



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition
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December 23, 2009 – Life is Too Short to Miss Recess

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Recess, snow-days and Christmas vacation – there is simply something in the heart of a child that loves to play. Life is too short to miss recess. When you miss your childhood, what do you miss? I don't remember much about school, but I do remember recess. I remember playing King of the Mountain on the snow pile. I miss kickball. I remember vacations with my folks, especially one where we stayed in this run-down cabin near Yellowstone and it rained for three days, and we played hide-n-seek inside the cabin. I remember board games on snow-days. I miss dodgeball. I don't remember many gifts that my parents bought for me, but I do remember the games they played with me.

The serious business of childhood is play. When we were kids, a wasted day was a day with no play. One of my favorite pictures of my kids – an image I carry around in my heart – is of my son Jacob, when he was about four. We were at parent/teacher conferences at Easterly Elementary school talking to his sister's teacher. Jacob was outside, playing on the playground. He was getting so dirty. We came out and he was sitting in the middle of the sandbox, both hands full of dirt. He looked up at Lynn and said, "*Mom if I didn't have dirt, I think I'd die.*" He was more right than he knew at the time. Life is too short to miss recess. We need to play.

As a part of a local team of non-profits who care about kids in our community, Communities that Care studies risk factors and protective factors. It's amazing how many of those protective factors have to do with relationships, the relationships between children and parents, positive neighborhood relationships, connection to a faith community. If you want to have a good relationship with a kid, perhaps the best thing you could do is to simply value play – the way that kids value play.

Isn't this why kids get Christmas? It is a holiday of play and wonder. In fact when the original Christmas story is told, and we hear angels telling shepherds of the birth of Christ, we hear the words, *I bring you good news of great joy*. Perhaps Christmas for a child is none other than a reminder that God has come out to play!

For some of you reading this right now, you have a to-do list that is weighing heavy on your day. Set it aside. Instead of doing what you have to do, do what you need to do. Go out and play. Go make a snowman or have a snowball fight. Read a good book. Have another helping of your favorite Christmas candy. Shut off the television and get out the monopoly board. Find a child and ask her to show you her new Christmas toys. It's recess time...and life's too short to miss Christmas.

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