

Power of PLAY: How Having Fun Can Help Kids Thrive

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SUMMARY

The roundtable discussion emphasizes the critical role of play in children's development, highlighting its benefits for relaxation, happiness, and essential life skills such as creativity, communication, and problem-solving. Despite overwhelming evidence of its importance, many parents struggle to prioritize play due to busy schedules and the allure of screens, which can detract from meaningful interactions.

- *95% of children believe play helps them relax, while 95% of parents see it as enhancing family happiness and well-being.*
- *Play fosters vital life skills, including creativity, communication, confidence, and problem-solving.*
- *Many parents admit to not playing enough with their children, often citing lack of time and work commitments.*
- *The discussion underscores the need for parents to engage in play, as it builds emotional connections and teaches resilience.*
- *Play is essential for cognitive and social development, helping children learn to communicate and collaborate effectively.*
- *The LEGO Group's initiative, "Small Hands Big Dreams," aims to encourage parents to prioritize play in their children's lives.*
- *The conversation advocates for a shift in perception, viewing play not as frivolous but as a fundamental aspect of learning and growth.*
- *Parents are encouraged to take a "play pledge" to commit to incorporating play into their daily routines with their children.*

95 percent of children said play helps them relax 95 of parents said that play boost their family's happiness and well-being and creates stronger bonds what's up I want to thank each one of you for taking time out to be here with us and very very excited because it's it's a round table on play and bhavna thank you for this thank you for to the LEGO Group for powering the first ever Roundtable on play and bringing play to

the Forefront for our children something so simple and so important likely is often taken for granted I wonder why why is Place such an important part of a canvas called childhood let me tell you why let me tell you some fun facts from the Lego playwell report that will reinforce the importance of play in our child's lives 95 of children said play helps them relax 95 of parents said that play boost their family's happiness and

well-being and creates stronger bonds over 90 percent of parents say play helps their child develop vital life skills including the three C's which is creativity communication confidence all grossing over 90 percent and 92 percent on problem solving this is what Eric Erickson says about play and I know we all love and admire his

work you see a child play and it is so close to seeing an artist paint for in play a child says things without uttering a word you can

see how he solves his problems you can also see what's wrong young children especially have enormous amount of creativity and whatever's in them Rises up to the surface in free play Maria Montessori said we cannot know the consequences of suppressing a child's spontaneity when he is just beginning to be active but despite all of these benefits we're still not playing enough I wonder why I'm sure you're wondering

as well 84 of children wish they could play more with their parents 34 percent of parents admit their family doesn't play together enough and say lack of time long work hours too much housework all are to be blamed 39 of children feel their parents jobs are actually coming in between their play time I'm honored and humbled to have each one of you here and of course grateful to the LEGO Group for powering us to drive this message of

play do we as parents let small hands build their Big Dreams across their different passions and hobbies and interests we will all be talking about how we can prioritize play for our children we're all key stakeholders and this is important to me and to you and to each one of us seated here today let me introduce everyone here today we have with us Varun um is of course a dear friend he's a

he's the co-founder of plot device plot device uh he is he's very hard to introduce because every day he tries to do something new I must say he's a fitness drunkie he's a parent to two which is very very important he's been he is an entrepreneur he is a podcaster he's a Creator and he's a very very Hands-On dad so thank you Varun for doing this for us today uh Swati Dr swathi I don't know how to introduce you just

simple I am the President of Early Childhood Association and podar education Network and someone who um is always driving the cause for children I I absolutely right um Dr shwetambra um who I also know as a friend um you want to tell us a little bit about yourself um of course thank you for having me I'm a clinical psychologist and a psychotherapist I've been practicing for

19 years now um but I think what is more relevant to both me and the situation here is that I'm a mother of two and I absolutely enjoy playing with my kids and wouldn't replace it for anything else as a parent right and of course we have Wagner whose part of the LEGO Group and of course the Lego team in India thank you and congratulations on the small hands Big Dreams initiative that's just launched at the Lego playground today

um I've seen it I've just witnessed it I'm gonna head out back for my play pledge because I just feel that when I'm accountable and when I'm publicly accountable uh I think we end up doing a lot more of living up to that to that piece okay Varun um I want to ask I want to start asking you this first question and taking back to what the research says kids feel that our work comes in between play time

how guilty are you and while I know that uh you know we all know these facts I want to know how are you making it actionable like how can we as parents who are working multitasking multifaceted want to have a

perfect body perfect career perfect everything make time for play um so my daughter's six River when she was about three she started walking around the house with with a fake phone mimicking us and that was like a signal to say one second

she's showing us something so we actually gave her the powers and when you feel like that Papa Mama talking much on the phone doing too much work call us out because we call kids out on things right so like can give her can we give her that power when she does that put our phones away she gets to choose what we all play with um except for times we can't put this away right now but we do make sure that

she has the power to almost Drive play at home it's not something that we have to drive so giving her that was actually been amazing she comes up with new more things for us to do all the time right how do you guys draw those boundaries that's and say that this is play this is work for me I think it's become easier with me becoming a part of the LEGO Group I think it's become easier because

uh my son actually believes that I don't go to work I go to play so he's jealous he he basically says I want to go to work with Lou uh but then uh you know there are obviously times when you are stuck with work and you have to tell him uh you know there's there's work and that's keeping you busy but I think uh I have consciously as he's growing up I have consciously um also realized that he learns best

