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## The Courage to Play and Be Silly

by Scott Stoner

*We don't stop playing because we grow old;  
we grow old because we stop playing.*

—George Bernard Shaw

Today is April Fool's Day, an excellent day to remember the importance of play and silliness in our lives and how it contributes to our wellness. In my own life, a primary indication that I am not responding with grace is when I notice that I have lost my sense of humor.

Research has long shown the importance of laughter and play in a child's overall development and well-being, and now it is showing that the same is valid for people throughout the life cycle. The study of the role of play in adult wellness is given full attention by the *American Journal of Play*, a scholarly journal that explores the importance of play in both our workplaces and in our personal lives. As a result of this kind of attention to the importance of laughter and play, Silicon Valley start-ups are now not the only companies that are equipping their break rooms with ping pong or foosball tables. More and more companies are recognizing the positive connections between fun, play, creativity, and team building, and are building those kinds of opportunities into their workplaces.

Research also tells us that, on average, children laugh many more times a day than adults. I know the truth in this because I have two young grandsons who significantly increase my daily laugh quotient every time I am with them. Through them I am reminded that I can easily grow rigid and inflexible when I forget the importance of playing and being silly.

There are many ways that grace can be manifested in our lives and in our relationships. Today let's remember the importance of playfulness and humor as two expressions of grace.

**Making It Personal:** Do playfulness, laughter, and silliness come naturally for you? What do you think about the idea that humor and play are manifestations of grace? Can you think of a time when you either witnessed or experienced such grace?