

Bonding Thru Board Games

Introduction

Families live in a busy world in which time together is often lost in the buzz of activity. Family bonding time is important to maintain close relationships among family members. One way to increase this time is through the use of Euro-style board games. A Eurogame, or Euro-style game, is a class of tabletop games that generally uses abstract pieces in a literal theme and is designed around the concepts of creating, developing, or nourishing. Euro-style games emphasize strategy while downplaying luck (players are allowed to control randomness) and indirect player conflict, which usually involves competition over resources. Eurogame activities create positive environments for relationships to grow.

Through this program, participants have the opportunity to learn and develop secure relationships and life skills, including:

- » Understand the definition and purpose of Eurogames, or Euro-style games.
- » Develop the six major qualities of successful and strong families.
- » Know how to build and strengthen family cohesion.
- » Build shared memories through a common, enjoyable experience.
- » Apply social-emotional and academic skills.

History of Board Games

Board games were first created and played as early as 5000 B.C. Dice were used in the first board game; however, it is not the typical dice game of today. Dice games began as painted carved stone and flat sticks that were painted on a single side. Rather than rolling one or two dice at once, multiple sticks would be tossed and the number of painted sides of the sticks that landed face up equaled that player's roll. After the sticks were no longer used as dice, glass, copper,



ivory, marble, and brass were commonly used to make the six-sided dice we think of today. The first creation of the six-sided die comes from the Roman era. Board games were discovered as a royal pastime in 3100 B.C., an aid used in religious teaching in 3000 B.C., an influence over military strategy in 1300 B.C., and an essential part of childhood in 500 B.C. By 400 A.D., the game of chess had been invented and spread with the Viking travelers. In the United States, in 1903, "The Landlord's Game" was created by Lizzie Magie, which is now known as the Parker Brothers game Monopoly. Euro-style board games began to surface in the 1960s but did not gain popularity in Europe until the 1970s and 1980s, primarily in Germany. Euro-style board games came to the United States in 1995 with the game "The Settlers of Catan."

Differences Between Traditional and Euro-Style Board Games

Traditional or American-style board games:

- » Focus on luck
- » Are conflict-based
- » Have a common theme
- » Have an extended time of play

Euro-style board games:

- » Highlight strategy
- » Play time is predictable
- » Players are not eliminated
- » De-emphasize conflict and luck
- » Require planning and thought
- » Literal theme with abstract pieces
- » Games are simple to learn

Why Choose a Euro Game?

The physical components include wooden cubes and meeples (wooden tokens in basic silhouette shapes) designed to keep you interested even when it's not your turn. These games place players on equal footing at the start of the game and provide branching paths for players to gain additional abilities of their choice. Simple rules and short playing times are two components of many Euro-style games. Central fundamentals of Euro-style games include an emphasis on strategy, indirect player conflict — which usually involves competition over resources or points — and player control of randomness. Players are focusing on building the most efficient systems to reach the endgame with more points than the other players.

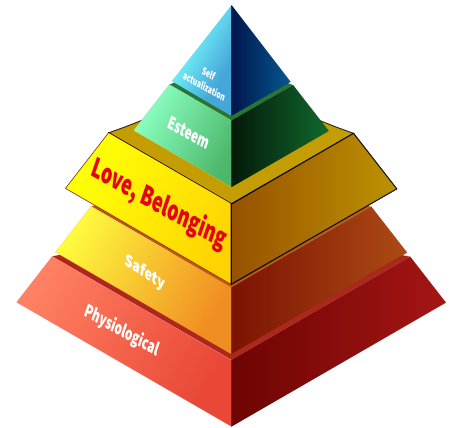
These games are designed for players of all ages, children and adults, and player interaction is often limited and more peaceful than direct conflict or confrontation. This creates a positive environment for relationships to grow. Euro board games are an entertaining and clever way to teach social skills without resistance. Unlike video games, these board games promote face-to-face interaction, a key component to connecting, learning how to read body language, and being able to see beyond words.

Playing board games has been demonstrated to be effective in allowing students to apply a full spectrum

of social skills. The best-known skills include: teamwork, communication, time management, problem solving, and leadership.

How Do Board Games Benefit Relationship Building?

In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, belonging and love needs are the third tier. These needs are fulfilled by friends and intimate relationships. Board games provide the



opportunity to gather families and friends together, across generations, to connect, compete, and have a great time together.

