



Co-Hosts: Dr. Daphne Scott and Dr. Katie Hendricks  
Episode 026: If You Want to Get More Done... Have Fun and Play  
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**Daphne Scott:** Welcome to the Super Fantastic Leadership Show podcast with Daphne Scott and...

**Katie Hendricks:** Katie Hendricks!

**Daphne:** This is *the* podcast devoted to supporting you in leading at the highest levels of effectiveness with the greatest levels of fun. Today, Katie, guess what we're talking about?

**Katie:** Oh, does it have something to do with fun?

**Daphne:** Yes! Play and fun! That's what we're going to talk about today. We use that word *fun*. It's the essence of what we're up to about being effective and fun in every show. It was time. It was time to really explore the topic.

**Katie:** I love that. I'm also appreciating Maharishi, who started transcendental meditation. Somebody asked him one time what the definition of enlightenment was, and he said, "Fun all the time."

**Daphne:** I like that. I love that. It's funny, when you brought him up, I just thought of how there was a clip, and I think they pulled it off the Internet, but he was on *Johnny Carson*. He just sat and laughed for like three minutes. All they did was giggle.

**Katie:** Yes, he had the most wonderful giggle.

**Daphne:** Yes. Well, I loved that. I have so much appreciation for him, and I practice TM as well, so we have that in common, and I know the value of that and any meditation, really.

**Katie:** Yes, it can actually allow you to have more fun all the time.

**Daphne:** Yes, more fun all the time. I'm a big fan. So we're going to be talking about play and fun, what all of that means, and why it's important, why it even matters. We're going to talk about that, but let's do a little appreciation. Did you want to appreciate anyone else besides the Maharishi?

**Katie:** Well, actually, what's coming up in my mind today is to appreciate my husband, Gay, who has just gone through a knee replacement. That is like having your leg amputated and then put back together again. It's a very, very big deal.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** What I'm appreciating is his commitment to having fun and to being conscious. Giving himself that kind of conscious awareness has allowed him... Now he's two weeks from his surgery, and he's up and walking around, partly with a cane and partly just on his own, and he has managed to be funny and lively and authentic through this whole thing. To me, it's a real sign of mastery as a human being.

**Daphne:** Oh yeah. I'd love to say that that surprises me about Gay, but it doesn't.

**Katie:** Right?

**Daphne:** I'm so glad he's doing well and making a recovery.

**Katie:** Me too.

**Daphne:** And you too! Katie, I'm going to say I want to appreciate you, and here's why. I know what it takes to be the caregiver of someone who has just gone through a procedure like that. One of the things (for those of you who are listening) you may or may not know is I actually am a licensed physical therapist and have been for the past 20 years, so I've been in the throes of knowing what goes into the rehabilitation for patients who have undergone knee replacement surgeries and other orthopedic surgeries.

So I want to take a moment just to appreciate you, and I know the care and concern you've had to provide for Gay over this initial few weeks, and I think that's something we probably don't do a good enough job of preparing family and friends for when someone undergoes a surgery like this.

**Katie:** Yeah, I think that's true. I'm very grateful that this is not so much travel time or teaching time. It's really kind of perfect timing because it has really been a full time job.

**Daphne:** Yeah. It really is, so my appreciation goes to you for being there for Gay and being able to be that support to him.

**Katie:** Oh, thank you!

**Daphne:** Great! Well, let's get on to play and fun.

**Katie:** Yeah!

**Daphne:** Enough of this! Now we can have some fun!

**Katie:** You're right. Now that we've done this whole thing... Actually, we managed to play.

**Daphne:** Yes!

**Katie:** We managed to play with the various aspects of this, things that were really funny and things that brought us to tears, but it was really all about, "How can we play with this?"

**Daphne:** Yeah. That is just such a key question. Let's expand on that. When we say, "How can we play with this?" does it mean we're just (I like making this distinction) riding off of the rails, unable to get enough laughter? Well, sometimes.

**Katie:** Like we've gotten hysterical?

**Daphne:** Yeah, exactly, like we've gotten hysterical or we're bypassing what's really happening.

**Katie:** Yeah. We're just kind of overlooking something

**Daphne:** Right. Exactly.

**Katie:** Distracting ourselves.

**Daphne:** Yes. I think this is one of the places where people can get skeptical, right? It's like, "Work can't be fun. We can't really have play time here. Can it really be play? What does that really mean?"

**Katie:** "Are we being like children? Aren't we going to get anything accomplished here?"

**Daphne:** Yeah! Exactly! I think this hard work idea is really why that has gotten so ingrained. There can probably be a reasonably skeptical fear of, "We won't get anything accomplished," right? "We can't do both. It's either/or."

