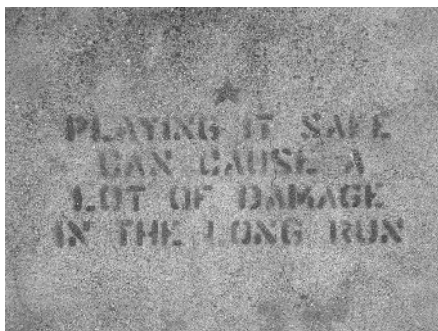


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## THE JECH GALLERY

### Playing it safe



**Figure 1** Social comment sprayed on a wall in an inner suburb of Bristol.

Play has physical, social, emotional and cognitive benefits for children.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that opportunity for spontaneous play may be all that is needed to increase young children's levels of physical activity,<sup>2</sup> an appealing concept in view of our burgeoning, societal obesity epidemics.

Surveys suggest that the vast majority of children enjoy playing outside and would like to do so more.<sup>3</sup> Yet, from a parental stance, our outdoor urban environments are often ridden with hazards such as stranger-danger, traffic speed, gangs and drugs. These issues affect parental licence on children's mobility and are particularly pronounced in more deprived neighbourhoods.<sup>4,5</sup> Debates around "good parenting" are likely to be further fuelled by media hype, different health-orientated values and bad science.

We stumbled across this social comment sprayed on a wall in an inner suburb of Bristol. Its artist has poignantly captured the risk-orientated conundrum faced by parents today. These few stencilled words summarise the complexities of health advocacy for the public health and child development communities. How can we help parents negotiate these swings and roundabouts of modern life, allow children access to positive risk-taking opportunities and achieve the right balance for their child's optimum health and welfare?

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