

Mummy, I'm bored!

How many times do we hear that as our children grow up, and how many times do we reply, 'How do you do, I'm mummy'? In the current situation it is not just children who are bored, many adults, particularly those who are shielding, are thoroughly fed up with the same view. If you live on your own it is worse as there is no-one to compare boredom with, but equally no one to inspire or suggest something to fill the time.

In the autumn last year, I bought Michael Rosen's 'Book of Play', published in association with the Wellcome Collection it explores the concept of play and why it is important for humans of all ages to continue playing. Play is important for creativity, resilience and wellbeing. I remember my grandmother saying that boredom was the mother of invention and how true that is; perhaps Newton sat under that tree bored until an apple fell on his head and the wondering began. Wondering is play, I wonder if, I wonder what, I wonder how, are all precursors to discovery and invention; science is based on play for without wonder we would be without many inventions and discoveries that make our lives so much richer.



As we spend time in lockdown, many move almost seamlessly between scanning the internet, catching up on box sets, or using numerous apps on their phone to keep in touch in a virtual world, but sometimes there comes a moment when there is nothing. This is called 'liminal space' and it is here that we register boredom, but it is also here that we have the opportunity to play. Maybe we need more liminal space in our lives to begin to experience again the wonder of creation in all its technicolour glory. Maybe lockdown is the opportunity to rediscover play. Play is not just discovering our external world afresh but also our inner world, as Michael Rosen says, '*we can think of ourselves as explorers of the mind, or archaeologists of our memories, picking up stuff, turning it over and working out why it is there.*' Play can help us cope with change and make us more flexible, and we are faced with lots of change at the moment and we do need to be flexible for the future.



Play can teach us that we can change the rules, just because something has always been done one way does not mean we cannot discover a new way to do. Take worship, at the moment around the country churches are discovering new ways of worshipping together and those ways are appealing to new people, people who would never dream of entering a church building. When we stand outside and clap or bang 'instruments' in support of key workers we are playing. Exploring different ways of doing things. There is a structure and order to play and play creates structure and order, often a new structure or order, and that is one of the ways we can participate in creation. Playing around with garden design or changing the order of furniture in a room is play. Play is about objects but also about imagining, play can be imagining a new scenario, playing out a new role, Robert Louis Stevenson explored play in poems and essays; porridge with sugar was a land covered in snow, porridge with milk was a land being flooded, as you eat you create islands or pockets of land not covered in snow and you can imagine how this affects the people who live in the land. One of the songs I remember from childhood is 'Wynken, Blynken and Nod' who set sail one night to a land of porpoises and whales.

So, if you are bored, rejoice and begin playing. Challenge yourself – how many ice cubes can you stack without them tumbling, from what distance can you throw a teabag into a cup, can you throw the bread into the toaster slot, from how far away can you do it? Get the ingredients for a recipe out and develop a new recipe from the same ingredients, perhaps you have some Lego around for grandchildren, how many different things can you make with the same set of bricks?



If there are two or more of you start a challenge cup to see who can be the most creative, celebrating the new ideas you come across. Play with your imagination and write a story about a character trapped in a situation and how they escape, or anything else you can think of, just PLAY.

It will do us a all the world of good and who knows where it might lead?