**Katie:** "We cannot do both." That's such a dichotomy that's really built into our culture, our development. It's actually less okay for kids to play now than it used to be.

**Daphne:** Yeah. Boy, I saw a video on Facebook, I think, but they showed a video of a Montessori school, and there were no traditional, real desks. The kids were all moving around, but in the traditional approach, there's less of that going on, right? "Sit at your desk. Face forward."

**Katie:** Well, way less. Not only that, but we used to actually go out and play.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** My mother would say, "Go out and play!"

**Daphne:** Right, right.

**Katie:** We would go out, and we would invent things to do.

**Daphne:** Yeah! Absolutely.

**Katie:** Now so many parents are shuffling their kids from one structured activity to another, which isn't exactly the same thing. You can have play within the structure, but real play... As we get into the definitions of that, I think we'll see how play may not be quite the way we're setting it up these days.

**Daphne:** Yeah. Well, that's perfect. Let me read the definition I found here as we were setting this up. Here's the definition of *play*. It is self-chosen (meaning people are free to quit), self-directed, imaginative or creative. Here's a key part. If you listened to our episode last week, you'll see why this is so important. It's intrinsically motivated (last week our episode was on competition and jealousy) and produced in an active, alert (but not distracted) state of mind. Now does that describe your work environment?

**Katie:** Your experience when you're at work? Maybe.

**Daphne:** Maybe. Hopefully.

**Katie:** It would be great, but probably not.

**Daphne:** Right. I mean, I just looked at its being self-chosen and people being free to quit, and I thought, "Well, are many people feeling really free to leave their jobs or to do them differently?" I even thought of it in a way of doing it differently.

**Katie:** Yeah, sort of free to quit doing something that's not working.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** When you look at the way children play, particularly when you're doing improvisational things with really young children and following, there'll be a certain number of interactions, and then the child is off to something else.

**Daphne:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Katie:** It's like that set of play, that particular piece, is over, and off we go to something else. But we don't allow that same sense of feeling the arc of the creativity and then the arc of the completion in our normal day-to-day (particularly work) lives.

**Daphne:** Right. It's kind of just keeping on going, going, and going, right? It's never-ending.

**Katie:** It's much more mechanistic.

**Daphne:** Yeah, mechanistic. I liked what you were pointing to about the structure. Structure can be helpful, right? But when it gets too structured, that's where we actually start losing our creativity or our ability to imagine what could come next, right?

**Katie:** Yes, the imagination, whichever one of your senses that comes through... Because it doesn't just come through what you see; it could come through what you're hearing or... I often get a sense of play and creative ideas when I'm brushing my teeth, so it doesn't necessarily have to be any particular kind of structure. When your senses are awake, play is always available.

**Daphne:** Right. As we're defining this a little bit (because we're going to kind of go at this from these different parts of the definition of play), I want to say a word about whether or not the opposite of play is... It means that if I'm not playing, then I'm serious, right?

**Katie:** Yeah. Well, I'm serious, and what I'm getting to inside of myself is that I'm kind of one-pointed.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** I'm kind of tunnel-focused.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** I'm goal-oriented. There's nothing wrong with that. I may be wanting to get something done, get this spreadsheet completed, and I may be focused on that, and if I'm doing it in a way that's serious, I'm not allowing those other aspects of my brain, those other aspects of my intelligence, to contribute to me.

**Daphne:** That was the point I really wanted to make when we talk about what the benefit is if I can play even in the midst of the spreadsheet. We'll talk more about what it will look like to play if you're filling out a spreadsheet or looking at data on a spreadsheet, but that creativity is what we lose access to when it's very one-pointed, right? I thought that was a great definition of what seriousness feels like. It feels one-pointed, right?

**Katie:** Yes. Yeah, because this is all about what you are experiencing.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** How are you moving through the journey of your life? If you're slogging along, thinking of yourself as in a factory, doing repetitive kinds of things all day long or making things repetitive so you don't shake things up... One of the aspects of play... I was remembering a book I read many, many years ago that was called *Put Your Mother on the Ceiling*. It was such a great title. I immediately had to get the book.

**Daphne:** That's great.

**Katie:** It was really about how you can literally turn things upside-down to look at them in a different way, which is one of the aspects of play.