when he plays thanks to the education system also the way it's evolving now and thanks to you know whatever I learned from him I see him learning the best when he's happy and he's happiest when he's playing so you know I take back a lot of bricks and then I learn to play with him so I think the boundaries are blurring now for me okay so for me as a young working mom I think um I figured out early enough that my

son would have to accompany New York um I built a little corner where we where he would hang out and every now and then I would go over to that corner and double up come up with Creative Solutions um talk to him about my work sometimes yeah um he was little but it was just engaging and that helped me connect with him um sometimes like you mentioned about you know giving your child that power I feel that some people don't have that

option um of packing away from work whether it's you know when I'm driving my kids to school or I have to manage home and work um so I think finding Creative Solutions just encapsulating those tiny moments um and engaging in a playful way really helped me personally um it can be a game of Atlas it can be just from peek-a-boo to cooking together um you know I feel that it's given me so much opportunity to engage with them

just in a playful manner and I think it's very important for all of us new age working parents who want to achieve so much like you mentioned that we doubled up and find Creative Solutions to engage in a playful way with our kids right Swati tell me what are the biggest excuses parents get why they can't play three of the most important and common excuses I've heard is I'm too busy number two I don't know what to play

with my child and number three is mobile phone Hannah why should I play with my child better things to do right while we're on that mobile phone conversation you know and and it's recently you know we were just discussing this before which is about this whole study which has come out which is talking about early smartphones with you know being ex you know handed over to kids very early on is kind of causing a lot of

um you know a lot of stress on their well mental well-being and and health and um you know just to address that what are the repercussions of that on a child's play time and what are the consequences if that play time is substituted with screen time there is no doubt that this has its you know a negative impact on children on adults even I just call me a realist

I feel it's unavoidable today if I had to send my 13 year old son out for a class across the city a city like Bombay I really do feel better if I if he has a phone on him um so I feel some of this is inevitable but um differentiating between the utility the functionality and the use of it versus play has really helped us um it's like giving a child I've always used this analogy it's like giving them

a knife if you have to and telling them how to use it it is that harmful it is that dangerous um you can't leave it on there a code to figure figure this one out but rules and boundaries are absolutely imperative um and in my experience not just with my kids but also with a lot of cases it has helped children are very intelligent and they like boundaries once you give them that they will follow it

um but I do feel that an honest open consistent conversation is very important when it comes to gadgets and social media this is why they're coming to you we're talking of a 13 year old versus kids as young as five and six being handed over or sometimes even as young as two being handed over these devices what is the impact of play on a child's mind between two to six years and what's the impact of a screen on a

child's mind between two to six so I think screens have become the third parent you know I always say that when a child is born uh the first thing that the child sees is a screen because the dad is standing there taking a photograph so the child imprint you know how like ducks imprint so they imprint on a screen and they think this is my parent so when I cry I'm given a mobile phone so I feel okay so when I cry I must look

at a mobile phone not at my parents and then to distract them we give them mobile phones to play so then they realize that for any entertainment for any emotional needs I must go to the mobile phone and that is something that needs to be removed from Baron's minds they need to understand what they are doing to their children now where play is concerned uh play is a childhood's work so it's not frivolous activity as most

people think now when I'm not given that opportunity to play with items like blocks or toys or dolls or teddy bears or whatever I'm losing out on three things I'm losing out on a collaboration which means it's a mobile phone is just what it does I do with it yeah so my collaboration is more with AI and not with hi which is human intelligence so when I grow up I won't know how to deal with people that's why these are the

children who face problems in schools because they don't know number two I won't know what to do with myself and I'm bored whereas when you play with toys you know what to do here you are so constantly hooked and Hyper focused there's no moment of boredom yeah but in when you're playing with toys uh and you're bored and somebody gives you toys you are now using your own mind your ideas your creativity and number three very very important is communication

when you build something with your hands or you're playing your instant reaction you must have seen in children is they want to talk to you about it that doesn't happen when they are playing with a mobile phone they in fact become lonely introvert so these are the three impact consequences call what you may but parents are not realizing that this is dangerous um Varun if I were to ask you you know growing up people think that okay I'll

be this I'll be this you know I'll I'll be a doctor engineer whatever you are an engineer yeah in today's world you know we've studied something we're working something we're doing completely different jobs what are going to be those essential skills that you feel you want to empower your children with which will help them no matter what field they want to take in like what do you think are those essential skills I'm just going to pick up from

work what she just said that is that social and emotional skills are like right up there right because you know we're all focusing on even talking about how much can kids learn about AI um I found a course on crypto for six-year-olds the other day we scared The Living Daylights out of me um but in the World of Tomorrow having EQ is going to be far higher requirement um to grow because that's the one thing the technology can't take away is that

it's human interaction social skills learn to regulate your own emotions and feelings um and that's going to be like for us we've spent so much time and we realized as as first-time parents we didn't realize till maybe our daughter was about four years old but through the pandemic and until now we've actually spent so much time in her understanding no the fact that she's really anxious before something she I thought I went on stage for the first time in in a school

