

For the Joy of it!
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Some things in life you do for the pure joy of it. There was a time when my daughter would get up before 6AM in order to run with me before I went to work. She still runs, and sometimes with me, but the timing is a bit different now and I can't keep up with her.

She has always been pretty determined in some things, but I like to think it wasn't so much exercise that was her reason for getting up at 5:30 A.M. as it was love for her Daddy. I know that was motivation for me. I don't like getting up that early either, but there was joy in running with her and in seeing the stars and full moon in the early morning hours when the deer have snuck back into the woods after nibbling flowers from our lawn.

Only 20% of Georgians exercise regularly and our children's academic scores lag behind. We usually think that is linked to obesity and diabetes that are affecting more and more people and at younger and younger ages. But the deeper problem that this signifies to me is loss of joy.

There are some things in life you do because you have to, like taking out the trash, changing the oil in the car, replacing the tires, cleaning out the gutters, paying the bills, balancing your checkbook, attending another meeting.

And there are some things you do, or ought to, because they are good for you, like brushing your teeth, taking your vitamins, drinking plenty of water and getting regular exercise.

In the gradually occurring overwork cycle, the more there is to do of things I don't really enjoy, the more likely it is I will make more time to do them by foregoing the things that I do enjoy. What's wrong with this picture?

I asked my daughter recently if she remembered when I used to lay down on the floor with the kids when they were little and they would run and put their hands on my knees and flip over me thrown high into the air. And she did. And there were a lot of long walks through the country, visiting farms and riding horses, playing softball, skiing, roller skating, bowling, riding bicycles, tennis, hiking and climbing trees. (Have you climbed a tree in the last year?) I doubt I would have done many of those things if it hadn't been for her and her brother, or at least not as often. The exercise was good, but the joy of being with them was better.

Life is joy, or at least it ought to be, and the things that bring us joy tend to help us keep fit and to learn more easily. They are *good* for us! There is no need to make them a task. Doing that only builds into them the desire to quit in order to be free of something I don't want to do...like a *task*.

For many years I had a cartoon of Calvin and Hobbes on the wall of my office that showed the father sitting alone wistfully day-dreaming, "I wish my father had spent more time with me when I was a kid." And then in the next frame his rambunctious kid comes into the room asking dad to come out and play! Without skipping a beat, Dad says "Well, it's time to get to the office!"

Did you know that if young infants don't crawl and walk enough it affects the development of their brains? Movement is essential for full neurological growth. The mind and body and soul are fully inter-related. It's the way we're made. And it's all held

together by joy. Joy is what happens when the child in a man responds to the call of his child to come out and play. But it may be buried under a lot of worries and ought-tos and have-tos and wish-I-hads, so you don't notice it at first.

So, next time this opportunity occurs, give it a second thought. Just think of it like getting up early in the morning when you don't want to, but after you go out and play, the joy of seeing the delight in your child's face will have more of a healing effect on you than Prozac. And the sense of belovedness this engenders will do far more in teaching a child about compassion and inviting obedience and creativity and academic success, than an army of professionals and a truckload of lectures.