The term rough-and-tumble play has come to include all play using the full body, including body contact with another individual; body contact with objects; and striking objects with feet, hands, or an object, such as a racket or bat. This definition even includes running, climbing, and other (possibly) solitary activities (Tannock 2011).

While reviewing the literature on rough and tumble play over the last fifteen years, I have discovered no research indicating that roughhousing causes violence....When we create trusting environments for roughhousing, self-expression is encouraged and the need for unhealthy competition is removed.

Roughhousing activates many different parts of the body and the brain, from the amygdalae, which process emotions, and the cerebellum, which handles complex motor skills, to the prefrontal cortex, which makes high-level judgments. The result is that every roughhousing playtime is beneficial for body and brain as well as for the loftiest levels of the human spirit: honor, integrity, morality, kindness, and cooperation.

...rough-and-tumble play (playful fighting and chasing), which may look wild from the outside, is constrained by rules. An always-present rule in play fighting, for example, is that you mimic some of the actions of real fighting, but you don’t really hurt the other person. You don’t hit with all your force (at least not if you are the stronger of the two); you don’t kick, bite, or scratch. Play fighting is much more controlled than real fighting; it is always an exercise in restraint.