



I'VE FORGOTTEN
HOW TO HAVE

FUN

I've forgotten how to have fun

It's a slippery slope into funlessness, isn't it?

One day you're squelching around knee deep in mud, clutching a cider with festival rock ringing in your ears, the next you're expressing genuine excitement when your favourite butter brand brings out a new reduced fat version.

The good news is that fun, whatever that means to you, can be rediscovered anywhere and any time.

The even better news is that it's more to do with what's going on inside your head than how you're spending your time.

What to do

Don't believe the hype

Is everyone in the world but you having fun? Probably not.

Aim to live

Don't force it.

Go easy

Let yourself enjoy different things.

Integrate

Try to make the things you have to do more fun too.

Educate

Learning can be fun.

Misbehave

Break some little rules.

Get handy

Unleash your creativity on whatever you can get your hands on.

Don't believe the hype

Before you set out on your quest for fun, it's worth bearing in mind that, contrary to the stories your mind spins, not everyone's having it.

We know how it is, you're on the bus home on a Monday night and you see the after-work boozers on the pavements, laughing and quaffng gin and tonics, and you assume that everyone in the entire world is having more fun than you.

But statistically one in ten of those gin guzzlers is clinically depressed. The aim of telling you this is not to revel in the misery of others (although a little Schadenfreude can be delectable, can't it?) but to stop you thinking of yourself as an outsider, just because you're not having fun right now.

Aim to live

The internet is rife with sites offering hints and tips about how to introduce fun back into our lives.

Try salsa, do improv theatre, go to yoga, they say.

Apart from the fact that trying improv theatre has been known to induce death-by-cringing in many participants, the main problem with these suggestions is that they make fun their sole aim, which is self-defeating.

To use an obvious example, a man focussing too much attention on whether or not he's performing sexually is less likely to perform at all.

Fun is not a certainty in life, but rather a nice extra – strive too hard for it, or hold onto it too tightly and it'll slip away.

Aim to live, not to have fun. Make a list of things you'd like to try which you think might be fun. (Note the emphasis on might – be prepared not to enjoy yourself). Then write down other ways those things could enrich your life.

For example:

'Yoga could be fun' becomes 'yoga could improve my fitness and help me relax'.

'A book club could be fun' becomes 'a book club could help me meet new people and further my learning'.

By doing this exercise you make fun a desirable by-product of your activities, rather than the soul aim.

Maybe every activity you try will be dull as dishwater, and that's okay. Because introducing fun back into your life is also about tolerating its absence.

Go easy

Don't let expectations about what you think you should be doing be your guide for how much fun you're having.

Just because you're not having it in the same way you did ten years ago, doesn't mean you're not having fun at all.

It usually happens in about the late twenties, when the ex-clubber starts to panic because they haven't been to Ibiza since 2009.

But what you consider to be fun is deeply personal, and also dependent on temporal and circumstantial factors.

If you're in a relationship, for example, a night out 'on the pull' isn't as fun an idea now as it once was.

And if your love handles are more loveable than they used to be, you might not enjoy a day at the beach as much as you did a few years ago.

Go easy on yourself, and accept the inevitable fact that we redefine fun as we get older.

Integrate

Once you've developed a healthy attitude towards fun, then you can set about reclaiming it.

But it's pretty difficult to fit fun into your life as a concrete, singular thing, so it's a good idea to try to integrate it into the things you already do.

Make a list of the things you have to do every day that involve some element of choice, and think of ways you could make more interesting choices. Below are a few examples:

You have to wash every day. But do you have to have a shower everyday? Could you take a bath once a week instead? And combine it with some candles and some Lionel Ritchie...

You have to commute every day, so how could you use that time to entertain yourself? Imagining scandalous back stories for the passengers around you is always a good one.

You have to eat dinner every night, but how you cook and what you eat is up to you. Listening to a podcast or an audiobook will make it seem less of a chore, and cooking for someone else is always more enjoyable.

Live alone? Bake something for your neighbour. This might sound a bit lame, but it's exactly the kind of spontaneity you need to introduce into your routine.

Educate

It's easy to forget that some parts of school were fun – like when you got lost in a lesson on your favourite subject and didn't look at the clock for a whole hour.

Thanks to the internet, learning is easier than ever, and, in keeping with our last point, easy to integrate into your day.

Next time you're standing in line somewhere, or waiting at the doctors, pick up your smart phone and snack on a snippet of wisdom.

TED.com is a fantastic place to access entertaining learning. TED invites influential speakers to lecture on subjects that they're passionate about.