**Daphne:** Yes!

**Katie:** You don't have just one way of doing things. I've been doing a lot of research, and right now I'm actually reading a book about play, so I want to continue bringing in some of the aspects of play as we're talking about this. One of them is from Stuart Brown's book on play. He's one of the big researchers and advocates of play on the planet right now. One of the things he talks about is a diminished consciousness of self. In other words, you become the play.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** I know that when I'm really engaged... Like when I'm doing these podcasts with you, I feel that we're so in play that I lose a sense of myself and become the interaction.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** It's like we're tossing tennis balls back and forth, serving and receiving, and I'm in the action. There's something that's incredibly satisfying about that.

**Daphne:** Yeah. I would agree, Katie. It is. I love that metaphor. You get more interested in the tossing. You get more interested in the game continuing than you are in yourself.

**Katie:** Yes.

**Daphne:** Right? You can loop back to yourself and all of those things we've talked about previously, but you get more interested in, "Oh, what are we creating here? Where is this going to go next?" That keeps us away from just our own sort of self-consciousness, if you will, right?

**Katie:** Yes, and another thing he says that I think really applies here too is that play can appear purposeless.

**Daphne:** Mmm.

**Katie:** It's apparently purposeless. I was just thinking about how when Gay and I first got together, he would be apparently doing nothing.

**Daphne:** Right.

**Katie:** Like lying there, sort of looking out the window, and sort of doodling or humming or playing on his harmonica. It didn't look like he was doing anything, and meanwhile, he'd create a book a year. He was a tenured, full professor at the University of Colorado. He would do all of these things he got accomplished while he didn't appear to be doing anything.

**Daphne:** Yeah. That's so great. I think that comes back to this self-chosen... We were talking about whether it's serious or we're laughing and giggling all the time and all of the stories we've made up about play, right? Well, what I imagine was true for Gay is that he always had a *yes*, like, "This is what I want to do right now."

**Katie:** Yes.

**Daphne:** Right. "This is what I'm called to do right now." That was that state of being in play, self-choosing. It was self-directed, right? "This is what's coming through me in this moment," and then all of this creativity would come from that.

**Katie:** Exactly. All of these new ideas would just sort of come out of the blue, but it would be from this ability to let things play. I'm also thinking of Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, and his 53rd fragment, which is one of my favorites. He says, "The universe is like a child at play with colored balls."

**Daphne:** Mmm.

**Katie:** A lot of what the people who are talking about the value of play are saying it does for you is... We know that animals that play a lot learn quickly how to navigate their worlds and how to adapt to them. Play keeps your brain flexible and evolving. In other words, we get smarter through play.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** We don't get smarter through work. We actually get dumber through repetitive work. We get smarter through play, and there are dozens and dozens of examples of inventors and people who have made huge breakthroughs in our human evolution and contributed many things to us. One of the ways you can learn about that is by looking at the series called *Cosmos*. One of the things you'll notice in there is that many of the breakthroughs came through play.

**Daphne:** Yeah. What is it called? *Cosmos*?

**Katie:** *Cosmos*! There's a series that has been on television.

**Daphne:** Oh yeah!

**Katie:** Yeah! It's a series called *Cosmos*. It's fantastic! What it will really do is give you an appreciation of the inherent relationship between play and evolution.

**Daphne:** Oh, I love that. I love that. That reminds me, when I was reading about this whole idea of play, there was this guy (researcher/psychologist) named Vygotsky. He wrote this back in 1933. Katie, when you were saying that, it really made me think about what we think about the seriousness but also about our universe and how we've learned through the idea of play.

When we were talking about the seriousness of it or what the paradox is of that... He said there's an aspect to play that allows us to recognize that even though there are sort of rules of how we're doing things, like if we come back to the spreadsheet idea, there's this aspect of play that allows us also to realize we're sort of making it up.

**Katie:** Yeah!

**Daphne:** Right?

**Katie:** Sort of!

**Daphne:** Sort of! There's a realness to it and a non-realness to it. There's a reality there, and there's also a way that, "Oh, wait! Maybe I can just take this and bend it this way, or maybe I can use this different formula." It reminded me of when I was not good at math at all in high school, okay? However, when I got into geometry, I became brilliant.

**Katie:** How interesting!

**Daphne:** Isn't this interesting? Here's what it was. I don't think it had anything to do with shapes. What it was... If you remember, in geometry there is this idea of proofs and sort of these rules.

**Katie:** Yes.

**Daphne:** I was a master at being able to take these rules and these ways of structuring and play with them to figure out the problems, and I loved it.

**Katie:** Yes. You could rearrange the part in all kinds of different ways.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** What I hear you saying that's really so important to bring into the leadership world is the flexibility of perception that you're talking about.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** It's the flexibility of, "Well, maybe I could do this instead. Maybe this doesn't have to be this way," so if you're rule-bound or protocol-bound, you're much less likely to innovate, and you're much less likely to be able to generate kind of new, creative solutions.

