

The Primal Blueprint Podcast – Episode #10: On All Things Play with Darryl Edwards

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Brad Kearns: Welcome to the Primal Blueprint podcast. I am your host, Brad Kearns. We are here on location at Primalcon Vacation Tulum at the 5-star Dreams Tulum resort in Tulum, Mexico. I am so happy to have Darryl Edwards here, our favorite Primalcon master of concept and the lifestyle of play. Darryl is joining us again for another Primalcon. He came all the way from London, England. Thanks for coming to Tulum, Darryl.

Darryl Edwards: You are welcome. Thanks for the invitation.

Brad Kearns: So we are at the end of the five day string here and you have been going crazy the whole time getting people out of their comfort zones and playing. What kind of stuff have you done with the group here?

Darryl Edwards: [00:00:51] I have been introducing a new concept that play is serious play. So some people believe it is kind of frivolous and unnecessary and but think it is more about hard work. You can achieve great results. You can get fitter, stronger, and healthier through the power of play.

Brad Kearns: You also gave a presentation, which is rare for you. Usually you are outside, in the mix, climbing up walls, climbing up trees, running around the sand box. You also got into the conference center to talk about some of the specific lifestyle benefits of play. Can you highlight some of those points from your presentation.

Darryl Edwards: [00:01:29] Yeah. I think it is important for people to see that is some reasoning and methodology behind what I do. The benefits are wide ranging. The benefits to your health..your physical health. The improvements by increasing activity, the benefits that come with increase in social engagements. So it is about participation and cooperation and kind of team play. I have you have a transformation at the beginning, commencing the activity, So you are completely in the moment. You are

not just waiting for the activity to finish before you kind of release or realize the benefits. You are experiencing that right from the off.

Brad Kearns: Great. I have noticed when you start with your group and the very start, for those listeners...you are a super fit guy. You perform these amazing fetes of physical strength...lifting up large people and throwing them around and going basically non-stop for days and days on end and nights on end. But you start out your presentation saying, "Look, people. I'm a guy who hates working out. I hate doing the hard work." So that's why you discovered play. Tell us a little bit about that mindset.

Darryl Edwards: [00:02:42] I do hate to exercise. It probably sounds strange coming from a person who is trying to advocate more physical activity in our day-to-day lives. I realized that I want to cater to those who have already heard the message about increasing the activity for health. They want to know how and they want to know how they can maintain the motivation, again, through using play-based activity. So I hate to exercise but I love to play, and I love to move and I love to feel the benefits of movements. But using play as the vehicle. So I worked in an environment that was all about punishments and hard work and stress. The only way to get ahead was maintaining some competitive edge and so I took that in to the gym in to playing competitive sports. That's what I did all of the time. There was never really any down time. I realized that just taking a step back and thinking about play and thinking about how much I enjoyed movement as a child without any structure, with any instruction. I wanted to recreate that now as an adult, and then impart that knowledge to adults and children today.

Brad Kearns: Now if anyone were to watch the video or see some of the stuff you do with groups.....this stuff that is wild and crazy which cannot even be described on an audio program. Let's say someone is on their own and may be that category where they know they should work out, they are somewhat committed but they don't really love going in to the gym and hitting the machines. Let's say they went out to a park, and there are picnic benches there and there is a kids' playground stuff. What kind of thing would they do when they get out of their car and they want to do a play experience?

Darryl Edwards: [00:04:31] Okay. I suppose you have to start with having a playful mindset. You have to realize that it isn't about equipment in the park. It isn't about the jungle Jim or a park bench. It is about your environment full stop. So you can interact with your environment and choose anything you like, whether it is another human being, whether it is yourself in isolation. You can use any object in a playful manner. And so a fairly traditional exercise like a push-up or a press-up, as we call it in the U.K., you can do that on the ground. You can do that on a bench. You can do that next to a tree. You can push the tree. You can climb a tree. You can do a pull-up on a tree branch. The possibilities are endless. It is not so much about the physical activity itself. It's about the exploration. You can use your imagination. In that way you don't feel that it is place of isolation. You actually feel you are interacting with an inanimate object but you are still kind of entering that play experience and it kind of flow base experience.

Brad Kearns: So you are currently working on a book.....The Primal Playbook...which we can't wait to come out later in 2014...but for now are there some resources if I want to open up my mind and open up my fitness approach to be more playful? What would you recommend for how I would go about learning some more skills and ideas?

Darryl Edwards: [00:06:01] Visit my website: thefitnessexplorer.com. There you will see typical playoffs that I do. You will see what my group of students do in a session, and you also see a lot of the concepts and ideas in terms of written word but also in terms of video content as well. So I've lots of

photos, lots of videos, lots of contents on my website and it will give you flavor of what I do on a day to day basis. The book is going to take what is on my website currently and refine that and actually give people step by step instruction on how to develop a playful aspect to their life, as well as the psychology of play and how to maintain motivation to play, how to play as a family unit, how to play as adults, older generation, younger generation, how we can maintain that playful state. It kind of covers cradle to grave.

