

ADVANCED PRAISE FOR PLAYFUL REBELLION: Maximize Workplace Success Through The Power of Play

“As a corporate facilitator, I interact frequently with people who tragically believe the time in their life for play is long over. Work can be playful, people! If you don’t want to get to the end of your life with regrets that you should have laughed more, played more, connected more joyfully with the people you love, pick up this book. Gary Ware gives you the blueprint for your own Playful Rebellion.”

**- Pam Victor, Head of Happiness, Happier Valley Comedy
Author of Improvisation at the Speed of Life: The TJ and Dave Book**

“Playful Rebellion clearly explains how anyone can live a more creative and expansive life by being more playful, particularly at work. I learned so much from the prompts, assessments, and resources that Gary shares, and I feel powered up!”

**- Amy Lisewski, CEO & Co-Artistic Director, Finest City Improv Author of
Relax, We’re All Just Making This Stuff Up!: Using the tools of
improvisation to cultivate more courage and joy in your life**

“Gary Ware’s Playful Rebellion is a must-read for anyone who wants to recapture the joy of play in their adult life. Ware offers a wealth of insights and practical advice on how to make time for play, even when life is hectic and responsibilities are piling up. With humor and wisdom, Ware shows how play can help us cope with stress, connect with others and find meaning in our work. This is a book that will make you laugh, think and change the way you look at play.”

**-Stephanie Liu, CEO of Captivate on Command, Co-Author of Ultimate
Guide to Social Media Marketing**

As someone who studies work-life balance and productivity, Playful Rebellion provides an essential puzzle piece in solving the success equation. While it might at time seem counter-intuitive, play is absolutely needed to get more done! Gary eloquently explains how to do this in the most fun and efficient way, with steps on how to play that don’t sacrifice success in the workplace.

**-Apryl Schlueter, Author of Finding Success in Balance:
My Journey to The Cheerful Mind**

In a world of hyper-curated personal brands and corporate experts, it’s liberating to read a book so down-to-earth from someone who deeply understands what they’re talking about. Playful Rebellion is fun, inspiring, and practical because Gary embodies those very same things. It reads like a wise friend sitting across from you. One hand is sipping a cup of coffee. The other is handing you a lightsaber inviting you to the adventure your kid-self used to dream of.

**- CJ Casciotta, Author of Get Weird and The Forgotten
Art of Being Ordinary**

**MAXIMIZE
WORKPLACE
SUCCESS**

**PLAYFUL
REBELLION**

**THROUGH THE
POWER OF PLAY**

GARY WARE

Illustrations by Sarah Moyle

Playful Rebellion: Maximize Workplace Success Through
The Power of Play
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***To Garrett, Cameron, Aaliyah, Adalyn,
Darlan, Sebastian, and Jonathan.***

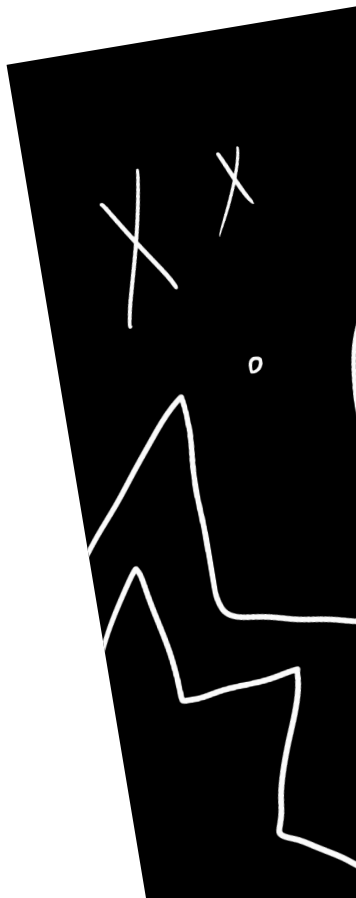
***Thank you for inspiring me to play and
be playful. May you never lose
that childlike wonder and imagination.***



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A black background with several hand-drawn white stars and dots. There are two five-pointed stars, one in the upper right and one in the middle right. There are also several small circles scattered across the background. A large white arrow on the left points towards the text, and another large white arrow at the bottom points away from it. There are also some white jagged lines at the bottom, resembling lightning bolts or abstract shapes.

DISCLAIMER

BY READING THIS BOOK AND ENGAGING
IN ITS ACTIVITIES, YOUR LIFE MAY
BECOME EXTRAORDINARY IN THE
MOST UNEXPECTED WAYS!

