

WHY DO I SAY PLAY?

I was barely an adult living in Los Angeles when I first discovered that adults could have fun too. I'm not talking about playing card games, or video game playsticks with the top selling XBox; or even a music-filled bingo game – and, I am not knocking any of these if these thrill you. But I'm talking about the unabashed, worryless luxurious fun of childhood; the grand exhilaration of a chase, of running, screaming, thrilling, of never thinking about a time it would end; of being so completely captivated that you forget that any real world exists; of living in that moment like you are the lord of your castle. I am talking about that play.

That was the play I rediscovered one night when a friend invited me to another friend's Thanksgiving gathering one year; and these folks played a game of charades I will never forget. We were all breathless in suspense, knocking each other over running through someone's home, and cheering each other on like this was the race of our lives.

This is the kind of engagement teachers drool over.

But I've never seen this play in the classroom.

Wait. Let me correct that.

I've never seen this kind of play in an adult classroom.

Where in the world did we learn to stop playing? Who taught us that? Some authoritarian bullsh*t?

Probably.

Because real play is... wait for it—

Radical y'all.

Like bell hooks Teaching to Transform radical. Yup.

I slowly discovered how central play was to my life when a coach working with a group of film directors asked us: what are the three parts of yourselves that if you lost this part, you would no longer be you?

Yep. I took a beat too.

I was used to the values question; but this was next level.

I thought and I thought; and I realized... one of the less obvious parts of myself was play.

...That when I was deeply engaged and grounded with another person, I became playful, silly and authentic. I could tease and delight too. Once in a while this horror gal could actually be... funny.

But I realized at the same time how the times in my life which were hardest, were when play was the farthest thing from my mind and heart.

As I continued making projects, I had a second revelation— that play was a part of so many things I enjoyed. But because I was an adult, I had somehow talked myself out of doing these things or having these things. I kept them low key, like my stuffed animals. But like, when friends came over, they went under the sheets.

But I started to recognize how I was slowly subconsciously slipping elements of play in my work; but they were all half-*ssed because I was conflicted. Yes. Conflicted.

Could I be a real adult and still be playful, silly, and authentic?

Could I be a teacher and still be this way? Wouldn't play undermine my authority? Wouldn't it confuse my students? And other faculty? I saw deep down that I really wanted to; but I was afraid to because: adults aren't supposed to play.

It's this unsaid understanding that haunts us past our teens. Adults are serious. Adults pay bills, work hard, and in the US buy stuff. Once in a while they play board games and get drunk (which acts as a cool undercover operation for playing without the responsibility). This is adulting.

But play can be so much more.

Did you know that there is a link to play, creativity and neuroplasticity— that's a brain that's willing to stretch y'all? And that there is a link to misery, lack of neuroplasticity and dying.

A fixed brain is not a happy one is the bottom line.

And my brain had started going down this road; but I saw how I could make play a choice and not an afterthought.

I saw how play was central to my work as a teacher, an artist, a filmmaker, and a writer.

And I wanted to teach with play!

Unfortunately adult institutions tend to be very fixed in their thinking; so I decided to launch Rae At Play as a way of offering an alternative, a playful (and more affordable) alternative to learning.

The offerings at Rae At Play are designed to help stimulate you to get out of the box and take some courageous leaps and bounds into the real world through playful exercises on writing, making, storytelling, collaging, storytelling and more.

Artists need to play most of all. But it's not only artists—it's teachers, inventors, writers, scientists, doctors, forest rangers and more. If you work in any sphere of teaching or creation, there is something valuable for you here at Rae At Play.

Welcome to my play-form.

Welcome to Rae At Play.

Rae