

“What do you do for fun?” Once I was asked this at a wedding by someone I didn’t know very well and honestly, the question stumped me. Racking my brain, all I could think of were things I did outside of the corporate job I held at the time. “Well,” I began, “I like to exercise and read and... and... drink wine?” The person I was speaking to seemed just as unimpressed by my answer as I was. Shifting on my feet I felt compelled to return the question. Without missing a beat, he replied, “Fishing. Camping. Four-wheel driving.” “Oh,” was all I could say before taking another sip of wine.

Though this exchange took place several years ago, something about it has long bothered me and I’ve never really been able to articulate why until recently. You see, last Christmas, my children conspired with their father to buy me a pair of roller skates. At forty, I was more than a little reluctant to hit the roller rink. However, not wanting to disappoint anyone I tied up my laces and strapped on my wrist guards – because forty remember – and off we went.

Having not been in a pair of skates since I was a kid, I deferred to my children for guidance. Our roles reversed as they began teaching me the ropes or should I say, rolls. Though I was rather wobbly to begin with, eventually and literally after much handholding by my kids, I got the hang of it. And you know what? It was fun. Like really, really fun.

Not only is it the satisfaction of taking on a new task, there’s also the thrill that comes with moving your body in a way, and at a pace, that you normally wouldn’t. Additionally, there’s the low-level risk that you might actually hurt yourself, which forces you to stay – for want of a better term – ‘in the moment’. And then there’s the Lols. So many Lols! But most importantly, I really feel like it’s the fact that I’m doing an activity with no other end than itself.

I’m not trying to be a champion roller skater (if that’s even a thing), not training to join a roller derby team, I’m not even trying to be better at it from one week to the next. I’m just doing it purely for the fun of it, which has made me realise how little we do this in adulthood.

## Not just child's play

According to the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, fun is defined as: “Something that provides amusement or enjoyment. Specifically playful, often boisterous, action or speech.”

To be clear, I’m not saying that my life has been devoid of amusement or enjoyment since roller skating re-entered my life, far from it. There are certainly activities I do for amusement, (hello *Netflix*) and enjoyment (here comes the exercising/reading/wine tasting again).

What I do believe has been lacking however are the more playful aspects: attributes (if you were to use the above definition) you’d be more likely to associate with children, rather than adults – especially adults who are also parents.

What’s interesting about parents and fun is that often we go to a lot of time, effort and sometimes expense to give our kids ‘fun’ experiences. We organise themed birthday parties with paid entertainment, or we take them to the zoo or if we’re really feeling particularly convivial (or have completely lost our minds during the school holidays), we might even take them to an indoor play centre on a rainy day.

Whatever the case, when we get to said activity, most parents generally tend to just stand on the sidelines and observe. We watch our kids have fun without ever actually participating in it. Instead we wait to assist with the snack breaks and the toilet trips that inevitably arise. From my own experience at the roller rink, I’m usually the only adult actually joining in.

And look, I get it. As every millennial will tell you, ‘adulting’ is hard, and parenting’s even harder. Time is scarce, patience is thin, and the responsibility is real. The thing is though, fun and play aren’t just frivolous pursuits reserved only for the little people in our lives. They’re actually a pillar of wellbeing that I would argue is being lost in our results-driven, productivity-obsessed culture, and as it turns out, I’m not the only one who thinks so.