**Daphne:** That's exactly what I was saying.

**Katie:** Oh, good! I'm so glad!

**Daphne:** I loved it. That's so good. But it is, which comes back to that imaginative, creative part. It comes back to being in that sort of rule-based way of doing things, right? Are we bound by our structure, or can we move the structure around?

I think that fits in with the self-directed pieces of it. It comes back to what you were saying about how we are in relationship to our teams and our leadership. The benefits of play in how you see your work are endless. They're endless. Now I also thought, Katie, that it was good to bring up a little bit... Well, I want to talk a little bit more, really, about the myths about play.

**Katie:** Oh, please. Yes.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** I think that's really important. Yeah.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** Yeah, because I have something I want to add to that.

**Daphne:** Okay, well, great. One of the things I've experienced is that when I bring this up or whatever, people do feel like it should be like, "We're just giddy, giggling, and running around..."

**Katie:** Right. It's like recess.

**Daphne:** Yeah, and it becomes a co-opted way... It's almost like a regression back to childhood.

**Katie:** Right. Right. Yes.

**Daphne:** I've seen this in groups and communities that come together. There's this regression back to childlike behavior.

**Katie:** Right. "We'll throw spitballs at each other."

**Daphne:** Yeah. That is not what I'm talking about, right? I think that's a myth, and I think that's (again) what drives people to sort of be afraid of this idea that work can be play. I'd love to hear what myths you have or what comments you had about that as well.

**Katie:** Well, I think the big thing here is that we don't value play.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** We think play has a lower value than work, that it actually does not have survival value, and I want to really assert that (particularly as I have seen in my own experience, but it's also what Stuart Brown talks about) play has real costs.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** Animals get killed. There are lots of studies of young animals getting killed while they're away from the herd, playing.

**Daphne:** Mmm.

**Katie:** One of the things he said is that the fact that play has these very real costs is one of the main reasons he knew it must be incredibly important, because otherwise it would not have survived, and animals would not be playing at the potential cost of their lives.

**Daphne:** Wow!

**Katie:** So the real genius of play, the reason I think it needs to be elevated... In fact, in our work we really talk about learning how to play through issues rather than working on them.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** It's that in playing, we create all of these imaginative, new cognitive combinations, and in creating those novel combinations, we can find what works. He actually says, "I believe we live in a playful universe," which is also what Heraclitus would say.

**Daphne:** Yes. Yes.

**Katie:** He would say the universe is like a child at play with colored balls. We know there are all kinds of superfluous solutions, not all of which get used. In my creativity, I'm generating new stuff all the time.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** Not all of which I'm going to use, but it creates a kind of attitude of receptivity and being ready to look at the new combinations of putting new things together which I think really is the main thing that's going to be leading edge for any kind of leadership position, any kind of organization today.

**Daphne:** Well, I completely agree. One of the things I hear you saying too, Katie, is that when you get into a state of play which opens up possibilities, one of the big things that gets left behind is either/or thinking.

**Katie:** Oh yes! Ooh, thank you!

**Daphne:** I want to tell you that probably one of the most valuable things I have ever learned and just embody very naturally is *yes/and* thinking. I come so much from a perspective of *yes/and*. "Oh, you want that and you want that. Well, how do we all get that?"

**Katie:** Right. "I hear what you're saying. Yes, I hear what you're saying, and I could see how we might use that." I love the *yes/and* idea. I want to just add to that to really flesh it out. In an organization, if I'm in a playful attitude, I'll hear what the other person is saying or offering, and

I'll receive it with that, "Yes! Yes, I hear what you're saying, and here's what I'm thinking about that," or, "Oh yes, and I'm not sure about this particular aspect of it." The other person says, "Oh yes, I see, and..." Then you're keeping the play going.

**Daphne:** Yes. I stole this from the improv world. The only way to keep a scene going... At a basic level, when you're first learning how to improvise with someone, the only way to keep a scene going is to keep adding to what they're saying.

**Katie:** Yeah, because if you just go, "Oh," it's game over.

**Daphne:** Right! Exactly. The worst-case scenario is that you walk up to me and say, "Oh, I love the red hat you're wearing," and I go, "Oh, I'm not wearing a red hat." Scene over. Now you're either insane or...

**Katie:** Right! Yeah, or the universe is insane or you are in the wrong place.

**Daphne:** Exactly. There's just nowhere to go with that. They really teach this, and I have used this in meetings. It's one of the highest levels of play. We did an episode on meetings before, but if you really want to have a high level of engagement in a meeting, bring in yes/and conversations. Don't allow anybody, for a while, to be the skeptic.

