

Bonding Thru Board Games: Developing Soft Skills

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Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson about socio-emotional skills or “soft skills” development through board games, participants will be able to:

- Identify the five core soft skills needed for home, school, and work.
- Understand how Euro-style board games support skill development.
- Use these skills while playing games.
- Create happy memories by sharing a fun experience with others.

Potential Audiences

- Intergenerational groups
- Community groups
- Veterans
- Seniors
- Churches
- Families
- Schools
- Special needs families
- Gaming groups
- Social workers

What Leaders Need to Prepare for the Lesson

- Time to read over the leader’s guide
- Pocket cards for each quality of a strong and successful family (MF3403 and MF3403S)
- Displays to explain and showcase the program
- Fact sheets for participants (MF3489)
- Brochures to further promote the program



Students playing board games at a school STEM event.

- Board games for participants to play
- PowerPoint presentation to promote the program

Introduction

Technology and social changes have greatly affected how we live, work, and connect, especially to the impact of COVID-19, essentially creating “the new normal” across various aspects of our lives. Education used to focus mainly on grades and technical skills, but today’s employers value soft skills just as much. However, many workers lack these crucial skills, making it harder for businesses to find the right employees. Some schools have started teaching social-emotional skills and career readiness, but more needs to be done to fully prepare high school students for the future workplace. By 2030, soft skills will be more critical than ever for future careers. Experts predict that most jobs require strong interpersonal and emotional intelligence skills; as AI takes over more technical tasks, the workforce will rely on human abilities that machines can’t replace.

The Bonding thru Board Games program is an evidence-based resource designed to help individuals expose others—whether friends, colleagues, or loved ones—to core vital “soft skills”: self-control, positive self-concept, social and communication skills, and executive function. These

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skills contribute to success at home, school, work, and everyday life.

Spending quality time together helps pave the way for socio-emotional growth and strengthens relationships. Euro-style board games are one subtle yet effective way to develop these essential skills. These games create a creative, developmental, competitive, and innovative shared space around your tabletop, offering valuable opportunities to build those vital skills.

For a game night event, set up tables around the room with four to five chairs at each table. Display the board games on this table for the participants to look at and select the ones they want to play. If desired, set up a table for non-sticky snacks on one side of the room to enjoy away from the games.

Take a few minutes at the beginning, or as participants enter, to explain the lesson for that night (pocket card) and how the event will run.

Ways to run the program:

- A. Have a lesson workshop without a game event. If one chooses, use the PowerPoint presentation to explain the program.
- B. Present the lesson for 30 minutes, then a board game event for an hour.
- C. At the event, give the palm card with the focus of the night to participants as they arrive and encourage them to apply the principles on the card to their play, then give the feedback on the evaluation.
- D. At the event, choose only one aspect of the focused palm card trait (for example: *Spend time together. Only family members and friends are invited. Make it a rule that technology be set aside until your game night is over.*) Ask for the evaluation feedback. Agents can write it as a little creative note if they want. Do not have an event without bringing an educational piece mentioned above and the evaluation feedback.

Community Activities

Mega Game Day — An extended period of time during the course of one day to play board games while connecting and communicating with family members or game mates.

Bi-Monthly Game Events — Scheduled bi-monthly game nights for participants to come and play games.

Parents/Family Events at Schools — Board game collection taken to schools for parents or family events.

Community Event Celebrations — Board game collection taken to another community event.

Holiday Event — Games incorporated into a chosen holiday (e.g. Christmas, Hanukah, Maulid al-Nabi, Diwali, Kwanza, etc.). Santa, Easter Bunny, etc. could be invited to be present at the event.

Community Displays — Display(s) set up at community settings (for example, a community center, school, religious center, etc.).

Presentations to Community Groups —

Presentations on the purpose and ways to conduct a family game event.

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K-State Research and Extension educators may access the evaluation instrument on the Bonding Thru Board Games Teams channel: <https://bit.ly/ksrebondingthruboardgames>

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