

HOLIDAY Traditions

A Playful Approach to the Holidays

by Dr. Susan Newman

(NAPSA)—During the hustle and bustle of the holidays, taking time out to play games with children and grandchildren makes youngsters feel important and offers surprising short- and long-term benefits.

Beginning with the instantaneous fun, preschool board games provide the chance to start or continue family traditions and to foster learning. Classic games such as Candy Land, Chutes & Ladders, Hi Ho! Cherry-O and Memory, played by parents and grandparents for decades, quickly and easily become part of holiday celebrations. These games hold the added benefit of boosting a child's confidence and reinforcing lessons youngsters will need in school.

Invite siblings and other relatives to join the fun to make the experience something children will not only remember and look forward to, but will also teach them good sportsmanship, how to take turns, patience, concentration, the art of winning and losing gracefully and the basics of color recognition, color matching and counting. Within the comfort of family and the festivities, mastering these skills is pleasurable. Families who hold a fun and informal preschool game session discover that after just a few games, young children realize they can do it and parents and grandparents realize how much they helped.



Dr. Newman

Game Tips

When playing with young children remember to be willing to play the game they want to play, be enthusiastic about being part of their merriment and be patient because young children may not be able to recognize a color or count as fast as you would like. Be sure to allow mistakes and make them part of the fun, and always be ready to play again...and again. Because these classic preschool games are based largely on chance, it is just as likely the children will win, encouraging them to keep trying...and learning.

Who Really Wins?

This playful approach to the holidays is a surefire way to add excitement, strengthen family bonds, and build children's fond memories of growing up. Finding the time to play during the hectic holiday season tells young children that they are special and the message is reinforced by the time spent together. When parents make playing games an expected and standard ingredient of the holiday season, it's difficult to decide who gets more enjoyment out of the time spent together.

• *Dr. Susan Newman, a social psychologist specializing in family, is the author of "Little Things Long Remembered: Making Your Children Feel Special Every Day" and "Little Things Mean A Lot: Creating Happy Memories with Your Grandchildren."* You can visit her Web site at: www.susannewmanphd.com