

Think about having fun without beer, says Jack Bleiler (really, he says that).

Are you ready to party like a kid?

After witnessing, firsthand, a whole swack (as opposed to a partial swack) of children's birthday parties this past weekend, I have once again come to the conclusion that children, left to their own designs, are way better at life than most adults. Way better than me, that's for sure.



Jack Bleiler

Kids dig parties. And not in the same way those of us in the post-pubescent age bracket dig parties. Our idea of a good party necessarily involves a massive quantity of social lubricant ("beer" or an equivalent, friction-reducing substance), around which the rest of the activities revolve.

The occasion, the events, the location; none of these factors is a vital component. Load up a bunch of adults with booze, and they'll party like preschoolers no matter where they are, even at a funeral ("I loved that guy like a brother. What's that? He was my brother?")

At one of the birthday parties we attended, a small clot of parents was discussing a recent adult party which featured alcohol-induced comas and drunken home renovations. This is commonly the end result of adult parties, and no one seems to mind. It makes for colourful storytelling. In fact, if you watched an adult party unfold from a safe distance, you might assume unconsciousness and minor vandalism were the ultimate goals from the very beginning.

But that's not really the goal. No, what adults are trying to achieve with their partying is a state of child-like euphoria; to put aside their grown-up, mature, responsible ways, if only for a moment, and recapture the natural, instinctive, and spontaneous joy of childhood.

And they will never get there.

By the time an adult has consumed enough alcohol to forget his grown-up concerns, that little spark of innocence and glee he was trying to access is hammered as well. When finally that inner child is turned loose, it's more interested in mayhem than merri-ment.

There has to be an easier way to release your imprisoned imp, and after studying the kids at play this weekend, I think I might have found it.

Certainly, sugar plays a crucial role. Each child

ingested several pounds. It's the closest they come to substance abuse. But unlike the lubricating qualities of alcohol relied on by adults, sugar is merely fuel for kids. While adults need alcohol just to get the rusty wheels rolling, the kids are already greased up and ready for action. They're only utilizing sugar to maintain their momentum. Reach maximum speed as quickly as possible, and keep the pedal on the floor. That's key.

And don't worry about any people or objects you might collide with. Kids

aren't concerned about appearances, or politeness, or antagonism, or any physical injury shy of decapitation. They bolt around with wild abandon — bouncing off lawn furniture, knocking over plants, stomping on household pets — a vast, undulating mass of miniature humans, pound for pound one of nature's most powerful destructive forces.

Another advantage the kids' parties have is the complete lack of sexual tension. You rarely see an inebriated four-year-old hitting on the hostess. At adult gatherings, on the other hand, this has been known to cause problems.

Basically, the reason kids have so much fun at

parties is because they're kids. They're not worried about the chocolate cake smeared all over their faces; they don't care if they've got to get up early tomorrow. They're living in the now and a party doesn't come along every day (except last weekend), and nothing's going to stop them from barreling along full tilt until they can't barrel no more.

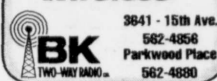
Eventually, we'll beat that out of them, but before we do, maybe we should try to learn a lesson from the little darlings. And that lesson is to un-learn everything that makes us "adults." Let go of our mutual funds and our college degrees and our

darned propriety, and, without the benefit of booze, barge into a party with a faceful of cake and a fistful of Silly String. That's what we're all really longing to do, isn't it?

The other thing I learned this weekend is that you can only get away with this, when you are older than five, if you are dressed as Gigi the Clown. Otherwise, people start to shoo their children away from you and remember urgent gardening projects they must immediately attend to.

Plus, I discovered that — in an emergency — sufficient amounts of coffee, nicotine, and sugar will produce an amazingly beer-like effect. Imagine that!

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