Brad Kearns: Let's talk about motivation for a second. That is a big one for the average fitness enthusiast that has somewhat level of motivation to join a gym, go frequently, maybe have periods of time in their life where they are stressed and they start falling off their motivation waivers. How would you get them to spark back up, to get them to rediscover their love for movement?

Darryl Edwards: [00:07:28] I suppose the transformation of it comes through play is based on immediate participation. So the second you commence playing, you want to continue. For most exercise activities, it really is the end goal that provides the benefits to that individual so it is difficult then to face an hour, two hours, 30 minutes of an activity that you feel is going to be about punishment and about regimen and about inflexibility. It is difficult to concur that on a daily basis, even though you know it is going to be really good for you to undertake that. So again, taking it back to play, it means as soon as you participate, you are going to laugh. You are going to have fun. You are going to be totally and completely in the moment. And you almost forget about the physical difficulties that you are undertaking, and you just focus on the enjoyment. You focus on this is actually great to do something I may have never done before, but I am going to continue to do this. I am going to continue to enjoy what I am doing.

Brad Kearns: Great. So let's say that you are a runner used to putting in your miles and going out there to put in your 6-mile run tonight, or what have you. What about a different idea than your usual run? What would be something that would generate a great workout effect and make it more playful?

Darryl Edwards: [00:08:57] If I was going to go on a 6-mile run, I would ditch the headphones and playlist and I would have a look at the environment that you probably kind of ignore because you have done the same kind of trail or run the same streets over the years. I'd look at the environment differently. I would notice the lamp posts, the benches, the trees, the fences, and anything that you could feel that you can interact with on a safe basis without causing damage. That's how you kind of want to approach this. You might run 100 meters. You might kind of crawl for another 100 meters. You might go for a sprint and you not looking for a steady state. You are looking what can I possibly get up to within the 6-miles of comic play. What can I possibly do within the 6-mile kind of play? It is not a 6-mile run, it is a 6-mile playground.

Brad Kearns: Anything goes.

Darryl Edwards: Yes, anything goes.

Brad Kearns: What about it's here in March and the continents are cold, windy, rainy, and you are forced to do your workout at the gym? So you got your machines. You got your floor space. It's your typical gym. How can we do something playful in there?

Darryl Edwards: [00:10:19] Usually there is some open floor space. Animal walks or animal crawls are a personal favorite of mine and, again, activities you can do by yourself. It is finding new ways of learning how your body moves. Learning how your body responds to different types of pressure. Learning how

your body responds to different types of balance challenge or [?] challenge. People can either use those activities as warm-up regimen, or kind of crank up the intensity using different patterns and complete that as your work out or better as your play out. So again, you are in a different environment, but play state is what you create. You see your environment differently. Whether you are using a kettle ball or treadmill. I have no issue with going in to a gym environment. I can still play even using the equipment that I have in that environment. There are no excuses. It is the mindset. It is internalized play. That is what play is about. You don't teach a child how to play. They have the tools already. We just lose that ability as we age.

Brad Kearns: We lose the ability almost by choice. It is still inherent in us. We just have to reawaken that.

Darryl Edwards: Yes. It is almost like being rewired and reconnected to that kind of childlike experience. But the benefits and wisdom of being an adult. So it is kind of making the best choices we can and reaping the benefits of the movements and as you said, it is a reawakening. We can all achieve that.

Brad Kearns: [00:12:09] Something we notice at Primalcon is when you get started with the new participants on day one, immediately in the first two minutes, you ask them to do some things that are probably highly uncomfortable. For example you have them partner up, for those of you who haven't seen the video in action, partner up, clasp hands and try push each other around or have fake fights with sound effects and these kind of things. These people don't know each other. They don't know what's hit them. They've just traveled across time zones in a jet and they wake up and here is this guy getting them out in the park and getting them way out of their social and physical comfort zone. So that first resistance that occurs at the very start and you are able to break through wonderfully because you are there in person. You are dynamic and get them to do it. The people who are going half speed in the back, you call them up to the front for the next demonstration. All know all your techniques. Let's go to the listener who is out on their own, and they are faced with that usual running course that they know they should go on and put their miles in. How can they break free from that embarrassment of being seen in public climbing a fence or jumping off a bench or something to that effect?

