

Toy Manufactures Create More Toys for Adults

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Relieve (Verb) /rɪˈli:v/ to reduce pain or an unpleasant feeling
Example: I find that going for a run can be a good way to relieve stress.
2. Resonate (Verb) /ˈrezəneɪt/ to cause a feeling of connection or familiarity
Example: Sally Rooney's books really resonated with me when I read them in college.
3. Trend (Noun) /trɛnd/ something that is popular, usually for a short time
Plant-based diets have become a global trend in recent years.
4. Themed (Adjective) /θi:md/ designed with a particular event, topic, or theme in mind
Example: The party was themed Winter Wonderland and had all the characters in the movie Frozen.
5. Embrace (Verb) /ɪmˈbreɪs/ to accept or support a new idea, technology, belief, etc.
Example: Young people are usually quick to embrace new technology.



Since the pandemic, Elizabeth Hulanick has turned to toys from her childhood to relieve stress. She and her co-workers buy Lego together at Target and play at their desks. She also started playing with Silly Putty again, because doing so comforted her. For this 37-year-old New Jersey resident, even her American Girl doll resonates more these days. When she was a child, she waited one year for her mother to buy her the doll and now, she says, it reminds her to always be patient.

Long before the pandemic, many adults turned to toys for comfort. But all the stresses from the health crisis seem to have encouraged the trend. And even as the pandemic's threat fades, toymakers see adults' interest in toys as long-lasting and are creating new products, services and websites aimed at the older group. Among the best-selling items are Star Wars and Harry Potter-themed Lego sets, stuffed toys from Squishmallows and action figures from companies like Marvel.

This so-called "kid-adult" market is significant. Ages 18 and older represented 14% of US toy industry sales for the 12 months ending September 2022, worth \$5.7 billion. It grew 19% since the 12 months ending September 2021, according to the NPD Group Inc., a market research firm.

Last year, Build-a-Bear created a website called Bear Cave for 18-year-olds and over, selling items like a stuffed rabbit holding a bottle of wine. Lego sees adults of all ages embracing its colorful building blocks and has been steadily increasing its products for adults since 2020. It now has 100 sets, including luxury cars, Van Gogh's Starry Night and the Space Shuttle Discovery.

Genevieve Cruz, senior director at Lego, says that the pandemic certainly had an impact "as adults found themselves stuck at home with nothing else to do." However, she adds that Lego believes the trend goes beyond the pandemic.

DISCUSSION

1. What are your thoughts on the increasing popularity of toys aimed at adults?
2. Have you bought any toys since the pandemic began?
3. Do you have any adult friends or family who collect toys?
4. What toys did you play with most as a kid?
5. Are there any toys from your childhood that are still popular?