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for choosing *Playful Rebellion: Maximize Workplace Success through the Power of Play*.

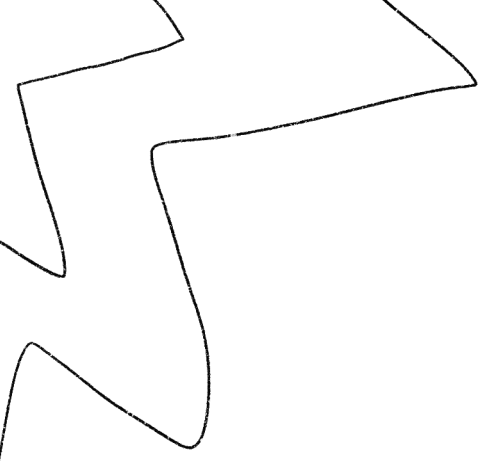
The following chapters will discuss my methods of bringing playfulness to your life and workplace. I'll tell you why bringing a sense of playfulness back into your life is essential for your health and well-being, and tell you how to do so. In this book, you'll find a step-by-step guide to unleash your inner child and bring joy back into your life by nourishing your Playful Spirit.

There are plenty of books on this subject on the market; thanks again for choosing this one! Every effort was made to ensure it is full of as much useful information as possible; please have fun!

Before we get started, I'd like to invite you to join the community.

You can register at breakthroughplay.com/rebellion.

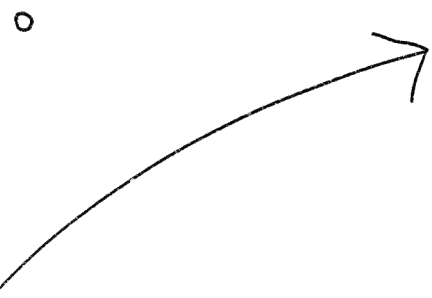
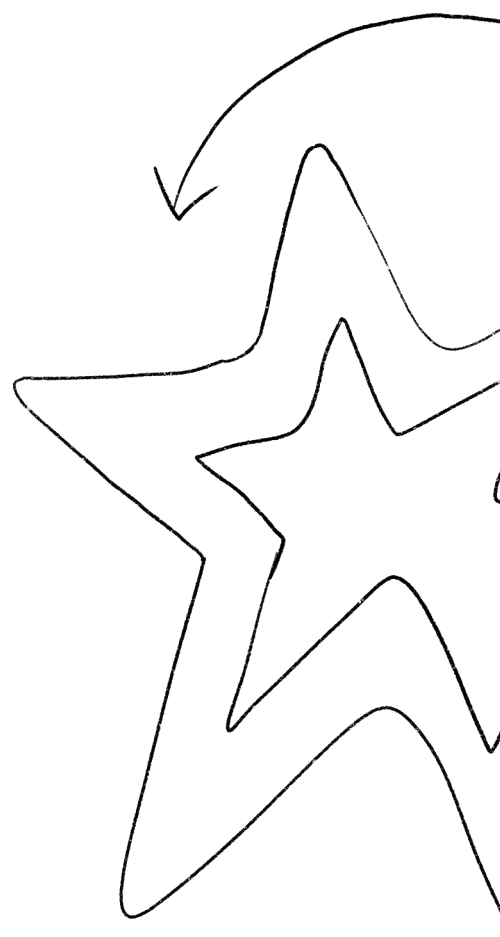
Once you are in the community you will get access to additional resources along with invitations to our various play challenges.



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WERBUNG

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CHAPTER 1:
**WHY
DON'T
WE
PLAY?**

CHAPTER 1: WHY DON'T WE PLAY?

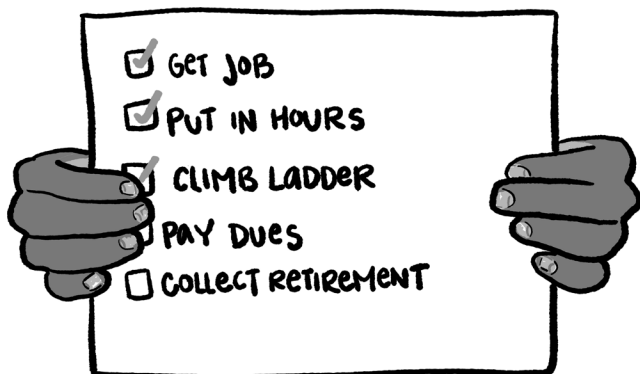


Play is the cheat code to business success, and leaders who are serious about leading need to cultivate play for themselves and their employees!

