



**Who:** Lawrence Biscontini, MA, International Fitness and Wellness Consultant

**Where:** Fajardo, Puerto Rico

**Why:** Because he implements play into so many aspects of his life for himself and others. He's the creator of a class called "Play!" offered at the Golden Door Spas, which maximizes workout benefits in minimal amounts of time in a way that makes participants play and have fun at fitness via games. Biscontini won Instructor of the Year Awards from ACE (2002), IDEA (2004), Can Fit Pro (Specialty, 2004), and Best Mind-Body Presenter (ECA, 2005).

## At Play with Lawrence Biscontini

### **Organic Spa: What does play mean to you?**

**Lawrence Biscontini:** Putting together mind, body, and spirit in a way to empower the self to find a light-spirit approach to movement very day. It means dancing with your soul whether at work or play. It means taking care of your outer adult while making time to entertain the inner child every day.

### **OS: How do you encourage your students to be more playful?**

**LB:** Use great music, great equipment, and maximize quality over quantity. My students don't do one hundred of anything. I let them do less repetitions and smile, so they end up asking me if they can do more work, which is a refreshing reversal. I am always combining different disciplines so I challenge their muscles, but they also never know what to expect!

### **OS: How has fitness changed in the years you've been in business?**

**LB:** We are more sophisticated now in our research, but we are still missing the boat when it comes to reaching the inactive. While the U.S. leads the world in fitness trends, it also leads the world in obesity. We've also come full circle: Barefoot training is back, just like it was in the early days of Jane Fonda and calisthenics. Equipment is more playful and sophisticated (like the Bosu, for example), yet simple (like gliding and foam rollers). We've also gone from worrying about results to caring more about the time at play *during* the workout experience, so the quality has improved over the years.

### **OS: Where do you see the future of fitness in the spa arena?**

**LB:** I see more synergy between fitness and other aspects of the spa. As a spa consultant, what I do is grow this synergy among departments so that someone can have an entire experience that links a treatment to a meal to a class to a boutique retail experience. Spa leaders are now understanding the importance of play and movement in the spa because that's the time that people have to move and grow.

### **OS: What can we do to add more joy to our lives?**

**LB:** Discover at least three definitions of what 'play'

can mean in your life and spend at least five minutes each day doing one of them. Make sure that laughter is a part of each day. Plan for spontaneity, which means sometimes scheduling play on the agenda and then taking time for oneself without feeling guilty. Use music for pure joy. Practice random acts of kindness to reap a greater sense of joy beyond immediate gratification. Combine wild imaginings with perfect calm. Remember that sometimes, too much analysis equals paralysis. Take a new kind of fitness class. Make great choices. Remember that, on a grand scale, everything matters. Remember that, on a small scale, nothing matters. Hug trees to stay grounded. Entertain the child in everyone and educate the adult in everyone. Do what makes you smile, and try to do it better each time.

### **OS: What brings you the greatest joy?**

**LB:** Seeing success in a client over time.

- Being interviewed for a magazine that gets the power of play and dedicates an entire regular section to it!
- Being in an inspirational church service with incredible music.
- Catching both a sunrise and sunset on the same day.
- Giving my yearly contribution to my favorite charity.
- Seeing the expression of joy on someone else's face when opening a gift that is really liked.
- Moonbathing on full moon.
- Training trainers.
- Experiencing a new country for the first time.

### **OS: How important is play to longevity?**

**LB:** When I was an overweight youth in grade school, my father died of heart disease. A few years later my mother had open heart surgery valve replacement, and just last year my only brother died instantly of a heart attack. Of the little I remember of my father, I do remember that he knew the importance of playing each day to find enjoyment. He used to call it "seizing the day," or "carpe diem." That has stayed with me so much that I chose that as the theme for my latest book, *Early Morning Cardio Workouts*. He told me repeatedly, "Remember that you shouldn't stop playing because you grow old, for you will grow old once you stop playing."  
—Mary Bemis