Always be yourself.

Unless you can be a unicorn.

Then always be a unicorn.
Characteristics of Play

- Play is self-chosen and self-directed
  - An expression of freedom. It is what one wants to do as opposed to what one is obliged to do

- Play is activity in which means are more valued than ends
  - Players do not necessarily look for the easiest routes to achieving the ends/goals

- Play is guided by mental rules
  - To play is to behave in accordance with self-chosen rules

- Play is non-literal, imaginative, marked off in some way from reality
  - In play one enters a realm that is physically located in the real world, makes use of props in the real world, is often about the real world, is said by the players to be real, and yet in some way is mentally removed from the real world

- Play involves an active, alert, but non-stressed frame of mind
  - Attention is attuned to the activity itself, and there is reduced consciousness of self and time. The mind is wrapped up in the ideas, rules, and actions of the game
Play is vital for human development

Physical, social, emotional & cognitive development:

• Develop imagination and creativity (brain plasticity and neural connections)
• Problem solving
• Enhanced confidence and resilience
• Communication: work in groups, share, negotiate, resolve conflicts, build self-advocacy skills
• Develop leadership and decision making skills
• Build active, strong, healthy bodies
• Engage fully in an activity
• Freedom of choice (autonomy)
• Expression of positive and negative feelings, empathy
• Adaptability
• Any others?
Types of Play

- **Dramatic** - take on roles within pretend games about familiar experiences
  - Ex. riding in a Grand Prix

- **Fantasy** - creating props and using them to engage in fantasy adventures
  - Ex. knights on a quest

- **Exploratory/Manipulative** – explore/manipulate properties and functions of materials, equipment and objects
  - Ex. Searching the forest for grooming tools, parts of the horse puzzle

- **Physical** - explore movements and ways to combine movements
  - Ex. posting the trot, two point gives sword extra superpowers

- **Games with rules** - follow or create rules to reach a shared objective in a game
  - Ex. relay races (pass the treasure), red light/green light (sneak up on the dragon), basketball (unlock the hidden cave)
Play in Children vs. Adults

- Exploration
- Modeling
- Communication
- Physical activity
- Examples:
  - Fort building
  - Dressing up
  - Play fighting

- Competition
- Relationship building
- “Playful spirit”, “playfulness”
- Examples:
  - Role play - LARP
  - Card/ board games
  - “Adventuring”
  - Spirit animals
To learn we need:

- Motivation
- Flow
  - Where the level of challenge and skill meet, and the person is completely engaged in the activity
  - “In the zone”
- Play is the “engagement” that allows learning to happen

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s
Flow Theory
Examples
As instructors, therapists, EAAT professionals...

- Be aware of the interests/imaginations of your students
- Be flexible
- Think outside the box (arena)
  - Find creative ways to connect play to your lesson content
- Say “YES”
Questions...?
Resources

Play

http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182
https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beautiful-minds/201203/the-need-pretend-play-in-child-development
https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2012/11/15/the-importance-of-play-for-adults/

Intrinsic Motivation

https://msu.edu/~dwong/StudentWorkArchive/CEP900F01-RIP/Webber-IntrinsicMotivation.htm