



# Chai Lifeline Moms Learn Firsthand the Power of Play

"Playtime is mandatory," says Rahla Kahn, the "playshop" leader of The Power of Play. Ms. Kahn is a humor consultant who brought a special kind of healing to the West Coast mothers who attended the Sohacheski Family Center's "Seasons of Respite" program in July. The daylong seminar was the final of four programs held during the year for mothers of seriously ill children, many of whom had never taken time for themselves before attending this ground-breaking series.

"Laughter and play have a physical effect on the body," said Ms. Kahn. "They actually affect our physiology and strengthen the immune system."

The idea that attitude actually has a physical impact on our body might once have been laughable, but recent studies have demonstrated that it's, well, no laughing matter. Both Dr. Bruce Lipton, a cellular biologist at Stamford University, and Dr. Candance Pert, a pharmacologist and author of *Molecules of Emotion: Why You Feel the Way You Feel*, have both documented the interaction between biology and emotion.

"There's a whole scientific conversation about what happens with our bodies when we have a positive attitude," asserted Ms. Kahn.

Ms. Kahn described the challenge of living with a sick child in terms that

the women definitely understood. "Sometimes life throws us so many 'no's. How do you find time for life-affirming play when laughter and games are the last thing on your mind?" she asked.

The women who attended the daylong program, held at a magnificent private home in Beverly Hills, weren't thinking about the science or verbalizing the 'no's as their laughter mixed with tears throughout the day. Ms. Kahn used a number of theater exercises and games to encourage the women to explore how they can make play a regular part of their families' lives.

The moms shared their stories, finding common threads that they wove together throughout the day. They brought their own brands of humor into the anecdotes of doctors and treatments, illness and recovery that they told one another.

"The day was fantastic," one mother enthused afterwards. "When your child is sick for years, you think you have it all under control, but every few years, something happens and the pressure starts to mount. You go to a lot of lectures about reducing stress, but you feel like you've heard it all already. This was so new and so empowering; I left feeling that this could work."

"What we're finding out from the research is laughter shifts the physiology of the body. Endorphins are released every time we laugh. Having a positive attitude actually affects our biology," said Ms. Kahn.

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