Soft skills are a crucial piece of

forming successful relationships in life. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) organization, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, social awareness, relationship skills, and self-management are five important skills necessary for social emotional learning and interaction.

If children lack the social and behavioral skills necessary for positive play, they can resort to challenging behaviors to convey the messages they are attempting to get across. Building positive relationships is a key component in positive interactions with children. Forming positive relationships allow children to feel accepted, encourages respect and empathy among children and adults, and helps to build a supportive environment for learning and connecting.

Family communication is an important slice of the successful family pie. Without successful communication, a family is not able to effectively interact or problem-solve as a unit.

Communication is not only achieved by speaking, but also by listening. Effective listening can show care and compassion to another while also building trust. Positive communication is a subconscious trust-building action. Positive body language and movements, facial expressions, and eye contact are

examples of nonverbal communication. If positive communication, whether it is verbal or nonverbal, is not present among family members, conflict is likely.

Playing board games is one way that a family can spend time together. Strong family relationships are built by families who enjoy spending time with one another and exhibit successful communication.

Board games allow families to create a foundation for trust and, ultimately, long-lasting relationships. It is important for parents, grandparents, and other family members to find a way to carve out time to spend together as a family. Each time family members positively interact with one another it builds and strengthens the bond between them. Board games foster that face-to-face interaction needed to connect deeply with each other and to develop the other traits of strong families.

Educational Value of Board Games

Board games can help strengthen STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) skills. STEM education helps develop analytical, science, and math skills, as well as attention to detail and technical skills. Board games can also help strengthen assorted “soft skills,” such as communication, listening, empathy, leadership, teamwork, time management, creative problem solving, and more.

According to Susan Turgeson, Family Consumer Science has seen the need to integrate STEM and “soft” skills into the FCS curricula, not just as “good skills” to have in 21st-century education, but for the U.S. to remain globally competitive.

Other skills board games could teach individuals at any age include visual perception, hand-eye coordination, and manual dexterity, among others. Playing board games can also teach how to deal with one’s luck changing in an instant, whether it is a positive or negative change. The effects of using educational board games in small-group activities to improve numerical knowledge have been established as well. Research has also documented a positive relationship between academic board games and improvement in the classroom. Board games actually access multiple learning styles, including visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and reading/writing, building the kind of learning (sometimes referred to as scaffolding) that meets the unique needs of the players.

Play is crucial for a child’s development and also beneficial for people of all ages. Play can add joy, relieve stress, supercharge learning, and connect you to others and the world around you. It can trigger the release of endorphins, the body’s natural feel-good chemicals, which promote an overall sense of well-being and can temporarily relieve pain. Play and laughter perform an essential role in building strong, healthy relationships by bringing people closer together, creating a positive bond, and resolving conflict and disagreements. Older adults can also benefit from many of the concepts that children do when playing — stimulating the mind and boosting creativity, fostering relationships, building empathy, compassion, and trust with others, and strengthening social skills.

Six Traits of Strong and Successful Families

In his book, titled “Family Treasures: Creating Strong Families,” Dr. John DeFrain examines what he says are the six major qualities that strong, successful families exhibit across all cultures in order to create positive environments. These include: enjoyable time together, appreciation and affection for one another, positive communication, spiritual well-being (values, beliefs, and life skills), successful management of stress and crisis, and commitment to each other. There are ways that families can achieve these six qualities through everyday living.

Enjoyable Time Together

- » Lots of quality time
- » Good things take time
- » Enjoying each other’s company
- » Simple good times
- » Sharing fun times



Appreciation and Affection

- » Caring for each other
- » Friendship
- » Respect for individuality
- » Playfulness
- » Humor

Positive Communication

- » Giving compliments
- » Sharing feelings
- » Avoiding blaming
- » Being able to compromise
- » Agreeing to disagree

Spiritual Well-Being

- » Hope
- » Faith
- » Compassion
- » Shared ethical values
- » Oneness with humankind

Successful Stress and Crisis Management

- » Are adaptable
- » See crises as challenges and opportunities
- » Grow through crises together
- » Open to change
- » Bounce back from stress and crises

Commitment to Each Other

- » Trust
- » Honesty
- » Dependability
- » Faithfulness
- » Sharing

Conclusion

Because families live in a busy world, finding time to spend together can be difficult, but maximizing that time is important. The memories that come from spending time with family and friends far outweigh the memories of time spent in isolation. Having fun, practicing successful communication and listening skills, developing soft skills, and using face-to-face interaction can all be accomplished using board games to foster and improve relationships.

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