



ARTS & CULTURE

Toys for Grown-ups a Growing Market

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, Elizabeth Hulanick has turned to toys from her childhood to deal with worry and **stress**.

She started bringing Lego toys to work to build things out of the colorful blocks with her co-workers. She also started playing with Silly Putty, a toy made of special rubbery material that changes colors. Playing with the Silly Putty, she said, brought her **comfort**.

“I always need something to be **tinkering** with, and that’s probably the safest bet for me to stick with a toy versus keep trying to figure out how to fix cars or something like that,” said Hulanick, who is 37 years old and lives in New Jersey.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many adults turned to toys to remember feelings from their childhood. The stresses from the worldwide health crisis only grew that **trend**, said Jim Silver. He is editor-in-chief of TTPM, a toy **review** website.

Many toymakers see adults’ interest in toys as a long-lasting thing, even after the pandemic fully ends. This so-called “kid-adult” market is a big part of the toy industry. The market is the second-fastest-growing group after **customers** aged 12 to 17.

Some toy companies are creating new products, services and websites designed for the older group.

For example, Mattel’s American Girl Cafe recently added alcoholic drinks to their **menu** after seeing adults show up without children. American Girl makes popular, costly dolls.

Last year, the company Build-a-Bear launched a website called Bear Cave for customers 18 and over. Products include a stuffed rabbit holding a bottle of wine.

Even the fast-food restaurant McDonald's is marketing to toy-loving adults. It released its adult Happy Meals in October. McDonald's President and CEO Chris Kempczinski said the company sold half its supply of collectible toys in the first four days of the special deal.

The Lego Group has been increasing its products for adults since 2020. It now has 100 toys designed for older customers. Among the most popular toys for adults are Star Wars and Harry Potter-linked Lego sets. That information comes from NPD Group Inc., a market research company.

Genevieve Cruz is senior director at Lego. She said, "The pandemic certainly served as a **catalyst** for this trend as adults found themselves stuck at home with nothing else to do with a lot of time [on] their hands."

Cruz added, "We do believe that the trend goes beyond the pandemic."

I'm Ashley Thompson.

The Associated Press reported this story. Ashley Thompson adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

stress -n. a state of mental tension from pressure

trend -n. something that is currently popular or fashionable

review -v. to report one's opinion about the quality of some product

comfort -n. a state where a person is at ease and is not feeling any pain

tinkering -n. the activity of trying to fix something by making small changes

customer -n. a person who buys goods or services

menu -n. a list of the things offered at a restaurant

catalyst -n. a person or thing that brings about a change or starts some kind of action

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