

Happiness is — having fun

By KATE GILDERDALE

A short item in a recent weekend newspaper caught my eye. It seems a professor at an American university had come, somewhat belatedly, I thought, to the conclusion that no one really knows how to have fun.

Now that this problem has been officially recognized by an expert, no doubt we can look forward to all kinds of earnest attempts to solve it.

Watch out for shelves full of books on fun, how to have it, what it is and isn't, and a list of socially acceptable fun things you can do without ruining your image.

There'll be workshop and night school courses to analyze and define what fun really means.

The trouble with this 80's style approach is that having fun is something that usually just happens. It does not require organization, team spirit, a dress for success wardrobe or a degree in high technology.

Out-of-shape, over-weight people in frayed denim and ancient sneakers can have at least as much fun as fabulously successful thin super-achievers, who appear to be organized down to the last millisecond.

Having fun, however, can be a frivolous and unproductive pastime and will probably not further your career, improve your image or increase your political clout.

There is a danger people will think you're not serious enough which may delay your rise to the top.

Of course, many may simply be unwilling to set aside their valuable time to relax and enjoy life. Even leisure time these days should consist of striving towards meaningful self-improvement.

Such admirable, if depressing, reality goals, may be all very fine when self-inflicted, but is it really fair to subject children to this brand of executive stress?

Not only are large numbers of children spending long hours in institutions (schools and day care) which is often unavoidable, but many of them are also enrolled in organized activities almost every

night of the week, and often on weekends, as well. Of course, extra-curricular activities can be most enjoyable, but some children can handle more than others. Not every child has the time to play alone or with friends. For some, the SKELVES without adults constantly jumping on them, may be unbearable. Can they relax when they're playing? Are they doing their activity in the totally approved fashion?

Above all, they need time to have silly, wonderful, unorganized fun.

Children are perfectly able to make their own rules, and who is to say these rules aren't better for them? It is true that older children constantly complain of having no fun. Many of them never had a moment in their young lives to enjoy their own amusement.

We all know life can be a serious and uncertain business. More reason then to take a little time off now and again to allow ourselves to indulge in something, however frivolous, that really enjoys, simply for the fun of it.

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