play Yesterday um and I did this whole thing about how you know how she should focus on the fact that she's doing this for herself not for someone else her daughter Navy series box breathing so she if you want to do that um further there but just the fact that these smaller things to take the pressure off that so I'm doing it for my teacher I'm doing it for my parents you're doing it for yourself yeah

um and that's what really kind of people will really build kids for whatever is going to happen tomorrow for me that was like I was my mother asked me as a kid what do you want to be when you grow up and I said I want to be a drawer I didn't know the word artist existed um but for me it was literally creating worlds and and coming up with stories around them and that's what I would

spend hours doing um I have a partner in crime with a six-year-old and eventually you know the the nine month old will grow up yeah so it's just that it's like you've got to you realize as you get older that that's what

you enjoy doing yeah and you find ways to go back to that and hopefully kids don't have to do that dance that we've all had to do yeah that's so true if you just allow me to pitch in it's

it's so significant that you say that because psychosocial development actually starts early on and the foundation of it lies in building a sense of self which comes through play so I mean the first time when it when you when a child locks gaze with her father um is when she realizes I exist I matter you know I this is who I am and I mean something and and they're on their Journey starts and you know so the

concept of object permanence concept of collaboration just developing autonomy cause and effect all of this can get aided through playing such a significant way so in that sense develop you know physical development cognitive development which parents are so big about but I'm so glad you spoke about uh the social emotional growth and EQ and all of those and these can actually be aided by absolutely it's such a beautiful happy we method not like you have to make them do something that

they're not enjoying or you're not enjoying this is you know mutually so much uh um so much more happy happier the playway swathi I'm going to ask you with your experience play obviously unlocks these essential skills that you that you spoke of why do parents resist it so much I know you said we're busy and all of that but we're not the first set of parents who are the busiest in the world so why are we resisting it so

much I think it's been resisted since Generations it it's now become part of our DNA yeah because as human beings it was always all about work that we had to work for our food we had to work for our existence and there was child labor at that time where you had to work on the farms Etc so at that time they felt that if the child plays and I'm talking about the time of Frederick Froebel the first father of

kindergarten he discovered that children play best after that came Montessori and all that and he developed a lot of toys which he called gifts and he realized that parents are unwilling to send their little children to play because he they thought this old man is crazy he's going to make our children play with his worthless yeah and that has been coming down now in every Asian countries or tiger moms as Marx performance all that so my child will

not do well in studies if my child is playing and they don't realize but what what is something that we should celebrate about is the new education policy it talks about play way and experiential learning yeah and that's what we should all be focusing on I hope parents will now realize that play does not mean wasting away your time play means you are giving that cognitive uh you know uh push to your brain to find something more interesting to

concentrate and to remember it better let me give you a simple example that when we say the first in the first six years 85 percent of the brain develops and why play the right side of the brain develops first and the right side thrives on play and it's the right side which is in charge of long-term memory so when you play with children and they learn through play it's going in your long-term memory you would Now teach

this child through books and writing it goes in the left so which means that's a left brain learning so which means it's going to go in the short term memory so parents have to put children in tuitions classes through play it will go in the right side right side is long term memory you got your whatever you wanted you got and just to add to this I know coding and all this is much this thing but I've written two books on

coding for young children which is completely non-screen based it's play and why coding coding is nothing but foundation for literacy and numeracy yeah coding is nothing but computational thinking and you need you need it to teach children at that very young age that it's not machines who take care of us we program machines right you know so and I've also developed a website called Bond smart it's for parents in the first three years play with your children

eight minute games 258 games play with your children two minute games why can't we do that right so I think parents the more what you're doing what Lego is doing is excellent because when parents realize the power of play then they will not feel that oh my child is violating over their time and there could be better activities that my child could do right but uh internet is an adding on is it is it never part of a curriculum like you said yes

because education does not give importance to play and especially as Asian parents we are so focused on like I said result yeah and I've noticed schools when we talk to schools okay why don't you have a play-based curriculum they say parents you know so I said to bow down to parents you are taking out the play element you are the expert you should be able to convince the parents right so I think somewhere schools also need to

realize that you don't only have to be in that Financial Rat Race you also need to be in the cognitive Rat Race to help parents convince parents what you are doing is right for their child and why that is very important you know I was just saying but I think swathi summed it up very beautifully so you know when I look at parents and I am one and when I go to schools uh the perspective is

completely changing you know we've grown up in a world which was very competitive right and um I think we we are as parents to be blamed for being a very very ROI oriented yes very greedy to say that if he spent one hour what did we get out of that one hour and typically what happens is we look at life uh in subjects you know how good is he at math and how good he's true he had English but

unfortunately life doesn't test the subject-wise right so what typically happens is when you're thrown into the world of work is when you realize that life is not competitive you know it has to be collaborative and that is where I think we uh struggled and and that's where the people who emerge the best why is it that the front benchers you know the first uh in class are not the ones who are doing the best yeah um and and uh nothing against them

that you know the world is changing I was a back venture so I'm very much in favor yeah so I think we turned out all right and I just feel that that's the world that we need to give our children but but we are scared you know as parents and and we want to make out um every minute of that time that the child is spending uh with books or toys or whatever yeah I just want to add one

