



## **The Link Between Decreased Play Opportunities and the Rise in Clinical Depression & Anxiety (Parent Education)**

In our introduction workshop we refer to the use of mental health statistics as a way to encourage parents to consider the healthy benefits of play and the side effects of restricting children's learning through play. Below are the statistics you may wish to quote in your conversations with parents.

Clinical depression and anxiety is often linked to a person's locus of control. If a person has a strong internal locus of control, they feel more in control of their world and life's ups and downs that come their way. They are more resilient and can overcome hurdles and challenges more confidently. If a person has a stronger 'external' locus of control, they feel that life's ups and downs happen *to* them, and they have little (or at times no) control over the outcomes.

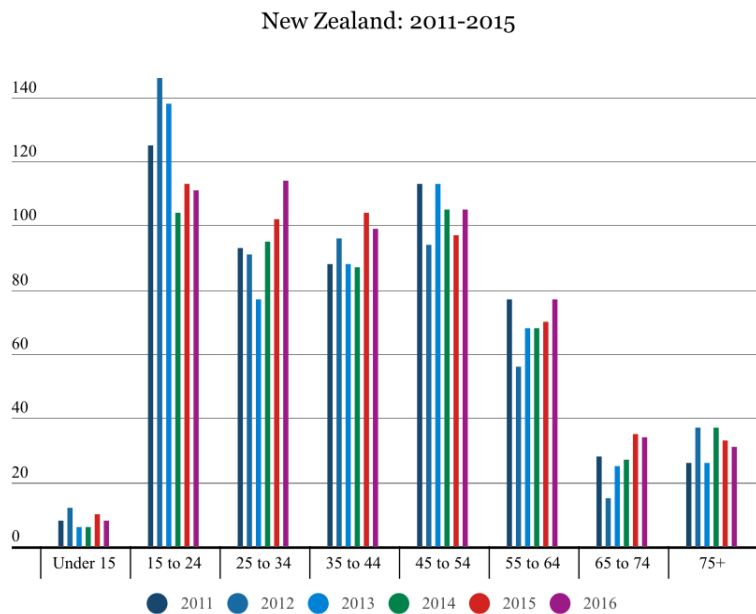
Play provides children with an opportunity to develop a stronger internal locus of control, as they are exposed to a variety of social situations, problems etc - this allows them to feel confident that they have the ability to overcome and 'problem-solve'. For children to be resilient to life's ups and downs, they need to be confident in their own ability to manage these - rather than relying on others to fix things for them.

There is now a significant correlation between the decline in play opportunities for children and the increased rates of clinical diagnoses of anxiety and depression in our children.

In America, research has demonstrated that 5-8 times as many high school students meet the criteria for diagnosis as major depression or anxiety disorder than 50 years ago. That is higher than during the Depression, The World Wars etc..... (American Study)

In the United States, rates of suicide have quadrupled in children under 15 years of age and doubled in the ages 15-24 years. This is seen to correlate with the linear trend of depression and anxiety.

## New Zealand Suicide Figures:



Source: Coroner's office

## Study of Play Opportunities in America between 1981 and 1997:

18% more time at school

145% more time doing homework

168% more time shopping with parents

55% less time conversing at home with others

19% less time watching TV

25% less time 'playing' in general.

Total play time per week included computer play of 11 hours (deemed indoor play)

Repeated again in 2003

Increase of another 32% in time on homework

Decrease of 7% time spent playing.

(source: Gray, 2013)