



Episode 23 - How to have more FUN

Welcome to this episode of the managing the smart mind podcast with Master Certified Coach Else Kramer, a.k.a. Coach Kramer.

Hello smart human!

After three in-depth episodes on procrastination, I think it's time for something lighter.

At the time of recording this, we're in the middle of Summer and I am about to go on a two-week vacation. So it's a perfect moment to do a podcast on fun - and why it's so important.

If you're an overachiever, like me, who is prone to constant optimization, and striving to get better at things, be more productive, etc. - then fun probably isn't a very high priority.

Think about it. When was the last time he did something that was absolutely delightful in and of itself, and not at all useful or productive?

Right.

A lot of smart humans are very driven, ambitious, serious and responsible when it comes to their work in the world. They take on a lot because they like to be stretched and learn new things, and to contribute. But they forget that they're human and that it's massively important that they also get to play and have fun.

Now, interestingly, this can be even harder when you do something you love for a living.

When you massively enjoy your work (or at least most of it), why allow room for anything else?

But it doesn't work that way. If you're always absorbed with your - fabulous, granted - vocation it will eventually start to wear you out. You may even end up thoroughly disliking the thing you loved - because you aren't allowing yourself to have fun.

Another thing that smart brains tend to do is to optimise everything. Your brain is very good at finding ways to improve processes and can be constantly scanning to find things to do better, smarter, faster.

And it doesn't only do this at work: my brain, if left unchecked, will think of ways to optimise queues at amusement parks, laundry folding, airport transiting, omelette making, etc.

But it forgets something really important in this optimising equation: YOU.

To stay a relatively sane, happy, human you want to also optimise for JOY.

How do you rate on the daily joy scale?

I want you to check in with yourself right now and ask how much fun you're having on a daily basis.

How often are you smiling, laughing out loud, delighting in sensory experiences being playful?

If it's less than three times a day, then it's time for sure to inject some more fun into your life.

And talked about this earlier in my Friday thoughts. By the way, if you're not already on the list for those, sign up on my website, or follow me on LinkedIn. I encouraged people to go on a delight diet, which really resonated. Because if we don't experience delight at least a couple of times a day, you start to wonder what the point is of being alive? If you never have any fun you will deplete yourself and become incredibly grumpy and a pain to be around.

And it gets even better - prioritising fun sends a strong message to your heart and mind that your well-being matters and that you're important. This builds self-confidence.

In addition, feeling joy is a great way to re-energise yourself - to recharge your battery throughout the day.

Alright, so joy is important, and fun is important. How do you incorporate it into your day without making it too complicated and then procrastinating on it?

Here are some suggestions.

1. Take time to appreciate the magic in everyday things

First of all, try and find the magic in everyday things - really take time to appreciate them. I am very lucky in that I was raised by a man who had so much appreciation for the magic of life, and also the magic of science by the magic of engineering. It comes very naturally to me. And I can actually just gaze at one of my plants for five minutes and just be in awe of this miracle of how it is sprouting new leaves or making a flower,

So try, instead of just you know, going about your business running around, even if it's just on your commute, stop and really look at something that you usually overlook, and appreciate it.

2. Luxuriate in your senses

The second tip is to really enjoy your senses, to nurture and feed them by creating fun sensory experiences. For example, I have lots of perfume bottle bottles in my office, I am a niche perfume geek. And I use them as a kind of mood boosters. Whenever I feel how my energy is going down, I grab a beautiful

bottle of perfume, spray my wrists, and just sit there and inhale the scent. It's so lovely!

You can do that with any of your senses. You can look at colours, patterns, textures, you can look at art.

You can eat something absolutely wonderful, like a delicious piece of dark chocolate.

You can stroke some beautiful fabric or walk barefoot in the grass. You can give someone a hug.

You can listen to beautiful music, whichever works best for you. Make sure you activate and luxuriate in your senses at least a couple of times a day.

3. Move your body

Another great joy-giver and fun-infuser is to move your body.

Sadly, so many of us when I say 'move your body', start thinking oh, I need to get fit, I need to lose weight, whatever it is. No! That is NOT what this is about.

You may have forgotten, but you can actually move your body for fun, for sheer joy.

You can dance, jump around, hoola hoop, go skipping, wave your arms about, do a handstand, pretend that your office or your room is a big aquarium and swim around in it.

Do whatever feels good in the moment.

If you have time you can even go outside for a walk, run, skipping session.

But just moving your body for 1-2 minutes in a fun way can completely recharge you and reset your nervous system.

4. Make Music

There is a lot of research about how beneficial making music is for the brain - but I would venture that it is also good for the body and soul.