With lecture titles such as 'The Art of Creating Awe', 'The Power of Vulnerability' and 'Can Democracy Exist without Trust?' TED is awash with tantalising morsels for time-poor users. Many talks are only 15 minutes long – perfect for when your kid's football match runs over, or you're sat at a bus stop.

Got even less time on your hands? Visit HowItWorksDaily.com, where five minute videos about everything from meteor showers to how paintballs are made can be browsed. The wonders of the production line never cease to amaze.

Misbehave

We know it and we've always known it: misbehaving is good for the soul.

Occasionally breaking the rules, or doing things you consider to be improper, can galvanise you into a sense of fun, as it exposes you to new experiences, and reinstalls a lost childishness.

As Katherine Hepburn famously said, 'If you obey all the rules, you'll miss all the fun.'

For many people, the realisation that they've forgotten to have fun comes about at a time of life when they're also becoming aware of the rules and responsibilities of adult life.

We suddenly feel that we should behave in a certain way, in accordance with the expectations of our peers.

What rules you follow will impact your definition of misbehaviour, but here are some suggestions to get you started:

Pinch your partner's bum in a museum

Pull a face at a baby when their parent's not looking

Wink at a bartender

Let your little brother have a sip of wine when mum's back's turned

Buy something that's beautiful, but absolutely useless

Throw jelly cubes at the ceiling

Get handy

Ever been doing arts and crafts with a child and got that vivacious, industrious feeling that you used to get whenever you played with plasticine or lego when you were younger?

Strive to recreate it by getting creative. Here are some suggestions:

Draw faces on all the bananas in the fruit bowl.

Sculpt an anatomically correct model of your partner out of blu-tack.

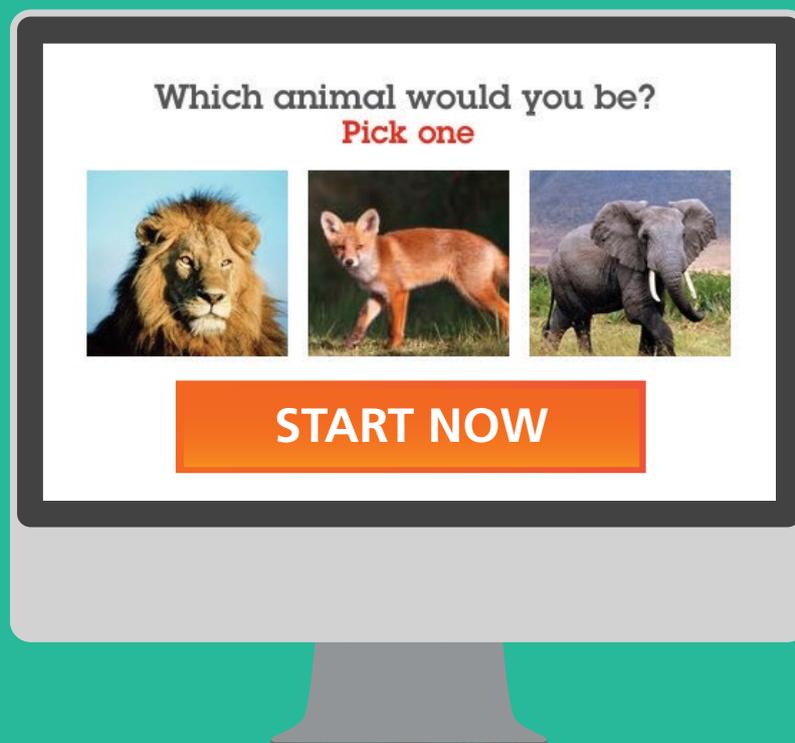
Make evil sock puppets.

Getting your hands dirty is a great way of having fun without spending too much money or drinking too much booze, although beer-drinking while paper mache-ing is highly recommended.

Continue your journey

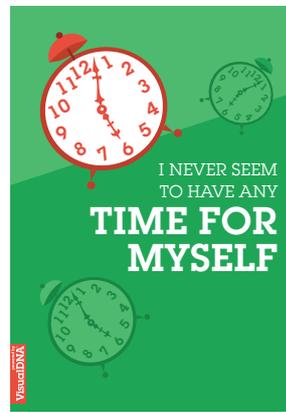
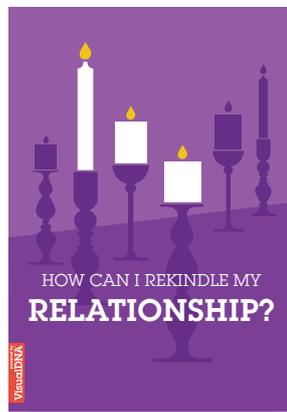
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