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Blog Post for a board game company. No SEO optimization. Words in bold are proposed link locations.

Stay playful – it's human nature

### **Games of our Ancestors**

Archeologists, historians and anthropologists believe that so-called “social games” (which is a proper term for “games you play with other people”) became an occurrence across cultures about 5000 years ago. People were throwing **dice** and moving **mini figures** around boards since the very beginning of culture. In fact, **dice** originated as a form of divination practice before it became a tool for playing. Similarly, Tarot cards were used both for divination and for playing.

The invention of chess by Islamic and Chinese cultures brought about a new way of leisure. Not only were games fun – they were intellectually challenging and required strategic thinking. Soon enough, strategy became a key aspect of playing.<sup>1 2</sup> Games became professionalized and commercialized, largely thanks to printing press and increased migration.

With the rise of early capitalism during the 18<sup>th</sup> century Industrial Revolution, games such as *The Checkered Game of Life* could be mass produced and used as a tool to promote dominant ideas and values.<sup>3</sup> Dice, pawns, **cards** and boards entered every home and never left.

### **Why do we keep playing?**

With the rise of popularity of **Role-Playing Games**, such as **Dungeons and Dragons** (first released in 1974), and later Video Games, the question *why?* has been on psychologists' mouths constantly. The fact that an activity seemingly yielding no profit has been around for so long is definitely puzzling. Thankfully, scientists proposed some answers to this question.

Turns out games are not as “pointless” as many elders would like to believe. According to neuroscientists, playing is crucial for a healthy brain, and not just for children. For adults, playing is linked to cognitive resilience and lessening the risk of diseases such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's Disease.<sup>4</sup> Maybe that's why games survived for so long – those who played, lived longer.

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<sup>1</sup> "[History of Social Games](#)". Archived 27 May 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Shenk, D, 2006. *The Immortal Game*.

<sup>3</sup> Parlett, D, 1999. *The Oxford History of Board Games*

<sup>4</sup> Canepa ME, Ramenghi LA, 2026. *The neurobiology of play: a narrative review of evidence from mice and humans for advancing neurorehabilitation*. Front Neurosci, 6.01.2026.

However, an Ancient Egyptian had no way of knowing the benefits of playing, yet they played anyway. Why is that? Psychologists believe that there's more to games than just pleasure. Some state that being competent and skilled in a game leads to better nervous system regulation and higher confidence levels.<sup>5</sup> In other words, playing makes us more at peace and boosts our self-esteem. Others argue that the feeling of being fully engaged in an activity, the so-called "flow state", is often achieved during playing games. This feeling promotes learning and brain activity, as well as nervous system regulation.<sup>6</sup>

To sum up, games are more than just having fun. They help us learn, grow and feel better. While playing we're in a better mood, we feel better about ourselves and we acquire new skills. Who wouldn't want that?

### **You need to play too**

In these peculiar times we happen to live in, when everything has to be productive and result-focused, one could say playing is more important than ever. While the world stretches us thin, both at work and at home with a wave of bad news, taking a step back into a different world might just be the necessary respite we're all looking for.

That's why you should allow yourself to play. Get that board game. Start that DnD campaign. Roll those dice. You and I both know it will help you. If you're looking for inspiration where to start your playfulness journey, check out our **board game collection**.

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<sup>5</sup> Ryan, RM, Rigby, CS, Przybylski, A. 2006. *The Motivational Pull of Video Games: A Self-Determination Theory Approach*. *Motivation and Emotion* 30(4).

<sup>6</sup> Perttula, A, Kiili, K, Lindstedt, A, Tuomi, P. 2017. *Flow experience in game based learning – a systematic literature review*. *International Journal of Serious Games*, vol. 4 is. 1