thing I I feel for our parents and and my parents are slightly more rewarded thankfully for me but the requirement was put every kid in a box you know it's like I come from a like my my standard jokes I'm a typical um Telugu boy because half my family a doctor so for them or Engineers the doctors and stayed in India and I'm Engineers into America literally that's the template of my a large part of my

family um my Panasonic do what you want to do become what you want to become as long as it you find some stability it shouldn't be like random there is no like listening to it I still went engineering because but I just went but I realized that people around them kept asking is he going to be this or that it's not what is he interested in on what does you want yeah are you in this box or in the other box

which takes away from play apps because plays independent you you're not looking at something oh this is the plan I'm falling look at this what can I make out of this and and if you look at kids and give them stuff they don't know the rules they'll do whatever they want with it and that's I mean that also like opens up the mind and does what you can do with it also Mansi I don't think parents uh have that literature which

teachers have yeah uh okay parents have heard about Montessori but all these people whether it's verbal Montessori in India parents don't know about him did you know that he set up the first balwadi in 1920 before independence and he believed in play so it's not that it wasn't in our country it's that parents are not educated about it I always feel that don't ever make me the Prime Minister because I will make parenting a course

and only if you pass the course can you become a parent it's the only job you don't require qualification yeah yeah no but that's that's uh you know I when you were actually talking about doctor engineer and whatever I you know either it's family either it's teachers who condition so you know I feel also please come out of so much of conditioning or career choices that have so much of conditioning right because you're told as a child

and therefore you know your choices kind of are consciously coming in so I used to play teacher teacher and I became a teacher and she's saying that parents are like every time in class and I didn't stay in class because I was part of all societies like drama elocution I was like okay I don't need to be in class too yeah that was so much fun yeah to to be true whatever I'm doing umra let me ask you

um parents aren't able to decipher the meaning of skills you know which are like say imaginative or creative or cognitive um and these skills are obviously you know they're very non-tangible like I keep saying they're not Quantified Bible how would you explain the importance of these skills two parents like if you have to just dumb it down for them I love that question I wouldn't want to dumb it down for them at all I do feel

that their parents have really risen up to this job in fact just you know drifting back into the previous conversation I actually want to ease the pressure out on parents a little bit because that pressure is making them push so hard and the you know and the receiving at the receiving end our little children um I do feel that parents are trying to understand get a better grasp on these things right from building self-confidence into learning

how to collaborate at work um you know in a big business meeting I think every single thing can skill can be built the playway um not only introduced created but grown proliferated sustained um maintained and it can be done through the playway now our Focus becomes skills like you know physical ability cognitive ability IQ even EQ to a certain extent I

think one of the most important things that needs to be taught in courage in a child is a healthy sense of self you know valuing themselves and it's amazing how plea can help that absolutely um other than these essential skills that I feel that we're talking about you know autonomy or problem solving collaboration do you know how significant play is uh in recovery I think all of us need to understand recognize that play can help us restore

ourselves play therapy it can help recovering one of you mentioned um that you know when you're playing in one of your quotes when you're playing when a child is playing you know what they're thinking we use it for projective techniques sometimes children are not able to articulate what they are feeling or what they're going through and we use these techniques and we let them play and we let them draw we let them just pick something and that tells us so much

about children and I think that that's true even for adults and so the significance of play um it's it's Irreplaceable every single thing that we achieve if it is done you know in the play way um I think can it just eases out a lot of the achievement takes away from the pressure of you know having the result oriented um attitude so in terms of parents I think I had soft to them I think parents are doing a great job

um so I really want to ease that out even if you're just having a conversation she plays a lot to do about perception this conversation can be played right yeah um correcting a child encouraging a child motivating a child can be done in the playway so yes toys and toys are important but even in the small interactions that we're having with children if we just introduce that play We allow for that perception there I think it can make a big difference love

that I absolutely um love absolutely love that answer so what if I was to ask you how can play stimulate all of these skills that I mentioned the cognitive development problem solving creativity critical thinking because you've obviously seen so many kids over so many years so why does Google office have a play area for adults because they've realized that the more people play the better will be their productivity so that's where we should move from

that's the example I give parents always that you all talk about offices that have a play area for adults then why are we restricting play in children if adults can Thrive so much on play think what it can do for children and I also tell parents go from the known to the unknown I know your child is addicted on the mobile phone that's the known okay start playing games on the mobile phone with your child that's called co-playing

yes and then from there take your child to your favorite game it could be a board game it could be play with blocks you know and if your child is above the age of six they love competition so then you can have a competition of who can build the tallest tower yeah and who can build the best Bridge you know stuff like that

so it's all about now look at what we did in all this we're talking

about creativity you're talking about collaboration you're talking about impulse control that I want to do something else but I love my Dad or I love my mom so I'm going to play along with right you know so it's very very important that these are not just words they actually happen in play yeah you talk about thinking skills logic you talk waiting for their turn go to a public park and let your child climb that slide I am against dads who take

their children and plunk them straight directly on the slide and their children miss out on that climbing part and the waiting part and that's more important you know waiting in that line that's teaching you so many social skills climbing up is teaching you that effort and then you get that slide so public parks why were they made they were made for play but sadly as soon as the child comes in grade one we remove the slides

we reboot the jungle gyms we remove all this and we say nine now we're going to focus on study right so I think it's very important that in in homes why don't we give a play area to every child why not why only to those below six years I think there should be a play room in every home you know we don't need many of the rooms that we make in our homes but if we had a play room that would be

