



## "Bonding Thru Board Games"



### Developing Soft Skills: Self Control

Refers to one's ability to delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention, to manage emotions, and regulate behaviors.

#### How is Self-Control Developed?

- » Turn taking is not an innate skill. Turn taking is a valuable skill for making friends, waiting, being patient, negotiating, and problem solving. Waiting only a few minutes at a time are helpful in supporting self-regulation, attention, and listening.
- » Getting a "bad roll of the dice" can seem unfair. People automatically respond as if it were a threat and go into "fight or flight" mode. Take a breath before you say or do anything.
- » Dealing with roadblocks can be more easily overcome when realizing there are different alternatives to get it done. It helps to think out of the box. It makes you flexible.
- » Games involve constant change performed by other players and new thoughts are needed to persevere. Being OK with changes and rolling with the punches provide multiple opportunities for positive practice on resiliency.
- » Board games are perfect terrain to develop patience. Patience is needed to focus on the game, to pay attention to other players, to work through challenges, and to achieve long-term goals.

See the fact sheet, Bonding Thru Board Games: Developing Soft Skills (MF3489): <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3489.pdf>

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## Developing Soft Skills

### How can board games prepare children for school and the workplace?

Parents, guardians, and teachers have a huge responsibility in this developmental crisis. Board games offer perfect ground to develop soft skills in a practical, protected environment.

- 1. Self-control: Refers to one's ability to delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention and regulate behaviors.**
- a. Positive Self-concept: Refers to having self-confidence, self-worth, self-esteem, pride, motivation, and resiliency.
  - b. Mental Health: Refers to a person showing emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how you think, feel, and act as you cope with life. Soft skills are mental coping skills.
3. Social Skills: The ability to get along, show respect for others, use context-appropriate behavior, and practice resolving conflict.
4. Communication: A person uses non-verbal, verbal, written, and active listening skills.
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### Developing Soft Skills: Positive Self-Concept

Self-confidence, self-worth, self-esteem, pride, motivation, resiliency.

#### How is Positive Self-Concept Developed?

- » Players are on an equal footing at the beginning of the game and paths are provided for players to gain and develop additional abilities of their choice.
- » Self-motivation is a key component to achieve goals and feel a sense of accomplishment. It is having the drive and enthusiasm to achieve what the game is asking for. You take matters into your own hands, completing the tasks of the game.
- » You are capable of great things! Players must put forward effort, perseverance, and determination to reach the goal.
- » Even when making a strong effort but still falling short, players concentrate on the hard work, not on the winning or losing.
- » Keep trying until it is mastered. Stomp those ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts)! Overcoming failure breeds empathy and the ability to bounce back from adversity.

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### Developing Soft Skills: Positive Self-Concept — Mental Health

Emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how you think, feel, and act as you cope with life. Soft skills are mental coping skills.

#### How is Mental Health Developed?

- » Board games help reduce isolation. It will help to stave off loneliness and build positive relationships with others.
- » Board games offer a structured way to meet others. Having a game as the frame of the activity allows friendships to build slowly in a less formal or pressure-filled way.
- » Board games help family or friends develop cohesiveness. Face-to-face interaction is a big component of playing board games and supports good mental health.
- » It promotes good old-fashioned social connections in-person. It creates an emotional bond for the family or friends and fosters better survival likelihood as well as communication.
- » Playing board games removes stress by putting you in a flow state, shifting your brain away from daily stressors and making you a champion of whatever you are doing.
- » Players learn to stay calm when the inevitable (e.g.) Jenga tower falls. Laughter is nature's stressbuster, reducing heart rate and blood pressure in the short term and increasing your wellbeing in the long term.

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## "Bonding Thru Board Games"



### Developing Soft Skills: Social Skills

Ability to get along, respect for others, context-appropriate behavior, and practice resolving conflict. To create and maintain satisfying relationships.