Darryl Edwards: [00:13:24] Find a playmate. Find someone who is willing to undertake the same type of activities. You know there is kind of the wisdom of the crowds. There is wisdom in having multiple people involved in the same kind of activity. So the embarrassment lessens. That's what I recommend. Whenever I hold group sessions, adults often stare at us, and I arranged this that we can be so relaxed about movements and kind of almost doing anything while enjoying ourselves in our movements. But the more fascinating is watching children who will literally stop and stare. They will ask their parents why they are not performing these types of movements. And they will ask their parents if they can actually join in and so you realize that, yes, some of the movements may be embarrassing. You may be invading someone's personal space. It is good to test people. It is good to have laughter and enjoy the experience with movements. It is fairly easy for me to break down the barriers, because people get this immediately. If they are willing actually to hold hands you really don't know what is coming next. The first few seconds they kind of get it. I have never experienced anyone kind of backing away, going, no, no I am not going to do this. Once I kind of get that contract, that kind of play contract, like holding hand for a particular game, they get it. Usually they are happy to do it again, and again. So I have never met any individual, who, once they have entered that contract isn't willing to see it through. And those people who don't want to enter the contract? They are the ones who never experience it. They are the ones that will be spectating. For the ones who decide to commence with the activity, it works.

Brad Kearns: [00:15:25] They know it is good for them. They know they are capable of doing it. They should be doing it. It is more fun and all that and I notice that the play session that you do at Primalcon kind of changes the social vibes for the rest of the day because after you have gone through such an experience, with your partner or with the entire group, everyone knows what they just went through and they are so much more at ease socially and they bond or connect better over the meal or over the next thing that they are doing strolling back down to the resort or what have you. It is a really wonderful way to break through barriers of all kinds in groups. You should go around and do it to company work teams and so forth on retreats.

Darryl Edwards: For sure, because I think that one important aspects of this is the group dynamic means that people of all shapes and sizes, with different backgrounds, male or female, strong or weak, very fit and athletic or couch potato. They all exist within a good setting. And I think the most interesting spirits in them is for me to pit the weakest individual with the strongest individual and for them to be some sort equalization where they can both participate in the same activity and both have a training effect, and kind of realize that, "Oh, my goodness! I can actually train with someone half my size 20% of my size, and can still enjoy this movement and I can still benefit from it." For someone who is very fit and athlete, the changes is their to approach to activity because they realize I don't have to face someone who is better than I to improve. I don't have to compete with another individual to improve. I can actually gain improvements whilst enjoying it and incorporate another individual and share that experience. For someone who is a couch potato who has a valid excuse of being very unfit. I haven't been active for 20 years. I am intimidated by seeing all these fit individuals around me. I can participate here in the entire play session and realize they actually don't have an excuse. They actually don't have to feel excluded from this play environment. For me that is the most interesting aspect of play is this kind of social team play based.

Brad Kearns: So what is an example of, let's say, pairing someone who is much stronger and more fit with someone weaker, even a parent and kid, for example, a specific movement or exercise you could do that would work in that manner?

Darryl Edwards: [00:18:02] Here's a story. I was in a park a few weeks ago, I saw two dogs are being walked. One owner with a boxer (basically like a horse in terms of its size) and one owner with a chihuahua. The chihuahua was kind of aggressive, barking and the boxer kind of looked at the chihuahua and thought what is the point of even trying. If I barked at you, you'd probably pass out. After that kind of exchange, they obviously realized that they wanted to play. And so the next 30-40 seconds the boxer and the chihuahua were basically play fighting, rolling around. The boxer was kind of smacking the chihuahua across the face, very very aggressive but in a playful way. Then they finished the activity. I suppose the point is, the stronger person (the boxer in this case) blended in and blended in enough for the chihuahua to still have a great experience. And for them to still continue with the experience. So for the same you could say male/female, father daughter they can still enter the play state. It doesn't matter what the activity is it is about creating this level the playing field. That is really what it is about. So again it is not really thinking about a specific example, it is about generating equalization where you go, "Hey, this is fun." Life isn't fair. Some people are stronger than others. Life isn't fair but we can for the 5, 10, 60 minutes, we can create a level playing field and enjoy this.

Brad Kearns: So humans can take a cue from the dogs. I notice at dog parks, they always work it out. The dogs always work it out when they are off their leashes and running free. It might be a little tension at first but when the real tension occurs when dogs are leashed. And the owners are stressed about it and they encounter another dog on the street and the dogs are barking and charging and barking at the other

dog. When you take those leashes off and turn them loose on a field, every single dog there is friendly and comfortable, and in a playful state.

Darryl Edwards: Yes, they are. They enter that play contract and the tails down and they play and then it's good-bye. They maybe don't see each other again. But they had an amazing time. There was no need for aggression in the beginning because it was great. It is fascinating and we are animals. It is good to see we can be influenced by other animals' behavior, when it comes to the human experience. So I learned a lot from watching that. I was sure I could definitely incorporate that. I will be doing that anyway but I kind of really hits home when I saw what was happening there.