a place where people can you know in our schools we have a play wall so we've used our corridors and we put Lego on all our walls so it becomes a play wall so you know it's very important that children sometimes want to see perspectives I'm always sitting down and looking at toys from down now look at it on a wall so it if toys do this to you play does this to you it gives you

perspectives it gives you so much right and I am in my best element when I'm playing because I'm relaxed dopamine that's the happy chemical that's rushing to my brain when I'm playing and happy chemical happy person happy person but good memory good memories intelligence intelligence you've got it you know another question that we get asked on git stop press very often is should when I'm playing should I allow my child to lose I said of course of course you have

to let your child win just go with the flow yeah they lose more that's that's what's going to teach them resilience absolutely the ability to accept defeat and still move on you know and I hate this word allow yeah I hate this word a lot of teachers use it a lot can I allow children I said you are nobody to allow children to do anything you're there to support nurture Mentor that's it period right um You said you were an average student

yes and you took I was really long to finish our degree I'm not staying in public it's a very very well educated engineering okay if you have to go back and for your daughter I wanna know how be designed you know and perceive play and how will it help children off tomorrow to be more equipped like if you're just like blind canvas how would you desire incorporating so I've actually spent

some time in my daughter's classroom right and it just felt like this massive shift because I my visual was no

Stacks open just focused on the teacher on one Blackboard teaching and here this is like almost like a circle there were smaller tables there were blocks there was stuff to scribble on that's the weight has to be it almost has to be this circle of like safety that you can do stuff you can mess things up but I also put them things

back in their place after that yeah um that's how it has to be because I feel being messy is important everything can't just be in this um and I I go back to the play area thing which you said I think adults need to have toys as well right absolutely so the funny the joke in our house is the fact that on weekends my daughter comes and says can I play with Papa's Toys and so I'll take out my blocks and my

figurines and my bobble heads and summer Shield Deckers I will mix them up and we'll play and then we log in like both of us have like I'll settle both because at some point should move on something this is a museum of toys bring her to my office she'll love it yeah it's it's the most and for adults it's great I think as parents wheel takers are roles less seriously yeah he played as well and I

wish that was a part of the whole process right like if I go back to school I'm like maybe it didn't have to be so serious yeah it didn't matter if I got like lesser marks in third standards I was telling someone yesterday that then standard marks are the most useless ones useless progress right um and I was like very I got wood marks only in 10 standards the only time I got good marks was the

10th so that's why he's retained his eyes okay but now I'm gonna ask you the LEGO Group believes that the five Super skills that every child needs are physical skills social skills emotional cognitive and creative skills what are the top five flexible skills that come to your mind that you feel all kids should learn about yeah I think uh you know it basically sums up to uh what we've been talking about you know and um I don't know if it is three or five

or seven but I just believe that the most important skills and I think uh everybody spoke to it you know and I realized it with my own child and at my workplace are the ones where which equip uh children with the social and the emotional skills you know so and I'll say this with an example you know when when it comes to my son uh I I took a long time to decide on which school should he go to because I had a very set

pattern of what school should look like because I had been raised in very Traditional School like all of us but when I put him in the school and I'm very happy with the school that he goes to I realized that you know it was very different very very different from what I could have imagined in the school uh but what I have happily done along with his teachers you know is that I'm raising a child who's seeming to be

emotionally equipped you know and and very uh socially aware and that's that's where I place all the emphasis so while he goes to play he came back uh you know recently from a football match and he said we won and he was really happy because his team had scored four goals and he had scored one and then I said who scored the other three and he said there is uh this girl in the football team and I said oh my God like he's

learned the concept of dni Without Really teaching me that you know and I respected that and then uh very recently again uh there was a dance that was happening in school and we went to school and uh you know one of his teachers said that uh you know you should be really proud of your son because we asked the children to pick up one partner and there was this child who's physically disabled and uh you know it was a competition so there was

no binding to pick up this and and he spoke up to that guy and he said I want you as my partner and the teacher was really proud and I obviously as an emotional mom had tears like dancing you know where did it come from but I just feel that he's he's quite aware of what's happening around he's quite sensitive and I think those are the things that that we need to pack our children with you know okay

um no and again um you know I also feel that everything is not a one-time things right it's over it's like these bricks right you're building them one day at a time so it's all that you've done over the years that's kind of coming alive on that particular day and and of course in the future days as well um so I think you've you know the ECA recently launched their first play policy and I I want to ask you how are