#### How are Social Skills Developed?

- » Board games bring all kinds of people together and allow opportunities to sharpen interactions with others. It will set up a "mock" situation in which your child will experience a wide variety of emotions. Adults can help the child work through each and every one of them.
- » Playing a game requires patience, being able to wait and take turns, negotiation about who goes first, agreeing to and sticking to the rules, and being a good sport, whether you win or lose.
- » Players learn social cues, social speech filtering, and practice empathy.
- » Players learn to consider and understand that others' feelings may be different from their own. Games help individuals become emotionally self-aware.
- » In cooperative games, players work as a team and must be willing to accept input and help from others, teams begin to recognize specific skill sets, and together make decisions that advance the whole.

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### Developing Soft Skills: Communication Skills

Communication contributes to social skills and affects the depth of relationships. These skills include non-verbal, verbal, written, and active listening skills.

#### How is Communication Developed?

- » Board games create a structure that allows players to step out of their shells and into a world of communication.
- » Nonverbal: Communicating with your eyes and body is a big component of board games. Sly smiles, shifting eye contact, as well as hand gestures and body positioning can communicate purpose or keep players guessing.
- » Verbal: Board games are a platform to create conversations. Players begin sharing their feelings when unsure what to do when an opponent blocks a move, or to be a good sport when losing or winning. Players must communicate well in order to negotiate convincingly.
- » Written: Board games help a player learn to understand written instructions on the cards for the next clue. In some games, the player must draw crazy pictures to describe a word or sentence, learn to recognize numbers on the dice, or read symbols. Players are exposed to meaning interpretation through grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, and style.
- » Active listening: Many games involve figuring out other people's intentions or what is behind what they say. In negotiations or teamwork, active listening is vital to analyzing the situation and to foresee possible outcomes.

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MF3530 July 2020



## "Bonding Thru Board Games"



### Developing Soft Skills: Higher-Order Thinking

Higher order thinking (mental ability) and executive function (mental capacity) include problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making. Ability to identify an issue and take information from multiple sources to evaluate options in order to reach a reasonable conclusion.

### How is Higher-Order Thinking Developed?

**Working Memory:** The ability to retain and manipulate distinct pieces of information over short periods of time. Attention to details.

- » Players work at retaining the instructions, understanding the game, and planning.
- » Players must develop concentration and visualization on the board, player's moves, and opponents' moves.

**Mental Flexibility:** The ability to sustain or shift attention in response to different demands or to apply different rules in different settings.

- » Players will anticipate what other players will do and use that to weigh the next move.
- » Players learn to juggle multiple tasks successfully. They learn to think in different ways to tackle a problem, creating strategies, thinking out of the box, creating resiliency and bouncing back quickly when adversity strikes, diversifying in the event one choice does not turn out as anticipated.
- » Players learn to take a concept and apply it creatively in different scenarios. They are encouraged to make creative decisions under pressure.

See the fact sheet, Bonding Thru Board Games: Developing Soft Skills (MF3489): <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3489.pdf>

Contact your local K-State Research and Extension office:



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## Developing Soft Skills

### How can board games prepare children for school and the workplace?

Parents, guardians, and teachers have a huge responsibility in this developmental crisis. Board games offer perfect ground to develop soft skills in a practical, protected environment.

1. **Self-control:** Refers to one's ability to delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention and regulate behaviors.
2. a. **Positive Self-concept:** Refers to having self-confidence, self-worth, self-esteem, pride, motivation, and resiliency.
2. b. **Mental Health:** Refers to a person showing emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how you think, feel, and act as you cope with life. Soft skills are mental coping skills.
3. **Social Skills:** The ability to get along, show respect for others, use context-appropriate behavior, and practice resolving conflict.
4. **Communication:** A person uses non-verbal, verbal, written, and active listening skills.
5. **Higher-order Thinking (Mental Ability) or Executive Function (Mental Capacity):** Refers to abilities including problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making. It's the ability to identify an issue and take information from multiple sources to evaluate options in order to reach a reasonable conclusion.

**Elizabeth Brunscheen-Cartagena**

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