

## Traditional Games to Improve Mental Health

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### Abstract

Aim of this paper is to introduce the significance of traditional games that helps to improve mental health. In this era, children are trapped or addicted to electronic devices and video games. Normally every -one thinks that games will promote physical development only. But traditional games not only ensure physical development but also boost brain power and mental health, no matter whether it is out door games or indoor games. Some traditional games like Kho- kho, hide and seek, archery, skipping, five stones play, pallanguzhi, tennis, chess, etc. which all requires a 'work out' for the brain. They helps to improve quick and smart thinking, memory power, insight, sensory sharpness, communication skill, reflex action, concentration power, problem solving, cognitive thinking, spatial and perception skill, co-ordination balanced thinking and emotion etc. Such games also help to release mental stress. These games are suitable for teachers too, to improve their mental health which is very crucial in effective teaching learning process. Also there are memory games, Board games, Art and Craft etc. to improve mental health. So we can point out that, those traditional games helps in increasing mental health of both students and teachers and for keeping the mind always active. By involving these kinds of games in PT hours, leisure times etc. helps us to be active and to improve our mental health. So get active, Challenge our mind and play games and stay healthy both mentally and physically.

**Keywords:** Traditional games, Mental health, Stress.

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### Introduction

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps us to determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Mental health can affect daily life, relationships, and even physical health. Mental health also includes a person's ability to enjoy life - to attain a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

According to Med lexicon's medical dictionary, mental health is: "Emotional, behavioral, and social maturity or normality; the absence of a mental or behavioral disorder; a state of psychological well-being in which one has achieved a satisfactory integration of one's instinctual drives acceptable to both oneself and one's social milieu; an appropriate balance of love, work, and leisure pursuits." According to the WHO (World Health Organization), mental health is: "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life,

can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

It is obvious that it is increasingly harder for traditional games to compete against the ever-growing invasion of screens around the house that grab the attention from the children of the house. Televisions, smartphones computers, and games consoles the house is full of electronics within reach of our children that offer many different interactive entertainment options. As always, neither extreme is recommended, it's great that children have fun with new technologies, but they should also find enjoyment with their parents and in the street, with their friends, playing classic games that have entertained so many previous generations. Children will always continue to enjoy games from the past, as long as they learn to play them. These games can also be of great benefit to them, they require physical activity, social skills, creativity, imagination, competition, camaraderie and many more benefits. Quite simply, traditional children's games stimulate their growth, physically as well as intellectually. They will also help them to make friends, to communicate with others, increase brain power and there- by to have complete mental health. The main attraction of classic children's games is that generally, we will not need any equipment. Most of them do not require anything more than imagination and a willingness to have a good time. It is also important that most of these games are group games, which mean that as well as simple rules and a fast pace, they allow children to interact with each other, by talking, laughing and sharing experiences most naturally. All of these are essential to their growing up.

### **Few traditional games that improve Mental health**

1. **Pallanguzhi** is an urban board game, once patronised by women in Tamil Nadu, Pallanguzhi is played by dropping seeds into pits on a board, it has been a women's pastime, also an entertaining way to improve math and motor skills or a marathon affair during festivals like Sivarathri and Vaikunda Ekadasi and is also played during the break at workplace. The board has 14 cups, each player controls seven cups. People used to play using tamarind seeds or Kauri shells.
2. **Kabaddi**: It is played with two teams, each team with 12 players each. The side that scores the highest number of points when the play ends shall be the winning team. It is same as practicing yoga, where players control their mind and body through self- control, overcome fear, enhance presence of mind and pay attention to small things and to fight with the right spirit.
3. **Skipping**: Good old skipping involves concentration, perseverance and memory power. Also, as traditional skipping games involve keeping step to music or rhymes, the child needs to maintain tempo, beat and rhythm. This game involves visual spatial perception skills too. The child needs to assess the distance of the rope from the floor, the position it is in, the direction it is swinging towards and, most importantly, its speed. This judgment involves a lot of mental calculation wherein the brain is actively involved. And, it is this assessment that will help the child place her feet on the floor when the rope is up in the air. Another important skill involved is eye, hand and body co-ordination. This co-ordination is dependent on the brain monitoring the body movements. The Jump Rope

Institute (founded by the US Olympian Buddy Lee) states that skipping or jumping rope is an ideal brain exercise and that it helps develop both the right and left hemispheres of the brain. It adds that it increases memory power and mental alertness.