When I was a young boy, my dad gave me some advice that worked until I became an adult; he said, “Gary, you can play when your work is done.” That advice drove me from then on because I loved to play! I would race home from school every day to get my homework done. Then I would play. I would do anything and everything: playing video games, playing outside, sports. If I were playing, I was happy. That served me until I became an adult and had to go to work.

The interesting thing is, in every job that I started, I was very playful; I saw the work as play. But quickly after that, I would go from seeing the world as a playground to seeing the world as a proving ground. The work was never done. It was never time to play based on that old belief.

The Mindset



The belief that play is the opposite of work and that you can only play when all your work is complete, tricks you into seeing the world as a proving ground. Businesses now insist their employees work many hours a week and regularly prove their abilities if they want to succeed or even stay employed! Members of the workforce are expected to follow the same road to success: get a good job, move up the corporate ladder, pay your dues, put in the hours, collect your retirement.

The list is the same for everyone—check, check, check.

These corporate mandates stem from the Protestant work ethic, which exemplifies work, sacrifice, and diligence. Part of the Protestant work ethic was the belief that if we were left to our own devices, we would get into trouble, stop working, and become degenerate, so the industrial age of work was all about command, control, and compliance. The factory owners gave the orders, and the masses of faceless workers obeyed. The average workweek was six days a week and twelve hours each day. Sundays were spent in church all day. The idea of play became nearly villainized, and people were working so hard that they were falling asleep on the job, causing accidents and safety issues. Workers were also spending less money on luxuries and leisure activities, causing profits to plummet in the automotive, tourism, and other industries. After all, who had time to go anywhere or do anything fun when they spent all their time working? So, Henry Ford became the first to challenge that status quo by campaigning for the forty-hour workweek.

People thought he was crazy, but then a funny (or should I say funny?) thing started to happen. People had enough time to play! Finally, with a limit to their hours spent at work, employees had the leisure time to enjoy being away from the workplace guilt-free. They even started spending money more freely on leisure products and activities (Like Henry's cars!). These methods

worked for the type of tactical workforce that was common in Mr. Ford's era for decades. Workers were no longer dangerously exploited, and traditional motivators and deterrents like incentives, bonuses, pay reductions, and employment termination became less effective. Big businesses created a "new normal" for the workplace: a twenty-year career, climbing the corporate ladder, ending with retirement, and a pension.

What Changed?

Before the Information Age, the only people we could reach at a moment's notice were doctors, drug dealers—and Mom, of course. Now, we can contact anyone in seconds. As a result, we have a constant bombardment of communications: emails, messages, phone calls, virtual meetings, etc. All this extra media decreases the amount of leisure/playtime and increases the workload that we take on, even when we aren't conscious of it. What we also don't realize is that it's all too much. We haven't stopped to rethink and ask ourselves, "Is there a better way?"

Corporate mandates deprive people of a sense of play because it's more efficient for them. Leaders don't realize that those mandates are going to hurt the employees in the long run as they are overworked, stressed, anxious, frustrated, demoralized, and feeling trapped in what was once considered "The American Dream." Creativity is at a low, and nobody has time to play. Our work-

force, and especially the corporate workforce, have been conditioned to accept the “facts” that:

- Play is only for when the work is done.
- The opposite of work is play.
- Play is a waste of time.
- Play is only for kids.
- As adults, it's normal to forget how to play.

When in reality:

- We are wired for play.
- Everyone at their core is creative.
- The ability to see your work as play is a superpower.
- Playful leaders are more persuasive.
- The opposite of play is depression.
- Play can connect teams, unlock creativity, reduce stress, and increase productivity.

“Big Business” has decided that Play is a frivolous and pointless activity and is trying to steer our workforce down the path of the Protestant work ethic again because that's what worked before. Contrary to the constant push for risk-taking and innovation, if you make a mistake on your job, you're penalized. That's going to keep you from playing because you don't want to get fired.

Comparison and competition also keep us from playing. If you constantly feel as though you need to be better than your peers, you're not going to play. Play is risky and messy, and it's about experimentation. If you must be perfect and your livelihood depends on you being better than the "other guy," you're not going to take risks, which means you're not playing. When you're not playing, you're not being true to yourself.

The Game Is Rigged!

Henry Ford helped us transition from working twelve hours each day, six days every week, to just eight hours a day, five days per week, and everything worked out just fine! The new mindset was "If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life!" People could relax, and not worry about work so much.

