

Board Games and SEL

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Board games lend themselves well to teaching and practicing SEL skills as they are 'social' by nature. We have to play them with other people, we have to practice social norms of waiting for our turn, following rules, listening and paying attention – not to mention dealing with winning and losing.

Board games can develop the following SEL Skills:

Self-Awareness – players will understand their strengths and use these in their strategy as well as using appropriate facial expressions.

Self-Management – players have to manage emotions while playing games and deal with obstacles and setbacks.

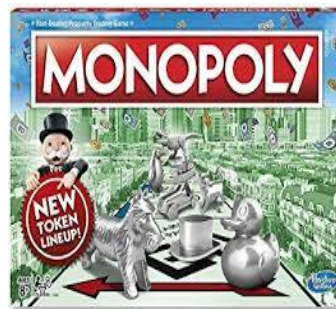
Social Awareness – some board games require players to read facial expressions of other players in order to achieve a goal. This is a chance to practice and develop social awareness.

Relationship Skills – often players will have to work in teams while playing a board game. This encourages turn taking, listening and conflict resolution.

Responsible Decision Making – players all have the same goal - to win! While navigating a board game, players have to plan ahead to reach their goal and use problem solving skills for any obstacles they face along the way.

This article has been developed to support schools in their implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) through the use of *The PATHS® Programme for Schools (UK Version)*; and to extend SEL beyond the classroom - reaching out to their whole school, homes and community. In this article we want to explore how you could use board games to practice SEL skills.

Board Games



Monopoly requires self-management as you must practise waiting your turn. Landing on someone's property is also an opportunity to develop calming down strategies.

Guess Who is great to practice looking at faces and reading facial expressions which can develop social awareness.



In **Cluedo** players have to mask their expressions in order to win the game. Cluedo is also a game of strategy where we plan ahead.

Snakes and Ladders is a great game for all ages. The turn taking element of the game is simple and develops relationship skills.



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Heads up



This game supports the development of **Relationship Skills** with a particular focus on communicating effectively and seeking help from others. You will need to create a set of cards (minimum of 10) that state different comfortable and uncomfortable feelings. Feelings could include: happy, excited, hopeful, scared, sad, worried, jealous, angry, frustrated, anxious. ***A template is included in the printable activity pages attached to this blog.***

How to play

1. Set a timer for 1 minute.
2. One player chooses a feelings card and holds it up to their forehead facing the other players. *(If you have the Heads Up board game you might want to use the headbands provided.)*
3. The players must then give clues to the feeling word so the player can guess. Once they correctly guess they then choose a new card. This repeats until the 1 minute timer ends.
4. The player must count how many feelings they guessed correctly and that number becomes their score for that round.
5. Players continue until everyone has had a turn. The winner is the person with the most correct guesses in the time given.

Pictionary

This game supports the SEL core competency of **Relationship Skills**. By playing this game, you will be developing the ability to work cooperatively with others, communicate effectively, seek help from others and build relationships with those around you. These are critical skills for all ages.

Instead of using the cards provided in Pictionary, why not create a new pack that demonstrate different activities, events, occasions, where you experience different feelings. The team then needs to guess both where they are drawing and how they are feeling during this particular time!

How to play

1. Players will split into two teams. Each team should then decide on who will be the first 'Artist' of the game. *(Some children will require lots of adult support and guidance with this.)*
2. Two large sheets of paper, one for each team, should then be placed so each team can see clearly.
3. The two 'Artists' then pick the first card and begin to draw the activity written on the card at the same time.
4. Drawing only, no words allowed by the 'Artist'. The team who guesses correctly first is the winner and receives 1 point.
5. Two new 'Artists' are picked and the game continues.



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Uno

This game supports the SEL core competency of **Self-Awareness**. In this activity, you can use the fun card game Uno to build on emotional vocabulary by discussing a variety of feelings, what they mean and sharing times you have experienced them.

1. Discuss the different colours and decide what feeling each one will be. *
For example:
'Red' could be angry, cross, mad, frustrated or annoyed.
'Yellow' could be happy, excited, surprised, calm.
'Blue' could be sad, worried, scared, upset.
'Green' could be jealous, bored, sick.
2. Every time a card is played, the player can either describe/ talk about a time they felt that emotion or act it out.
3. As a group you may decide on different occasions or places where you felt each emotion. For example:
Round 1 – At home
Round 2 – At school
Round 3 – In the playground
Round 4 – Online
Round 5 – At a friend's house



Jenga



Without any alterations to the game, playing Jenga encourages the SEL skills of **Self-Management** and allows for lots of opportunities to practice different regulation strategies. Players must practise remaining calm in what can be a stressful situation by deciding what block to move and where to place it next. Why not try adding some extra social and emotional learning into this game with these simple steps.

SEL tips...

1. Using a marker pen, add numbers 1 – 9 on the end of each block so they are visible when stacking (there are 54 blocks so there will be 6 number 1's, 6 number 2's, 6 number 3's etc).
2. The first player will pick a block. Before they place it, they must answer the question relating to correct number. ***All questions are listed in the printable activity pages attached to this blog.***
3. Players continue to play Jenga as normal but with each new block they choose they will answer the SEL question relating to that number.

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Card Games

Card games are another great way to help children (and adults) develop SEL skills. Card games promote all the skills such as turn taking, listening, and **Self-Management**. The beauty of card games is that one deck means you have lots of different games at your disposal and most can be played by all ages. Here are some ideas:

- ♣ Snap
- ♣ Go Fish
- ♣ Gin Rummy
- ♣ Switch
- ♣ War (see opposite)



Game in focus – ‘War’

- ♣ **Number of players:** 2
- ♣ **Cards:** Standard deck of 52 cards
- ♣ **How to play:**
 1. Deal all cards between the two players face down.
 2. Both players turn over their first card and put it in the middle.
 3. Whoever has turned over the highest card takes both cards and adds them to the bottom of their pile.
 4. If both players turn over a card with the same value the game is now ‘War’.
 5. Each player now takes their next card and puts it face down on top of the one they have already put in the middle. When turned over – whoever has the highest card takes all four cards. The winner is the player who collects all cards.

*We certainly hope that these ideas will be both inspiring and helpful in exploring **Board Games and SEL**.*

Please do get in touch with us via our Social Media if you have used any of these and remember to follow us on our Facebook and Twitter accounts for many more ideas from participating schools.



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