**Katie:** That's such a great invitation to mastery.

**Daphne:** It is an invitation to mastery, absolutely. Bring in yes/and situations. That is a high level of play that you can add and build to what everyone is saying, and it really steps you away from the either/or thinking. "Either we can do this or we can do that, but we can't do both."

**Katie:** A way of translating that for people who may not know the improv world would be to affirm with your listening, to do conscious listening.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** That is basically saying, "I appreciate what you're saying. I hear what you're saying, and here's what I want to add to it."

**Daphne:** Mm-hmm! Yes!

**Katie:** Rather than rebutting. It would be listening with appreciation and then adding something.

**Daphne:** Yes. There's an invitation to mastery right there: listening with appreciation and adding to what the person said. Katie, that's one thing that I know I learned from you years ago and that you do reliably. "Oh, I appreciate what you just said about that," right? That is such a high-level skill. That is a huge yes.

**Katie:** It is a yes.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** It's a yes that the other person can receive.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** It's not going, "Oh. Yeah."

**Daphne:** Right. "Yeah, that's a good idea, but you know..."

**Katie:** "Yeah, we tried that last year."

**Daphne:** "We don't do it that way," right?

**Katie:** "Yeah, you must not have been here very long."

**Daphne:** Right. Exactly.

**Katie:** Yeah, so we all know ways... For me, one of the highest invitations to mastery is asking, "How can I keep the game going?"

**Daphne:** Yes. I love it.

**Katie:** "How can I...?" Each of us has that power. We all know how to call off the game. We can give people looks. We can be texting while the other person is speaking.

**Daphne:** Mm-hmm.

**Katie:** We can be looking away or making funny noises. We all know how to do that, but learning how to keep the game going is a play move.

**Daphne:** Yes.

**Katie:** It really is, I think, the key to innovation.

**Daphne:** I agree. I want to give one other toss as an invitation to mastery. Just try doing certain things differently. The littlest, tiniest things can become play.

**Katie:** Yes.

**Daphne:** Maybe I come in and just move my computer monitor over, or I decide that for just a few minutes... This is one thing I love to do, although I only do it for a few minutes at a time when I do it. I just use my mouse with my left hand.

**Katie:** Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. Yes.

**Daphne:** I don't do it if I'm really on task, but I just do it for a few minutes and just play. It's just funny to see what happens.

**Katie:** You know, I just saw an example of someone who came home from one of our workshops and created a standing desk for themselves instead of a sitting desk.

**Daphne:** Yeah, exactly! Those are all little things we can just play with. It just creates a different context. It creates a different experience, and those are all forms of play.

**Katie:** Also, I want to suggest (I know this is really revolutionary) props at work. I want to suggest that you have a drawer where you keep hats, mustaches, balloons, and Hacky Sack balls.

**Daphne:** I love that.

**Katie:** What we call the art of the toss is what we've been talking about, and it's my favorite play medium. Particularly when you're at work, if you have ways you can lighten things up while continuing to keep the game going, that can be great fun. So imagine handing hats out at a meeting, and everybody has to speak for five minutes from the point of view of the hat they're wearing.

**Daphne:** Oh, that's so fun. At one of my offices we have these big hands. You put your hands in them, and they're like Incredible Hulk hands.

**Katie:** Yes!

**Daphne:** They look like the green hands, and you hit them together and they make the monster sound he makes.

**Katie:** Oh, that's great! That's great!

**Daphne:** Yeah, it's so fun!

**Katie:** We have big pointers, and we have wands. I think those are incredibly important to remind us of our imaginations.

**Daphne:** I agree. I agree, Katie. Well, that's a just a little bit on play and fun. Hopefully we've broken down some of the myths too.

**Katie:** I hope so. I sincerely hope so.

**Daphne:** Yeah. I'm serious about it too.

**Katie:** Yeah. I can hear it.

**Daphne:** Well, we hope you feel more inspired than ever and you continue to get out there, play, have fun, and elevate your level of effectiveness. It's so important. Continue to share your

comments with us at [www.daphne-scott.com](http://www.daphne-scott.com). If I'm not mistaken, Katie, on your website you have a category dedicated to play. I know you have play on there somewhere. Maybe it's under Genius?

**Katie:** Well, we have a whole section called Body in our Free Stuff section which has a lot of suggestions that will really allow you to cultivate play.

**Daphne:** Yeah.

**Katie:** So please take a look and use them.

**Daphne:** Yes. Please use them. Also, keep living a Super Fantastic Leadership life!