

## **Playtime is not just for Kids!**

**By: Jen Vortriede, Follow Your Heart Life Coaching**

When was the last time you played? I realized before this past week that it had been quite awhile since I had played. Several weeks ago my husband Eric and I were under a great deal of stress, and I said to him, “things are a little too serious around here these days – we need to be a bit more playful.” When Eric is too busy to “play” with me, does that mean I can’t be playful? Not at all! There are ways I can “play” with a girlfriend, or even by myself, and I proved as much this past week.

This past week my dear friend Peggy from Oregon visited Eric and me at our home in Palm Desert. I put aside most of my work for the week. Boy, did we ever play?! Peggy and I drove to Joshua Tree National Park, where Peggy scrambled up on a pile of huge boulders so I could take a photo of her conquering the mountain. We went to the Living Desert, which is our local zoo, where we became explorers. We watched big horn sheep on the hillside, petted an iguana, looked in wonder at a hummingbird feeding her tiny babies, ate a hot dog, appreciated the miniature train display, and remembered what it’s like to feel like a kid for the day. Peggy and I tried to swim gracefully at times in our pool, and we laughed good-naturedly at each other when we weren’t so graceful. We also went clothes shopping together as if we were teenagers once again.

Of course, my friend Peggy could not stay with us forever and had to go back to Oregon to her own life. I also had to get back to my work, but “playing” with Peggy inspired me to do something today that I haven’t done in many years and that was to try a cartwheel in my backyard. Eric stood nearby in case he needed to pick me up off the ground (or take me to the hospital!). Fortunately he didn’t need to do either. My cartwheels were definitely not the most graceful or beautiful in the world, but it was sure fun doing them! My body is not that of a kid anymore because of its various aches and pains, but I can still feel like a kid inside when I’m playing.

Incorporating play into one’s life is not only fun, but playing can be good exercise, depending on the activity. A couple of things I do fairly regularly as part of my exercise program, which I find really fun and more like playing than work, are using my hula hoop and jumping on a mini trampoline. Both forms of play are good for my heart and work on various parts of my body. They also help to alleviate stress in my life.

If you’re like me, you try to get all of your work done BEFORE you play, but I’d like for you to consider adding some play to your schedule at least once a week. You may not be into using a hula hoop, attempting a cartwheel, or jumping on a mini-trampoline. What playtime activities did you love as a child? How about finding a playground and swinging on a swing for even just five minutes at a time? When was the last time you used a jump rope or played hopscotch? Do you enjoy ping pong? Go fly a kite. Throw a Frisbee. Try on a silly hat at a hat store. Color in a coloring book. Shoot a basket. Schedule a play date with a girlfriend. Play hide and seek. Giggle.

Play — it can help to reduce your stress level, may even be good exercise, and it’s just plain fun! We all need to work in some way or another, but having balance in one’s life is important for our overall wellness. Now, get out there and play!