4. **Swinging:** Another fun activity, swinging develops perceptual skills and spatial awareness. It also helps integrate sensory information – awareness of body movements, sight, sound and gravitational pull. Such sensory inputs form the raw material for the development of the brain. Thus, swinging, which processes a lot of sensory data, aids brain development? Also, the rocking movement while swinging stimulates the cerebral cortex which is the part of the brain dealing with concentration and focus. Moreover, while swinging, the vestibular system, which involves the sense of balance, movement and equilibrium, is activated. And, this activation, depending on the type of movement, can either help your child stay calm or alert – the former because of the rhythmic swaying motion and the latter because of the increased blood flow to the brain.
5. **Hide and Seek:** This game also known as, ‘I spy’, was not just fun all senses become sharp – sight, touch, sound, smell. Her observation powers also reach a peak. When she tries to guess the hiding place of her friends, she has to rack her brains. And, when she attempts to lure them out of their hiding place, she has to employ strategic thinking and problem-solving skills. She has to stay focused, alert and, maybe, even crafty throughout the game. She cannot afford any distractions. All these require keeping her brain sharp. For the one who hides, it isn’t too different. She has to work her grey cells out in trying to come up with a new hiding place each time (one that would challenge the seeker), staying alert to sound and movement, and being wise enough to not fall for the seeker’s tactics in making her give herself away. So, whether it is playing peek-a-boo with your babe in the cradle or hiding behind the door for your child to seek you out, be sure that this game boosts your little one’s brain power.
6. **Kho-Kho:** This exciting game releases mental stress and speeds up the working of the brain. It’s a tag sport which tests both physical and mental endurance. The players, be it chasers or defenders, need to concentrate and literally ‘think on their feet’! Strategic thinking is also required to avoid getting tagged or tagging someone. When it comes to the chaser, he needs to make wise choices when it comes to tagging players. The brain is actively involved in such decision-making. And, the increased blood flow, better circulation of blood, and raised levels of endorphin – all mean the brain is alert and active. So, if you thought this game was only brawn and not brain, you need to change your perception now. It is after all a thinking game.
7. **Lagori:** It is played using a soft ball and seven flat stones, in a large outdoor area. The players form two teams - ‘seekers’ and ‘hitters’. The flat stones are piled up at the center of the ground and a player from the ‘seekers’ hits the pile with the soft ball. Now, the ‘seekers’ try to collect the scattered stones and pile them up again, while the ‘hitters’ use the soft ball to hit the ‘seekers’. If a ‘seeker’ gets hit by the soft ball, he’s out of the game. Makes your child a quick runner. Improves your child’s precision ability, and hence enhances concentration.

8. **Kancha:** Playing with small stones or pebbles was a caveman's game. Going by that logic, the origin of Kancha can be traced to the early days of mankind. The objects used for playing Kancha are round glass marbles, also known as 'golis'. To start with, a shallow hole is made in the ground. A line is then drawn, three feet away from the hole. Each player stands behind the line and aims to throw his *goli* into the hole. This game sharpens concentration and presence of mind. Improves aim and focus.
9. **Archery:** This is a game played from past years it's -self. It is played using bow and arrow. It helps to develop intense focus and concentration, to gain mind clarity, improve co-ordination and balance, build physical strength and stability, helps to be discipline and stick- with- in-ness. From these skills that improve mind- body connection to those that hone our character.
10. **Five stone play:** Also called as anchankal, kallankal etc. This is played by two or more players, using five small stones. The objective is to complete a set of eight steps. This game helps in increasing the eye sight, memory power and builds concentration and aiming skills.
11. **Tennis:** This is a game that can be played by both younger and old. It is considered as one of the best recreational game. The pace of the game can be set to the individual's ability, played merely as a mild form of exercise. Speed, agility, coordination, and endurance can be developed through this. This game teaches self- discipline, strategy (to make quick decisions), creates fun, and creates sportsman spirit.

These are only some examples of traditional games that help in developing mental health of children's. Tennis, archery etc. can be played by elders too. There are many 'board games' and other games for improving the mental health of elders too, ie, the teachers also need a good mental health for teaching their students. So these games can be played by both elders and children's too.

**Chess** is a two-player strategy board game played on a chessboard, a checkered game board with 64 squares arranged in an 8×8 grid. The game is played by millions of people worldwide. Play does not involve hidden information. Each player begins with 16 pieces: one king, one queen, two rooks, two knights, two bishops, and eight pawns. Each of the six piece types moves differently, with the most powerful being the queen and the least powerful the pawn. The objective is to *checkmate* the opponent's king by placing it under an inescapable threat of capture. To this end, a player's pieces are used to attack and capture the opponent's pieces, while supporting each other. **Carom-board** is a cue sport- based tabletop game commonly played by families, children, and at social functions. Players take turns to play. A turn consists of one or more strikes. A player wins by pocketing all of the pieces of their chosen colour first. However, neither player can win until one nor other player has "covered the Queen". To cover the Queen, a player must pocket one of her own pieces immediately after pocketing the Queen. If the Queen is pocketed but not covered, the Queen is returned to the board. Both players normally try to cover the Queen in addition to trying to win the game because a player who wins and also covers the Queen receives bonus points. **Ludo** is a strategy board game for two or four players in which the players race their four tokens from start to finish according to the rolls of a single die. Special areas of ludo board are coloured

yellow, red, and green, blue. Each player is assigned a colour and has four tokens in their colour. Snake and ladder, monopoly, etc. are other board games.

All these board games help in mental development through improvement of various skills. Board games keep brain younger for longer time as these games keep brain active at lower risk of cognitive decline. It helps with cognitive and social development and also help to reduce isolation as the game are designed to be played with group of people. It is an opportunity for the family to take part in something together, which in itself is supportive for mental health. Also games help to reduce stress, support mental balance and help with relaxation. These games take away from the normal troubles of life for few hours and to give a workout for brain.

Art and crafts is another thing to keep the mind active and the hands nimble. Word puzzles are played for keeping the brain buzzing. Bingo, logical puzzle game, etc. are other small games for elders to improve mental health by boosting their brain. So they helps to improve quick and smart thinking, memory power, insight, sensory sharpness, communication skill, reflex action, concentration power, problem solving, cognitive thinking, spatial and perception skill, co-ordination balanced thinking and emotion etc.

## **Conclusion**

Today most of our societies are addicted with technology and they do not know that over use of these electronic devices will makes our social, intellectual development very slow. Schools are the most significant social context in the life of a child as almost one third of a day is spent there. It is an institution which plays an important role in the development and future of the children. So by involving children in traditional games in PT hours will help them to be staying active and to improve their mental health. Traditional games are best games that gave both enjoyment and mental health for all including children's and adults than that of any electronic games. Thus we can stay healthy both mentally and physically.

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