Except, that never happened.

By that time, most people had already been conditioned to feel guilty if they weren't working or being productive. Humans are also naturally "wired" with a negativity bias. We see things as scarce and strive to hang on to them even when we're hurting ourselves. So, our workforce was left feeling guilty and under pressure to keep what they had, but unable to escape that trap. The playground once again became the proving ground, and employees continued to work themselves into exhaustion!

WHY DON'T WE PLAY?

Unfortunately, today's labor market isn't much different. Research shows that employees who were overworked before the global pandemic of 2020 now work even longer hours from home despite not having a daily commute. We have even more technology, are more connected than we've ever been before, but we are experiencing record amounts of loneliness, depression, and burnout: all things that are not allowing us to be the best version of ourselves we can be!

People feel it's their duty to work hard, and they feel guilty if they don't. We tend to tie our self-worth up with our productivity. If we don't put in all those extra hours, when we aren't producing for our employers, we feel like we aren't as good as the people who do. It's a mindset that's been handed down and ingrained since people started working, and if left to our own devices, we'll work ourselves right into an early grave!

The real villain of this story is our social norms, our environments. They're outdated, the way that we are working is no longer working, and the only way out is rebellion. Deep down inside, we know the best way to connect, we know how to set up an environment that is going to be conducive to the way we need to work, but we're trapped, so it's time to break out!

Now, you may ask, "Gary, why is this important? Why should we fight for this?"

My answer is simple. We've been so busy making a living that many of us have forgotten what's even more important. Making a LIFE! On average, we spend about 35% of our time working. Do we really want to spend that much time being depressed, lonely, and stressed? Our programming has become out of date, and it's time for an upgrade!



Back when our ancestors had to fight off predators and the elements, if there was a stressor coming at us, our body would produce cortisol and adrenaline to help us either fight, flee, or freeze. The blood started pumping from our brain to our extremities so that we could fight off that stressor, our heart rate increased, and our senses sharpened. Once that stressor was gone, we were able to go back to normal.

Well, the stressors we have now aren't the same stressors that we

had back then, and they don't go away! That email from the boss that's looming at the top of our inbox, that message that came in at 8:00 p.m. last night from a coworker, the growing to-do list, even that 24/7 news feed is causing us stress. And unless we rebel, those stresses are going to keep piling up as we continue to be blocked from our Playground and our Playful Spirit, as well as being the best person we can be. The sad fact is, if you were to die today from stress-related illness, your employer would fill your role by the end of the month no matter how much they cared for you. But your friends and family are going to miss you forever. To them, you can't be replaced; you're invaluable and unique, and no amount of work can give them back the joy, love, and fulfillment you bring into their life!

My Story

I was always the kid that was the super goofy class clown. One of my favorite holidays growing up was April Fool's Day because I would get up early that morning and booby-trap the whole house. My sister always hated it, but I had so much fun! And that didn't stop at home. In school, I was always the one cracking jokes. I didn't do it to be malicious or rude, joking was just how I connected with people. Observing this way of relating to others and wanting to help me be successful life, my dad would tell me, "Gary, there's a time for goofing off, and there is a time for work and focus. When you're at school, you need to focus; you can play

when the work is done.” Growing up as a black man in the late 60s and 70s, Dad didn’t always have the same opportunities as I had. He knew that education was important and wanted me to get the best one possible.

I remember in second or third grade, the teacher had us do some sort of assignment where we had to sit in our seats and be still to write. Now, to a kid with ADHD, sitting still is very challenging. I somehow convinced my classmates that it would be best to work together, so instead of sitting still and working solo, we started to collaborate.

Well, the teacher did not like that at all and thought I was being disrespectful and defiant. She called my parents, (my dad specifically) and I knew when I got home, I was going to “get it.” Of course, when my parents came home, I ended up in hot water, which became an ongoing situation! That was one of many instances where I was “rebellious” against what I thought we should do simply because that behavior was more natural to me. That’s when I began to understand that sometimes play would get me in trouble. What I didn’t know until years later is that play can be a great motivator in a structured situation to do the tedious work!