Indian parents um perceiving the importance of play versus the global counterparts okay uh so I would give credit to Reggio Emilia uh Regional is a town in Italy which is where the municipality of that town set up these play schools after the second World War so when this town was destroyed during the second world war they they decided what should we rebuild first should we rebuild the church the homes or schools and that's when they

decided if we rebuild the schools first children would be busy in the schools and we can rebuild the town then and Reggio Emilia is a concept based completely on play and Reggio Emilia has a poem called the hundred languages of children and it's such a beautiful poem and it says that children have a hundred languages but we the school culture and Society steal the 99 and then we tell the child that there is only one language you know which is what we are

doing as parents so Global Community has woken up to this concept almost 25 years back and I I think because the Reggio exhibition used to go to different countries associations like ours like you have the naeyc in USA you have the ECA that's the Early Childhood Australia in Australia they worked hard to ensure that it comes to policy makers so they have gone to the government changed things in the government because

once you change things in the government it changes in the school it changes in the school the parents have to accept it India has just woken up to it and that's why I said thanks to the National Education policy which is now mandating that it should be experiential learning and play hopefully it will come sadly our country education is a concurrent subject which means every state will now you know hush-posh they'll make of the national curriculum framework and bring

their own State curriculum framework but I hope play remains but if we really want it to remain each one of us has a duty that that's what I tell everybody you have a parent sitting next to you I'm my husband refuses to sit

with me in flights because he says you will catch every parent and you will start talking to them because they would have all bought a screen you know to keep the child busy and I carry with me blocks

and toys in my bag because I know there will be a parent on my flight who will have a screen so I give those to the child and I tell the parent now look how she's interested why do you carry that screen so it's important that parents let's not look at them as villains it's time we understood that it's a community takes a village to raise a child right and parents are the sarpanch of that Village so if you are not able to

convince the sarpanch forget about any change happening and I think that's why your group Lego everybody is doing this work to coming together and I'm sure there's going to be change in India um let's hope you've launched such a fabulous initiative with small hands big dreams right here today and build such a brilliant playground which is powered by the LEGO Group what was the thought

process like where did this whole campaign thought come from small hands victims yeah I think swathi answers that question partly uh because I do feel that you know when it comes to Children um like I said they they naturally uh play you know it's it's a natural form of expression where you can see everything coming out they're laughing they're crying they're screaming and and that's how they are they know that's their superpower but when it comes to

parents you know uh it's basically about saying what will happen in that one hour of play you know is it going to be a trade-off between how much he or she will study and how much he or she will play and and that's where we sort of take it off we do not we do not realize that you know when children play if we were to listen to what they are saying they're basically saying let's do it you

know let's do it together let's do it differently um let's do it in another way so it's basically teaching them to be resilient because they are realizing that that there's no right way of or one way of doing it there are multiple ways of doing it you know so it's parking creativity it is collaboration you know all of which they will actually need the world needs a lot of right um and and we are probably probably you

know as stakeholders standing as adults I'm saying you know standing in the way between children and play so we do want to uh bring a community of parents you know a community of adults who can in turn raise another community of adults you know and so on and so forth as we move forward that never stops playing you know so that's the generation that we want to sort of raise because like uh you know George Shaw said uh it is we don't grow

old because we stop playing we uh you know we just stop playing and that's why we sort of move on so so that's that's where uh the whole idea of small hands Big Dreams came up and we said this is what is going to bring together the key stakeholders in terms of play and we really want to inspire uh all of the adults to come and we we say it's it's adults welcome I like that and also you've learned

something which is called the play pledge yeah why do you want us as parents to pledge and why what was the thought behind the play pledge you know like you said when you uh you're all role modeling to the children uh and you know when we basically take that pledge it is about being accountable right it is about saying that I have taken the pledge and now the children are watching you you know uh are you really

committing to those hours of play are you really letting yourself be and once you get to that you will really understand that joyful Focus that comes in when you are playing you know I find it like meditation absolutely when you're just building you know uh and and that's that's how uh we want to start and then children will like pop say uh children have did the best yeah yeah that's why that's why I think we should

never forget yeah that's something we'll never forget um we're talking of all of this but what happens like what happens if we fail at playing or what happens if our kids fail at playing what happens what are the consequences of this inability the consequences can be dire um of absence of play things it's one of my favorite questions um see what play does is it helps us learn to communicate and engage right not just with the other but also with

ourselves so that intra personal play when we start building a voice and start talking about who I am what I'm doing how I can solve this problem and also learning to engage with another person so this form of communication both with on the inside and outside is extremely important when you don't build a healthy voice a healthy dialogue with yourself and a way to actually be able to connect with another person I mean it the consequences can be

significant um there is research on a lot of uh you know in criminal studies and uh you know neurobiological research psychological research where they have found that a lot of these uh people had significant absence of play in their childhood um you know missing toys missing parents missing um significant others to engage with them and uh so absence of play can be um harmful can be very very damaging

um and so it's it's important that we understand what exactly play is doing here is it is helping us create a voice social animals you know human beings are social animals we're thinking animals play helps us learn how to think how do we learn how to say what is thinking it's self-talk we're talking to ourselves we're thinking about something right now what are you doing a thought is self-talk and play helps that um helping us communicate with each

other and so um it's absolutely it's crucial that we give children and adults an opportunity to play and learn how to think and and social and socialize in fact Mansi when we launched that play policy we appealed to doctors because the um the Indian association of Pediatricians is a joint partner in that we appeal to dog doctors to to prescribe play I love that yeah that when they come to you for anything on your medical pad in your scrawly

handwriting please prescribe at least minimum one hour play if all doctors do that parents would really take this seriously absolutely foreign but can cause anxiety depression dementia we're prescribing it actually um in the in the geriatric population also um so that they can create a little bit

more stimulus and neural activity in their brain and and benefit from it right I'm going to ask all of you of this question and anyone can choose to answer it if play benefits or otherwise play alone and play together how how different is because usually parents would say I'm busy you go play is that okay 99 of the time as well that's okay there are stages in play you start with the