Brad Kearns: Now you can add the boxer/chihuahua game you are going to add. At Primalcon we have all kinds of different presentations of flavor of varieties. You have gone in the sequence with proper strength training fundamentals with people out there with the Olympic bar and learning the movements or doing traditional strength training environment and then they go to the play session and I think maybe the first concept is for most people is okay, we are just going to run around and jump in the air and laugh and giggle. This is not necessarily an easy and gentle session. This can be a highly intense experience. That 6-mile un that you mention could be the hardest one you've ever done if you experience climbing fences and jumping off tables. It doesn't have to be. It can be along the spectrum of as far as the intensity of the physical workout.

Darryl Edwards: [00:22:01] Yes. It is a very good point. Because it is about the experience. There are times when you want to run the intensity up in order to enjoy that moment. So you playing tag, for example, there is an element of sprinting, bounding, lunging, twisting and deceleration after acceleration. It is very hard work. It isn't easy. But people want to continue to play that game. They will have a little breather and dive right back in to play the game. And so, in my opinion, there shouldn't be a barrier to exercise or barrier to activity. Which means somebody who has been sedentary for many years should be able to participate in one of my sessions as well as somebody who is an elite athlete and they should both have the training effect they desire from the session. So yes people expect it to be kind of a walk in the park but it is this walk in the park that will go from a walk to a run, to a sprint, to strength, to focus on flexibility, to focus on coordination, agility. It is about variety and so a child playing....you never see a child decide to go for a run in a straight line for a mile because that is going to be fun. That is not just going to happen. They'll run for a short while then think this is boring, I am going to start zig zagging when I run, or I am going to run in a spot of 360s until I get dizzy, and then I am going to wrestle and piggy-back carry. Play horsing and see how many people I can get on my back. I can't do that but if I go crawling, I can get more people on my back. Okay let's try that. They are constantly looking at ways of, by using their imagination, to ramp up the intensity of when they need to and to power it back down when they need to.

Brad Kearns: The great thing about that is you can apply that intuitive approach to exercise which is so important. We both have talked about in our presentations where we are not programmed. We are not a robot. We are not designed to go do a certain random specific workout on a particular day. On the days you are tired, or feeling lazy, or whatever, you can alter your play session accordingly. And then sometimes you can go crazy and push your outer limit and break through to new fitness levels.

Darryl Edwards: [00:24:43] Yeah, exactly. At that kind of volume level, you can kind of tweak it as a limit fix. Depending on if you are by yourself or with other individuals. Depending on what objects you see you happen to have in front of you. These will change what you are prepared to do at that time. So the expectation is, "I just want to play." I suppose to get a little more serious about it. I do want to play but still

think about setting fitness. Parameters and other attributes. I still want to get stronger. I still want to get faster. I just don't want to have some sort of periodization or linear approach to get it, to deal with that strength. For someone who is a very strong and capable individual, I present a game or activity that can challenge their strength and for them to look at me, and say, he doesn't look that strong but "That is a really strong guy." A lot of people are surprised when I am pitted with somebody who is twice my size and spends a lot of time in a gym and we perform kind of play-based activity that is about strength and power. Often times I will dominate. The principle is again, is for someone to say no matter what else I am doing, there is always something else I can do to improve my speed. It isn't about just jumping up and down and singing songs and roll around on the ground. Isn't that playful and fun. There is a time and a place for that. There is also a time and a place for improving your physical capability. To face the particular challenges you may never face again. You want to create an environment where you say, I do want to get stronger. What can I possibly do? I am not in the gym. I am in the park where there is a log on the ground. Can I pick that up? May and maybe not. Do I know what the weight is of that log? I am going to get a sense of my ability to pick it up. The log isn't here any more. There's a rock over there. Can I pick it up? Maybe I can get someone to help? The point is to realize what the body can and cannot do and not be too concerned about it.

Brad Kearns: Darryl, that is great stuff. Thank you so much for joining us on the Podcast. Gracias para escuchan al Primal Blueprint podcast de Tulum, Mexico. and here at the Primalcon Vacation Dreams Tulum wrapping it up on the last day with Darryl Edwards in our makeshift studio here at the resort. If you haven't experienced Darryl, there is absolutely nothing like his presentation. I hope you can join us at a future Primalcon. The next one coming up is Primalcon New York, at Mohawk Mountain House June 5 through 8 in upstate New York. It is a beautiful facility. Check it out on our website primalblueprint.com. Darryl I believe you are joining us. We look forward to seeing you at Mohawk at the next Primalcon. Thank you for listening to the Primal Blueprint podcast.