

FEARS FOR A ROBOT GENERATION

New research by the BTHA and Play England reveals the harm a lack of play may have on future generations.

Experts revealed today that children could become part of a 'Robot Generation' lacking social skills, creative skills and the ability to interact with others if they are not given the opportunity to play regularly. The expert predictions were supported by research among parents that revealed **74%** of the 2,000 questioned thought a lack of play could have serious effects on a child's future.

The findings of an expert panel, led by the British Toy and Hobby Association [BTHA] and Play England, highlight the long-term effects on health and wellbeing that a lack of play can have, including obesity, poor social skills, an inability to make friends, less resilience to cope with pressures and the inability to have fun and enjoy childhood.

64% of parents believe that a lack of play can have a negative effect on their children's communication skills
57% believe it can affect their ability to make friends
56% believe it can damage their children's confidence
51% believe it can stifle their imagination

Parents have further concerns when it comes to adolescence:

50% believe a lack of play as a child will lead to difficulty making friends and forming relationships as a teenager
46% believe it will increase the likelihood of anti-social behaviour
43% believe it could lead to obesity
36% believe it could lead to depression or mental health issues

Whilst experts voiced fears for future generations and warned of the threat of constantly reducing time for play, 28% of parents reported that they do not believe their children get to play enough right now. **Parents notice a real impact on their daily routine if their children haven't had time to play, with 1 in 3 reporting their kids are "bouncing off the walls" with excess energy, a third reporting they're irritable and difficult to put to bed (30%) and that they argue more (27%).**

Dr Amanda Gummer, a psychologist and play expert and chair of the panel says "Play is a natural part of children's lives and helps them to grow and develop the skills they need for later life. Not giving children time to grow and play could lead to a generation of sedentary children, lacking in creativity and imagination."

Cath Prisk, Play England's Co-Director and panel member, added, "Play affects long term development but is also the "here and now"; it is an innate human need which we need to protect for our children".

66% of parents would like more time to spend playing with their children, which is not surprising when 44% of families are at their happiest when they are playing together. Parents cite work (52%), a busy schedule (49%) and feeling too tired (35%) as the three main reasons that prevent them from making more time to play with their children. When parents engage in play their top three activities are playing with toys and games, learning new skills, or sporty play.

Knowing how to let their children play is a parenting skill that 1 in 5 dads and nearly 1 in 6 mums would like to improve on. In response, the British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA) and Play England have launched the 'Make time to play' campaign to raise awareness of the importance of play in children's lives and to highlight that there are simple ways that children can play regularly in order to prevent a future generation of child robots .

Celebrity Dad Jeff Brazier, who is backing the campaign, says "Playtime for me and my kids is our time to spend together, and for me to be really focused on them - away from work and other distractions. It can be difficult when you're a busy parent with a career but I think it's really important for parents to set aside time to play with their kids, whether it's a game of hide and seek or a kick about in the park - it's great fun and a chance for them to be their most creative."

Through a dedicated Facebook fan page at www.facebook.com/maketimetoplay parents can receive help and ideas for positive play; they can win their child's ideal play date and get ideas for great things to do as a family.

For more information on the campaign visit www.maketime2play.co.uk

For full press releases including the findings of the play panel please visit the [BTHA website](http://www.btha.org.uk)