solitary play stage then you move on to the group play stage but if my child is six and above they want cooperative play right and they will seek out People Partners to play with so if a parent is all if the child has come looking to you to partner in play and at that time you say no I'm busy right now then if it happens multiple times it is going to damage the child emotionally so it is

very important that there should be enough opportunities for children especially when they seek you out of course you can have your boundaries uh that you know when I'm on the phone or when I'm doing work I will not be able to play with you but say you're watching television and the child comes to you you can't say this news is very important no stop hold that activity and play with your child because now your child it's like as an adult if I seek

you out and you always rebuff me I am going to be hurt my self-esteem is going to be hurt so it's very important that no you cannot always say no to your child that I can't play with you I think it's important to build enough time where you can play by yourself as a kid even like because it's as important to have social but also to be able to find self-sufficient me time so I was that kid who would not

share his Legos for instance but he clearly had bags every single relative from the states because that time wasn't available in dead like not shaped my friends but I'd want to go out and play other stuff right so you've got to have stuff to go socially like this but stuff but you have to have things that you can just do by yourself um we actually like um pushed I mean Sun through younger but we push our kids to do that like can you

find things to play by yourself which doesn't require you know intervention or even like edition of another person but there are many things you should do we should actually make yeah feel like I think there should be a balance you shouldn't become an either or yeah yeah yeah you can't draw lines yeah I just want to pitch in here just little bit later on it's important to also understand the Chinese Personality yeah um there are some children who actually

do Blossom more playing by themselves and then if you insist and push them yeah you should social situations which I find so many parents yeah doing out of honest intention or they should be more social they should learn this and they so um that happens but I think that damages children more and of course if a child likes to you know play a sport or team sport or collaborative play Then create more opportunities for that because then if you're going to insist

give them um something to do by themselves then that's not play for them anymore right um bhavna asking you this uh kids learning through play is how you know we're all built to learn we've all done that um give us some examples of how children ideate and learn through building Lego bricks yeah so you know um there's a very uh

there's a very nice anecdote that one of the parents shared with us and she said uh do you know what my son

says Lego means and I said no and she said it means let go and that's not what it has originated from but I love the analogy because I said why did he say it's let go she said because he keeps building building and building and then finally you know it just comes crashing down and then he doesn't know what to do and then he's not attached to what he had built anymore and he says okay that

gives me an opportunity to build something else again honestly when I build something I'm very nervous about it coming down after a while and then I wonder what happens if I've got to step wrong but children are designed differently you know right so uh so I I do feel that that entire spark around uh you know letting go uh the entire thing of being resilient and after saying that this was one problem that I sought and

let me just build it again I think that entire piece of saying that okay if this set of bricks was meant to be a house and now I can maybe build a castle out of it you know that that entire thing of imagining something this is a set of bricks that is sitting in front of us and you know if you put five children around they will have five different things in their head to what they can

come out with you know depending on what is it that their passion points are right so I think that entire thing of creativity that entire thing of what is it that they can imagine out of this and then allowing themselves to build go wrong you know not be attached to results understanding that they haven't failed if it's not built a certain way but there was a different way of Designing it from what is printed on the

box you know right so those are the things I think yeah sure you've always almost led me to my concluding question which is you know as parents we're buying the next toy even before our children are exhausted playtime with the first one um and obviously I hear a lot of parents saying how do we build that drive that resilience that creativity um get them to play and build on you know whether using the same Lego bricks

different different things because they're just growing up in abundance so how are you guys addressing that piece in terms of making sure that they're building on and it's a new toy each time so you know there is Froble I'm very fond of Froble uh he had three ways of using blocks he said forms of life forms of beauty and forms of knowledge so the same blocks he gives the children and say build something which are forms of life which means

things that you see around you so you are now observing and you're making things like a door a couch a table Etc now we give them the same blocks and says now forms of beauty something abstract something that you have created and then he uses the same blocks and says now forms of knowledge tell me what shapes you can see what colors what size can you do addition with it can you put two and two together and that's exactly

an experiment which we did in our classrooms with six year olds we told them if we give you these Lego blocks what should the three-year-olds do with it so they were planning for them and you'd be surprised they said

Dominos so which means if I have a block that has three on it the the person has to put another three then they said addition then they said painting you know block printing so you get different prints so

look at that so they found various ways to use the blocks one of them even said I will make a structure photograph it and then others have to copy it so you're looking at how each because that's also it requires a lot of attention to detail so it's very important that we have the wealth of Knowledge from all these people in the 1800s if you even start using it now with your toys at home forms of life

forms of beauty forms of knowledge you've covered it all right [Laughter] um but I look at Players very simple thing of the fact that if you make it a because it's not something you add into your life that is a constant part [Music] um that's all you need to do it could be as an adult could be as a parent could be as a kid so then you do off like okay you have the school work but maybe I'll

find some time to do this yeah or I have work maybe I'll find some time like some of the best times we've had and and even before I had a kid right like remove um some huge um Star Wars fan so we have this huge uh the the Millennium Falcon statistics but eight hours to build with one of the first projects that me and my wife Puja did we spent eight hours and we spent time building that is the I mean we

