WORLDWIDE DAY OF PLAY by Kaitlin Enneking

One day a year, the children’s television network, Nickelodeon, shuts down all programming, turning their channels dark. The network does this in an effort to get kids to connect with each other and their families through activities of play instead of slumping in front of the television. This “Worldwide Day of Play” started as an event to raise awareness and prevent childhood obesity, but new research suggests that kids and adults get more out of the Day of Play than just a pound or two lost from play activity.

For children, the experience of playing affects the brain by further developing the areas required for control, emotional management, and problem solving.

For adults, play helps maintain social well-being and memory, in addition to keeping cognitive (thinking) skills sharp.

This year on September 20, take a break from work or from the television and head outside. Check your local government’s website to see if there is an endorsed Worldwide Day of Play event in your community, or simply head to the neighborhood park. Whatever you decide to do, you and your family can all experience the benefits of play for a day. And who knows? Maybe it will affect your future daily routine, too.

SMART FACTS

1 IN 3 Number of children that are overweight or obese in America.

7.5 HOURS Average time spent daily by children ages 8 to 18 using media (TV, computers, phones).

60 MINUTES Number of minutes of physical activity a child needs each day.

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Tell us if this sounds familiar. You leave work 15 minutes later than you planned and you rush to pick the kids up from day care before it closes. You head into the evening with a personal list of to-dos, but you only get to that list after addressing things like helping with homework, walking and feeding pets, making dinner and cleaning up, or putting everyone to bed. At this point you’re probably looking at the clock thinking, “Where did the time go?”

A common issue for many working parents is that there simply isn’t enough time in the day to not only manage their family’s needs, but also address their own personal needs. Oftentimes 20-30 minutes of physical activity gets pushed aside for a math quiz study session or wet dog catastrophe. And after so many nights of the same, it eventually becomes next to impossible to incorporate physical activity into our daily schedule.

So how do you start thinking about physical activity differently? The first step is realizing that it isn’t something we HAVE to do, but something we GET to do. We have to reframe our minds around what it means to be physically active.

Being physically active doesn’t mean you have to run, bike, or swim for miles. Chasing your kids around or working in the yard are also forms of activity. Physical activity can be measured by the number of minutes you are not sitting down or standing still. That means if you have an extra five minutes to walk outside, go up and down the stairs, or do sit-ups, you should take advantage!

Once you begin to consciously think about incorporating physical activity into your daily life, you can measure your progress in ways other than tallying minutes. Try asking yourself the same series of questions over a period of time to measure progress:

- How do I feel?
- Am I sleeping better or do I have more energy?
- Am I happier?
- Do I find myself making better food choices because I care about my health?
- Am I more confident in myself?

If your answers are positive, then you are making progress in your physical activity and overall health.

While a good sweat is cleansing for your system and feels refreshing, the real reason we need more movement in our lives is to maintain happiness, build confidence, and create overall good health. If we can create more awareness in our lives about when we move and how it makes us feel, it will become much easier to take steps toward a healthier lifestyle.

**STAY CONNECTED**

Have a few minutes to squeeze in some extra physical activity at home? Check out this link for some easy cardio and strengthening at-home exercises: acefitness.org/acefit/fitness-programs-article/2863/Top-25-At-Home-Exercises/
If you’ve ever been bitten by the travel bug, you might start planning your next adventure while it’s still months away. Since you’ll have plenty of time for planning ahead, don’t forget to think about ways to stay physically active while you’re on the road. Oftentimes you get the chance to try something new that you can’t do at home! Here are some of the best ways to make your next vacation an active one.

- **Hit the water.** The possibilities for physical activity in the water are endless. You could rent a kayak or canoe and explore by water, or try your hand at surfing, water skiing, or paddle-boarding.

- **Skip the rental car for a day.** Many towns offer bicycle rentals where you and the family can ride around for the day. Biking provides a unique perspective that you won’t get from a car, all while increasing your heart rate and burning calories!

- **Go for a hike.** Many popular vacation spots have breathtaking scenery. Take advantage of the vistas by going for a hike. Depending on where you are, you may see trees, flowers, and birds that aren’t native to your hometown. Even locations without mountains or woods will have a network of state parks that may be close enough for a day trip.

- **Don’t let the snow stop you.** Traveling to snowy locations might not seem like the best setup for an active vacation, but unleash your inner child and go sledding, skiing, or snow shoeing. If you aren’t near hills, you can build a snow fort and have a snowball fight! The goal is to have fun and get moving.

Being creative about the way you incorporate physical activity into your vacation can help you build lasting memories with family and friends. When that travel bug bites, you’ve got some ideas to get your planning started. Happy travels!
CANTALOUPE

During the hot summer months, there is nothing quite as refreshing as biting into a piece of perfectly ripe melon. The delicious sweetness of cantaloupe, along with its thirst-quenching qualities, makes it a summer favorite. It is also a great source of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and antioxidants. While you can find cantaloupes at all times of the year, they are at their best during the summer.

How to Select
A ripe cantaloupe will be richly colored with an orange blush. It will feel heavier than you would expect given its size, and will also give a little if you press the stem end with your thumb. One of the best indicators of ripeness is its smell—search for a sweet, light fragrance.

How to Store
If you decide to buy an unripe cantaloupe, you may leave the melon at room temperature for a couple of days. Once ripe or cut, the melon should be refrigerated and consumed within three to four days.

How to Prepare
Be sure to wash your hands and all utensils before cutting the cantaloupe. It is recommended that the whole melon be rinsed and the rind scrubbed just before it is cut to remove any bacterial contamination. Use a clean cutting surface to cut off the stem end, and then put the melon cut-side down and cut it in half. Next, scoop out the seeds and cut off the rind. You may cut the slices into any size desired. Do not leave cut cantaloupe out at room temperature for more than two hours.

CANTALOUPE MELON SORBET

Ingredients
1 cup water
1 cup sugar
4 cups cantaloupe- cubed and chilled
Juice of 1 small lemon

Directions
1. Make a simple syrup by placing the water and sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring to completely dissolve the sugar. Remove from heat, place in an airtight container, and refrigerate until cold.
2. Place chilled cantaloupe cubes, cold simple syrup, and lemon juice in a blender. Puree until very smooth.
3. Freeze in an ice cream maker according to manufacturer’s directions.
4. When thick and frozen, scoop into a container and freeze until firm.
5. Let sit out for 5 minutes before scooping. Makes 6 servings.