

# **Leisure, LEGO® Serious Play (LSP), and Mental Health and Wellbeing**

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## **Abstract**

Sport and physical activity are frequently cited as effective tools for supporting adolescent mental health. However, not all adolescents are inspired by physical activity, and this presentation proposes an alternative support mechanism, through the power of play. We will identify opportunities to utilise the LEGO® Serious Play (LSP) technique to (i) build resilience; (ii) foster and support mindfulness; and (iii) enhance mental health and wellbeing of young people. The focus is upon creating a positive narrative surrounding those young people so negatively affected by the covid-19 global pandemic.

The use of LEGO® Serious Play has been proven in supporting organisations including Google, The International Red Cross, and NASA who have used this method in solving their complex real-world problems (Kristiansen and Rasmussen, 2014). We argue these techniques are equally as effective when applied in the context of supporting adolescent mental health, when delivered in everyday leisure environments. As such, the methodological innovation outlined is not LEGO® per se but opportunities to use it as the tool to deliver bottom-up mental health and well-being outcomes, which are adolescent led. Using recently collected data findings, we demonstrate that LEGO® Serious Play workshops in adolescent leisure settings provide spaces whereby deep learning can happen, a ‘state of flow’ occurs (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), facilitate positive emotions (Pekrum et al 2002), generate ideas, and help with emotional regulation, positivity, and enhancing adolescent well-being.

The preliminary findings clearly indicate LEGO® Serious Play can help adolescents to (re) discover the world and assert their own social identity, whilst also supporting intellectual, communication, emotional and social development, and their sense of self. We also detail potential to (i) improve adolescent well-being by introducing playfulness into leisure settings and help them (re) connect; (ii) offer a mechanism for platforming and amplifying diverse voices and perspectives of adolescents within leisure settings, and (iii) allow adolescents to feel comfortable expressing their personal views and lived experiences, given the focus is more on the model than on the adolescent.

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