still have that at home it's it's um and now our daughter plays with it I'm lucky you can't move the pieces out I don't know where this goes um but you've got to make it a part of your day-to-day yeah um in different ways yeah and not feel like you're you know you're adding it in when you maybe have time yeah it is part of what it helps build that balance no absolutely you know I remember my daughter was

fascinated with Harry Potter she's not I think fascinated she's obsessed Beyond a limit and I got the Lego Harry Potter December you know in during Christmas holidays and I said this is our project because we both love building and I said we're gonna maybe we're not gonna do all of it in one go but bit by bit every day and every morning we'd actually wake up and he's like I would look it up and for a change she saw a different

doctor of her mom who's saying okay bath breakfast brush can wait let's start let's do this right and I think that was just so I think that was so liberating that we're not interested and moms can also play right they're just not uh instruction manual so I really love that for us with every toy reflect and redo is a very big um value and so Lego is a very big part of our uh interactions and the way we

engage with each other we don't just use it to build we use it as currency we use it as rewards we use it as you know just tokens for various things um and every time we build something we have more fun undoing it and redoing it so redo is a really big one because then every time we're redoing the kids are coming up with different things except once my son got so bored of doing the same thing over and over again using

the same blocks for different things over and over again that he actually made a craft pen holder he stuck them together he said now I'm now you can ask me to redo this one but I thought that was incredible yeah that was

incredible um and so um yeah I mean I think just the ability to be able it gives us the opportunity to make something and undo it I think that for us can I add something here uh one of the most

important things that I like about Lego people talk about fine motor development there is a sense in US called the interoceptive sense which is about Force so when you put a Lego brick onto another one you really have to be careful about the amount of force you are using and that amount of force which is you're training your fingers on is going to help you in writing it's going to help you as a surgeon when you hold

instruments it's going to help you in any profession I'm a chef I'll hold something I'll hold implements all my life so it is things like this when we say play you know people just don't understand that play is and that was a compliment that a surgeon gave us his child was in our school and he says my trainee surgeons are not able to hold implements they don't have the tripod grip which you are training the little

ones on so that is what the power of plays and also what it becomes right um the other day and so we give our daughter her iPad on weekends and she has been written oftentimes she wants to play rather than watch but I was fascinated to see what she was watching is that um some kids built an entire piece and has the characters and is making the voices and telling a story she's watching that say Papa can we make this

I'm like I'm thinking about one second she's learning how to play and build but she's also now finding a way to take that as something she's imagining and tell a story yeah which we all did as kids and we all had the name we make voices and do that but now they're saying now this is I think this is where the world's meat like you know we spoke about screening she spoke about this but she's saying why can't I and she's like

can I start a YouTube channel I said not yet that's where I draw the line not yet I used to have that yes I would Place Lego bricks or pens or anything on the Styles and those who used to be my students so yeah but that's true you know role playing is a very important part absolutely our bricks as well and and typically what happens is when you said you know what do we do with the box I realized when I

got the first box and you know um I was in a rush to sort of build it all together and and when it was not getting done I was there was also moments of frustration you know why is it not just getting done because I don't have time tomorrow to be doing this but when I saw my son play or when I see kids play now with that I see that they really play you know they just don't build so what

they typically would do is they would maybe build a train today and then just like Warren said keep playing with the train thinking of the train and coming to a station and so on and so forth and build the bus in the set maybe a month later yeah you know so so I think uh what happens with them is uh we are building to complete finish yeah you know the tasks and they are building to play you know which is where the concept

of building unbuilding like shitambra said and uh like once said the whole concept of role playing you know all of that comes together and that is what play is complete yeah Monty I think that's your answer parents want the

product the end product children want the process yeah that's why yeah and and you know Strangely I feel that process gets interrupted after grade seven I mean after the child is seven eight nine yes the play just drops it does Why by

eight Buzz grade three I feel yeah yeah I feel like why why can that play sort of not continue exactly into the lives of our teenagers into the library why not have a block extracurriculars extracurricular imagine I want all of you all to be uh evangelists of others taking the pledge you know given that we've we've spoken about uh the importance of play today and each one of you all are evangelists in those sense

so uh can we all like raise our hands and say we're gonna be evangelists and we're all going to take the play pledge and say that we're gonna spread the word on yes and we're going to build the HQ yes IQ HQ and a i h i lovely we need a PQ let's play question yeah which are dice also need yeah we

all need it I'm so happy that each one of you could make it here today and facilitate this process be part of this round table on play powered by the LEGO Group by 2015 the jobs we know today may not even exist who would have thought a drone pilot or a content creator could actually be a job 30 years ago like historian and one of my favorite authors you are Noah Harari said the only skills we need in the 21st century will be to

learn and learn adapt and now reflect and redo like Dr shwetamrah said through play let your children hone their skills to think create and work together toys come labeled with age groups but there is no one one toy that comes starting with an age group but no ending age group and that Sparks creativity problem solving boundless imagination communication skills and confidence with play and that's the Lego bricks for you guys that's it and you have all grown up

playing with these Lego bricks so let these small hands build their Big Dreams this year while learning through play I want to thank each one of you for taking out time today and being part of this round table and of course helping our discussion and helping us Empower parents to prioritize play for our kids so they grow up to be successful people of tomorrow thank you so much