay well!

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