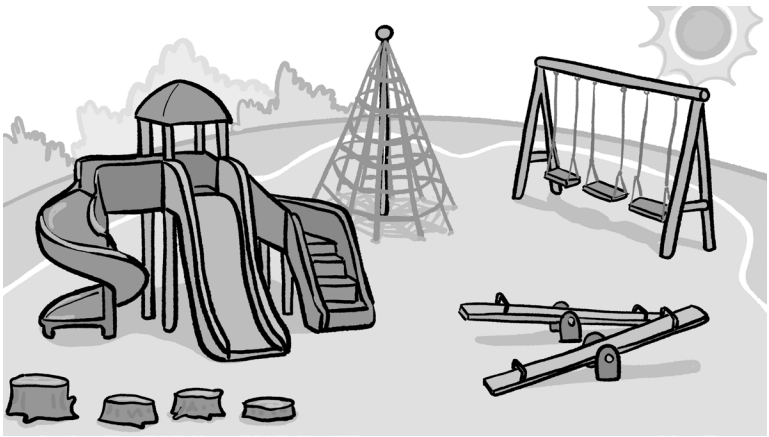
I wasn’t officially diagnosed with ADHD until my mid-twenties when it also came to light that I was dyslexic. In the 80s, especially early in the decade, diagnoses like ADHD weren’t as

mainstream as they are now, and people didn't understand how to deal with them. Most people at that time would tell me, "Hey, sit still." Even my mom would say, "Hey, Gary, sit down, do your homework."

Neither of my parents went to college, and they wanted their kids to be successful. So, they instilled hard work and discipline, but they weren't tyrants. My parents were some of the most liberal, easygoing parents a kid could have. As a matter of fact, all my friends wanted to come and hang out at our house! But when it came to doing your work in school, that was number one. And you'd better not goof off! I think most people growing up in my generation heard the same from their parents. And because I loved to play, that was good motivation.

Throughout college and early into my career, at any new job after I graduated, that playful kid in me would always start out. I always saw the situation as a playground of opportunities. I jumped in with that curiosity, optimism, and excitement to be doing the work. But over time, my dad's voice would echo through my head, "Gary, you can only play when the work is done."

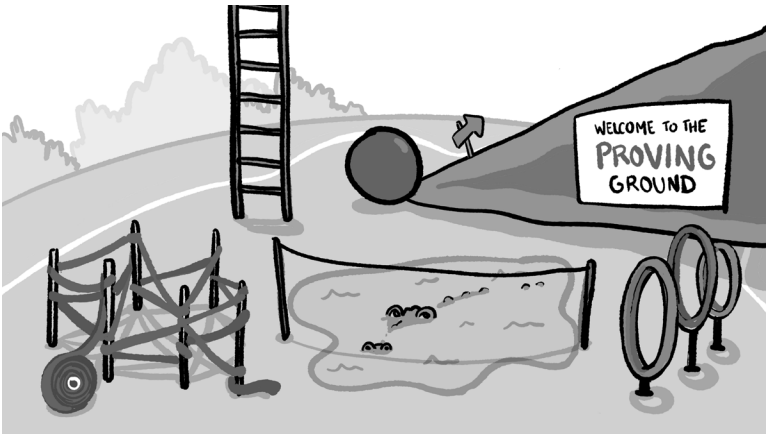
My lens shifted from seeing the world as a playground of possibilities to seeing it as a proving ground. I was proving to myself that I was worthy, that I was good enough. I was also trying to prove to the people I was working for that I was good enough,



that I should be promoted and valued. And while I feel like that did help me in my career, I don't think it's the most effective way of working.

One of the good friends I met in college, Steven Alcala, worked with me at a cable company in Los Angeles. We had the most remedial job: digitizing commercials to be played on the air; it was very tedious. Steven and I were extremely playful and goofed around a lot; however, we got our work done! We were super-efficient, even though all the other departments considered us the goof-offs of the company. I think that made those of us in our workgroup a lot closer than many others at the company were, too.

WHY DON'T WE PLAY?



As I moved up in my career, I found myself at a digital marketing agency. I was employee number twenty-three, and by the time I left about five years later, I was a senior director, and there were over two hundred employees worldwide; we grew fast! In the beginning, as employee number twenty-three, it started as play. We worked really hard with long hours; it was a very taxing job, but some of the things that we did were so much fun. Then, as the company grew, they said we needed to grow up too.

Fun had always been one of our company values, but as we grew into a more mature agency, leadership changed their value statement. I remember like it was yesterday; we had this big ceremony where they unveiled these new values. They were posted with these inspirational pictures all over the office. There came a day

when they finally they took the “fun” value down and replaced it with things like “excellence.” I didn’t realize it was happening then, but that was when we started seeing the world as a proving ground. We still worked just as hard, but the burnout came faster.