And you don't need to have or play an instrument. You can hum, sing, tap, drum on your cup or even use elastic bands to create your own string instrument.

5. Appreciate art Art and Beauty

Another thing I love to do is to interact with art. And this can be anything I mean, I have worked in the visual arts world for many years. So I you know, I'm inclined to get out a beautiful large book with beautiful Hokusai prints and just drink them in. Literally they feed me - those pictures nourish my soul.

For you it may be a piece of music that you absolutely love. A poem. Your favourite bowl.

Simply appreciating all the beauty in your world can spark joy.

6. Games & playfulness

Life is so much more fun if you play games and create challenges for yourself. I briefly touched upon this in the last episode, on procrastination - gamification makes everything lighter.

Set yourself mini-challenges, like a quest to find 10 pink cars on your 15-minute walk.

If you have a lot of emails to reply to, sing an opera aria or dance after every 10 mails.

If you've got a big deadline promise yourself that you can create a giant goldfish out of post-its after it's done.

And listen, also, just playing games with other humans is a lot of fun, I have to say, I'm a huge board game fan more about that later. That could be another entire episode.

7. Creating something with your hands

Working with your hands works magic for your well-being. Cooking, chopping vegetables, baking bread, building Lego, painting, writing with pen on paper, crafting - anything you can create using your hands works.

We consume way too much - and creation is incredibly fulfilling, especially we use our hands.

Go make something!

8. Connection

And then last but not least we experience joy through connection.

As someone with autism, a smart mind, my own business and solo-office, I am a very poor example of building connections. I really have to remind myself that yes, I do love to be with other humans. Just not all humans, all the time.

For example, last weekend, we spent time with friends, and we just hang out in their garden, and we play petanque, very simple, and it was just so much fun. We weren't doing anything like quote unquote productive, we were just throwing heavy metal balls on gravel, and connecting. It was beautiful.

So if you're like me and human connection is low on your agenda, just remind yourself or create a habit of connecting and doing fun things with other humans because it's massively important for your mental health and for your well being.

Making it a habit - the Joy Menu

So how can you incorporate more fun into your life? And how can you make it a healthy habit?

You want to constantly remind your brain.

For me, it is way too easy for me to forget how I like to have fun. I may be thinking about the podcast or coaching clients, or teaching. And then my brain will remind me that now would be a good time for a break. So I'll get up. And then in that moment, my first inclination is to grab my smartphone, to check the news, or go play a quick game.

But that's not what I want to do. Because that isn't fun. That doesn't bring me joy. So I have to remind myself, what does because it's not going to be top of mind.

To help me do that I have created a joy menu: a card that I have on my desk.

It has a huge list of all the things that bring me joy. So when I take a break when I pause, instead of automatically reaching for that phone, or opening 20 tabs, checking my email, whatever, I can reach for my card and pick something from the menu, which in itself is a delightful experience.

If it wasn't for my joy menu I'd never be doing quick drawings, for example.

It's also a great tool when there's stuff you really want to *stop* doing or at least do less.

Whenever I feel like going on Instagram or playing a game or doing something that really doesn't nurture me, I look at my menu and ask myself: is checking Instagram more fun right now than any of these things on the card? The answer is always no. And that makes it so easy to do something really fun instead.

My joy menu includes lots of things I can do for just a couple of minutes.

Small things are key. You want to make it super easy - and keep any supplies you may need handy. For example, if one of the things you'd like to do is drawing, just make sure you have a sketch pad and some pencils handy. And you can just grab them and go draw for a couple of minutes. You want to reduce starting friction, we talked about that in the last episode, make it as easy as possible to do something on that menu.

And you also want to aim for extremely *doable*. So it's not like oh, create an oil painting, right, that is not on my joy menu, because that will just take too much time. I also love stuff like mono printing, Gelli printing. But again, there's a

massive setup involved, and also lots of cleaning afterwards. That is not something that's on my joy menu, because that is like a project. So no projects on there. You really want to make it extremely doable. So you can't talk yourself out of it by saying you have no time..

Create your own Joy Menu and try out a Delight Diet over the next 30 days.

Notice the massive difference in your mood and energy level - and probably also in the rest of your life.

Have fun - and let me know how it goes.

Have an amazing week.

Else a.k.a. Coach Kramer

Do you want to rekindle your joy? Then work with me one-on-one. DM me on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) to learn how, or send me an email via podcast@elsekramer.com.

Thank you for listening to the Managing the Smart Mind Podcast, I love that at the time of recording this there are listeners in 64 countries! I am waving at all of you!