

Parent Involvement and Awareness:

Abstract Strategy Games Can Exercise the Whole Family

*by Reisa Schwartzman, President of Griddly Games**



There are many genres of games out there in today's market but many people forget to add abstract strategy games to their list of family games. I have very fond memories sitting around on a hot day sitting outside with my family playing backgammon.

We called it Shesbesh. Everyone would sit around waiting for their turn to play the winner of the match. Teaching my sons how to play chess, backgammon, Connect 4 and other strategy games, gave us many hours of play together. It didn't take long before I had to work at not losing against them!

Recently at a toy show, I had the pleasure of watching many families play abstract strategy games together. There was no fear from the kids playing with their parents. Everyone enjoyed the challenge of learning the rules together and mastering the game play. I saw concentration and joy in their faces. They were sharing quality time together. What they didn't know is not only were they having a great time but also everyone was benefiting in so many other ways.

One of the advantages of abstract strategy games is that age is not necessarily an advantage. Everyone plays on a level playing field once they know the rules!

Abstract strategy games have often had image problems, being seen as games for brainiacs and people with already high IQs or for adults only. Do smart people gravitate towards this style of games, or does playing strategy games make them smart? Studies have shown that moving pieces around a chessboard can in fact raise a person's intelligence quotient. Students have been shown to produce significant rises in IQ scores for both boys and girls after 4 months of game play.

The brain works like a muscle. It needs exercise like any other muscle to remain healthy and ward off injury. Studies have

shown that people over 75 who engage in brain-stretching activities like abstract strategy games are less likely to develop dementia.

Surprisingly, playing strategy games have proven to exercise both sides of our brains! The right hemisphere of the brain is responsible for our creativity. Since the right side of the brain is also being used during game play, the brain develops its creative side as well. Studies have shown that playing strategy games once a week versus using only computer games have fostered more growth in creative thinking and originality.

Memory skills can be significantly improved with game play. Being a good player in abstract strategy games means remembering how your players have played in the past. Students playing regular games like chess improve their grades in all subjects. They have shown better memory and better organizational skills. Even students who have never played games showed improvement in their memories and verbal skills after playing.

There is a direct correlation between increase in problem solving skills, increased performance in reading and improved concentration and playing strategy style games! From a scientific approach, learning a new skill like strategy games causes growth in dendrites, which are the tree-like branches that conduct signals from other neural cells into the neurons they are attached to. But once you've mastered the game, growth continues as you continue to play.

Interaction with people in challenging activities also fuels dendrite growth. Strategy games can also promote prefrontal cortex development and help children make better decisions in all areas of life. The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain responsible for planning, judgment and self-control.

There are many abstract strategy games out in

today's market. Find the ones that your family can enjoy collectively and take pleasure in the challenge. Not only will you have a great time together, having quality time as a family but you will be exercising your brains simultaneously. Play on!

**Griddly Games creates award-winning party and board games that deliver innovative, engaging fun that brings people together while encouraging social interaction, learning, strategy and challenges that anyone can enjoy. To discover more about Griddly Games, visit: www.griddlygames.com.*



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