

## The Benefits of PLAY—and Playing Petanque:

Play isn't just for kids. Playing a game like Petanque is also beneficial for adults of all ages. Play can add joy, relaxation, and stimulation to life; relieve stress; supercharge learning; and connect you to others and to the world around you. Play can also make work more productive and pleasurable. Petanque can improve your health, happiness, and productivity—because play is good for us!

In our hectic, modern lives, many of us focus so heavily on work, family commitments, and the chores of life-- that we never seem to have time for pure fun and play. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, we've stopped playing. When we carve out some leisure time, we're more likely to zone out in front of the TV or computer or go to a movie or eat out-- than engage in rejuvenating play like we did as children. But just because we're adults doesn't mean we must make life all about work. We all need to play.

**Playing games like Petanque can relieve stress.** Play is fun and can trigger the release of endorphins, the body's naturally produced, feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain. The social interaction of playing with family and friends can also help ward off stress and depression.

**Playing games like Petanque can improve health** and is a great way to trick yourself into becoming more active—a habit your heart will thank you for. It is estimated that walking the dog burns 230 calories per hour, dancing burns 320, and a leisurely bike ride zaps over 420. A game of Petanque can also burn a bunch of calories in an hour.

**Playing games like Petanque can stimulate the mind, improve brain function, and boost creativity.** Young children often learn best when they are playing—and that principle especially applies to adults, as well. It is easier to learn a new task when it's fun and you're in a relaxed and playful mood. Play can also stimulate your imagination, helping you adapt and problem solve. Playing fun activities like Petanque that challenge the brain can help prevent memory problems and improve brain function. Play can fuel imagination, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

**Playing games like Petanque can improve relationships and your connection to others.** Play can foster empathy, compassion, trust, and intimacy with others. Play can improve the quality of your relationships—as well as your connections with co-workers, family members, and friends. Play helps develop and improve social skills, in the give and take of play. Just as children at play improve their verbal communication, cooperation, and teamwork-- adults also refine these skills through play. Adult play helps break down barriers, improve relationships and can heal emotional wounds. As adults, when you play together, you are engaging in the same activities that positively shape the brains of children.

**Playing games like Petanque can keep you feeling young and energetic.** In the words of George Bernard Shaw, “We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.” Playing Petanque can boost your energy and vitality and even improve your resistance to disease, helping you feel your best.

**Playing games like Petanque can help with your work.** Many companies and organizations have long recognized the link between productivity and play. Some encourage play, providing games and encouraging recess-like breaks during the workday for employees to play and let off steam.

Play can result in more work productivity and innovation, higher job satisfaction, greater workplace morale, relief from boredom, and a decrease in employees skipping work and staff turnover. It can strengthen the bond you have with your coworkers as well as improve your job performance. Success at work doesn't depend just on the amount of time you work; it depends upon the quality of your work. And the quality of your work is highly dependent on your well-being. Play helps keep adults more functional when under stress and refreshes minds and bodies.

It's tempting to think that the best way to cope with an ever-increasing workload is to have employees work longer and harder. However, without some recreation time, it's more likely the work will suffer and workers become chronically overwhelmed and burned out. Encouraging play, on the other hand, creates a more lighthearted work atmosphere that in turn encourages employees to take more creative risks. However, without some recreation time, it's more likely the work will suffer, leading to chronic feelings of being overwhelmed and burned out.

Taking the time to replenish through play is one of the best things you can do for your career. When the project you're working on hits a serious glitch, take some time out to play. Taking time for play does a lot more than take your mind off the problem. When you play, you engage the creative side of your brain and silence your “inner editor,” that psychological barrier that censors your thoughts and ideas. This can often help you see the problem in a new light and think up fresh, creative solutions.

Play is a basic human need as essential to our well-being as sleep, so when we're low on play, our minds and bodies notice. Over time, play deprivation can reveal itself in certain patterns of behavior: We might get cranky, rigid, feel stuck in a rut or feel down about life. To benefit most from the rejuvenating benefits of play, we should incorporate play into our everyday lives, not just wait for that two-week vacation every year or until retirement.