That was one of the first times when I started to feel broken because I was still working just as hard, but I was tired all the time. The “Fun” was gone, but I just thought that was part of the job, and I started to see my work as my identity. I was trying to prove that I was worthy of my work. I wouldn’t take vacations and would work long hours.

It wouldn’t be until eight years later that I managed to connect with some of my mentors, one of which recommended that I take an improv class. When I first stepped foot into that improv class, the catalyst of play awoke and ignited my inner child. I got a taste of something that I had long forgotten—and I wanted more of it! The class was on a Monday, which were usually a super busy day at the agency handling reports and client demands, so I almost talked myself out of going... But I went anyway. There were fifteen other people there that were just like you and me, regular people. What ended up happening (the real magic!) was that I immersed myself in what I was doing for two hours.

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I was totally present, playing these silly games designed to help people step on a stage and think on their feet. The class included collaboration and many other things. But I wasn't thinking of any of that. I wasn't thinking about the fact that I was there to get better at public speaking. I was laughing! I was playing, and we were all invested because it was fun.

Two hours went by like that. I was in a state of flow. I remember stepping out of that theater with fifteen brand-new friends, people that I didn't even know before then. We were strangers, but we learned how to listen better and communicate openly because we had this immersive experience where we could be vulnerable and make mistakes. We naturally got closer, and that was the magical part.

The Tuesday after that class was the best Tuesday I had had in a

long time. The clients were still there, the work was still there, and there was still a lot of stuff I had to deal with, but I saw it differently for some reason. That following Sunday, when most people dread Monday because they have to go back to work, I was excited. “I get to do improv! I get to play!” That became my new form of Play and my new mantra. From there, I introduced that sense of fun to my team and coworkers because I instinctively saw the benefits and the changes in myself.

That’s how I started on this journey. That is where I learned to Playfully Rebel.

In all honesty, my rediscovery of Play came out of desperation. I thought my job was to move up the ranks at a digital marketing agency and eventually own an agency. That opportunity did come. I joined an agency as a partner, and I thought, “We’re gonna change the world; we’re going to change the way that agencies run!” In the beginning, it was very playful, but then I started seeing that proving ground stress again. I was trying to get that work/life harmony where the work allowed me to do things that brought me joy.

This was also around the time when my son was born. When I was growing up, my dad worked a lot, and I didn’t become close to him until I was a lot older. So, when my son Garrett was born, I pledged that “I will be there, and I want to be part of his life.”

At the same time, I was taking people on Adventure/Play retreats. For my birthday one year, my close friend, Amy Angelilli, and I led this retreat in Nicaragua for six or seven of us. We were doing improv-related activities and fun stuff on the island, including a service project for a school. On the last day, I remember being on the beach, looking at the sunset, and saying to myself, “Wow, I have a good life. I’m able to do this stuff that I love, and I have a job that can support my family and me.”

I guess the universe had different plans for me because when I got back that Monday, while I was checking in with my business partner, he said he thought we should go our separate ways. He even had a buy-out check for me. Suddenly, I was unemployed. To make matters worse, two hours after that meeting, our landlord called to tell me and my wife that he had to sell our house. We had to move, my wife wasn’t working, my son was just about a year old, and I had to figure out what to do next!

That’s when I decided that I could get another job, but I would most likely be miserable. The cycle of seeing the world as a playground evolving into seeing the world as a proving ground would start all over. Thankfully, my wife gave me the support I needed by saying, “Gary, you’re getting so much joy out of these things that you’re doing. Why don’t you try to do more of that?” That’s when Breakthrough Play went from being a hobby to my primary mission in life.

The stumbling block that I kept hitting, though, was fighting the corporate mandates, the conditioning we've all been subjected to so the companies we work for can improve profits. I started doing workshops and noticed that when people were in the workshops, they would play. They had fun and engaged in the activities we did, and that was great! But guess what? After the oasis of the workshop ended, they went back to work... And because of their conditioning, the proving ground kept coming back.

Time to Rebel!



Playing isn't just beneficial because of the emotional, chemical, and creative boosts it gives; play is essential for a person's well-being. The opposite of playing isn't working, it is depression, and depression often happens when someone suffers from play deprivation. These conditions lead to more severe concerns, including

WHY DON'T WE PLAY?

burnout, illness, and stagnation.

We need to rebel. We must rebel against the status quo, rebel against our “adult” selves, and relearn how to play! My mission is to help more companies and more individuals use the power of Play to help them become the best version of themselves possible!