



Undercroft Bridge Club Inc

The game of bridge addresses two factors regarding the onset of Dementia – Social Interaction and mental stimulation. The Undercroft bridge club focuses on both.

This request for funding from LotteryWest, will in part, provide improved facilities and support the ongoing operation of the club.

Bridge and mental wellness may seem like an odd topic, but it's important to think of your brain like a muscle. It needs regular workouts to stay fit and healthy. However, whilst many of us hit the gym to exercise our bodies, few of us have a go-to activity for our minds.

Beyond a mere card game...

Bridge is a superb mental workout and a powerful tool for emotional and mental well-being. It challenges you to think strategically, remember what's been played, and communicate without saying a word.

The game of bridge supports dementia prevention by providing **intense mental stimulation and consistent social engagement**, which help build the brain's "cognitive reserve". Research suggests that while no single activity can guarantee prevention, engaging in complex mental and social activities like bridge may help delay the onset of cognitive decline and symptoms of dementia.

Key Ways Bridge Supports Brain Health

- **Cognitive Workout:** Bridge requires constant use of memory, logic, and critical thinking skills. Players must remember which cards have been played, analyze probabilities, plan strategies, and make decisions under pressure. This continuous mental exercise is like a "gym session" for the brain, stimulating neural pathways and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain involved in higher-order functions like planning and working memory.
- **Building Cognitive Reserve:** Regular engagement in mentally stimulating activities helps build cognitive reserve, which is the brain's ability to withstand age-related damage or pathology without showing obvious symptoms of cognitive decline. The more complex the mental activity, the greater the potential benefit in building this resilience.
- **Social Interaction:** Bridge is an inherently social, partnership-based game that involves communication and teamwork. Social engagement is a crucial factor

The logo for Undercroft Bridge Club Inc is a stylized black and white graphic of a club suit symbol, which is a four-pointed clover-like shape with a small circle at the center of each point.

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in mental wellness and a key element in reducing the risk of cognitive decline and loneliness, particularly in older adults.

- **Emotional Well-being and Stress Relief:** The game can provide a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and a healthy escape from daily worries, which can help lower stress levels and improve overall emotional well-being.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Each hand of bridge presents a new challenge and new strategies to explore, offering endless opportunities for growth and improvement. This ongoing learning process keeps the mind active and engaged throughout life.

Scientific Evidence

- **Delayed Onset:** Studies, such as one conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, have found a link between playing bridge and stimulating the immune system, as well as engaging the parts of the brain responsible for planning and sequencing.
- **Reduced Decline:** A 2022 study involving patients with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) found that those who underwent bridge training had a significantly slower rate of cognitive decline compared to a control group.
- **Increased Brain Volume:** A 2014 University of Wisconsin-Madison study linked the frequency of playing card and board games with greater brain volume in regions affected by Alzheimer's disease, with players also scoring higher on cognitive tests.

In short, the multifaceted nature of bridge, combining mental gymnastics with vital social connections, makes it a valuable activity for maintaining brain health and potentially delaying the expression of dementia symptoms



This constant mental stimulation is good for your mind, and [research](#) shows there's a strong link between playing games and cognitive health.

But – just how does playing bridge support mental and emotional wellness? The answer lies in its unique blend of cognitive challenge and emotional engagement.

Cognitive and Emotional Benefits of Bridge: A Mindful Workout

Playing bridge is like a gym session for your brain. It demands intense focus and memory, which helps keep your mind sharp.

Every hand is a new puzzle to solve, requiring you to remember cards, analyse probabilities, and plan your strategy. This kind of active engagement is a key reason why playing bridge is good for your brain. It helps sharpen memory, focus, and strategic thinking.



Neuroscientists have found that engaging in complex mental activities like bridge can help improve a range of cognitive functions. For example, [research from institutions](#) like the University of California, Berkeley, has highlighted how the game stimulates the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.

This is the part of the brain involved in higher-order functions like decision-making, planning, and working memory. These skills are essential not just for playing the game, but for everyday life as well.

Bridge for Better Brain Health, and Delaying Dementia Onset

Does playing bridge prevent dementia?

Some [studies suggest](#) that the mental stimulation provided by bridge can help delay the onset of cognitive decline. While it's important to remember that playing bridge doesn't prevent dementia per se, the evidence nevertheless shows it's a fantastic way to keep your brain active and engaged.

It challenges your mind to create new neural connections and can even help maintain brain health as you get older. The key is to keep your mind working, and bridge provides a stimulating, ever-changing environment to do just that.

The Emotional Perks: Stress Relief Through Games

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Beyond the cognitive workout, bridge offers significant emotional payoff. It's a wonderful escape from the daily grind and a great way to relieve stress. When you're immersed in a game, your mind focuses on the task at hand, which can have a calming, meditative effect. This form of "active relaxation" can help lower cortisol levels, the hormone associated with stress.



But the emotional benefits of bridge extend beyond simply calming the mind. The sense of accomplishment from a well-played hand or a partnership that clicks is a real confidence booster.

These positive feelings can contribute to overall emotional well-being and make bridge a healthy outlet for stress. For many, the joy of the game provides a fun and mindful way to decompress. The mental challenge is all-consuming in a good way. It lets you temporarily cast aside worries and anxieties.

Building Community for a Healthy Mind

Social connection is a key element of mental wellness. Online bridge communities provide an easy way to connect with others who share your passion, combating loneliness and social isolation.

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The game itself is a social activity built on teamwork and communication. Playing with a partner fosters a sense of trust and shared purpose, which is good for your relationships and mental health.

Unlike single-player games like chess, bridge is a partnership game. You have to work as a team where defence is a joint effort, and bidding is a dialogue. Bridge and mental wellness go hand in hand, just like eating popcorn at the movies!



Bridge and Mental Wellness Through Community



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This inherent social element makes bridge a powerful tool for staying connected. In a world where more people are "ageing in place" and may not have a local club to attend, online bridge platforms remove barriers like geography and mobility.

You can easily find a community of players to chat with, share tips, and have a laugh, no matter where you are. This social engagement is just as important as the mental stimulation, making bridge a holistic activity for your mind and spirit.

The Australian Bridge Federation has gathered a number of [studies and testimonials](#) that demonstrate how bridge helps players stay socially active. For example, participants in one survey said that the social aspect was a key benefit, even more so than the competitive element.

This is especially true for women and seniors, who often prefer dedicated groups and clubs that cater to their interests, and offer a supportive environment to learn and play. The sense of belonging is real, and it's a vital component of mental and emotional wellness.

Playing Bridge and Mindful Gaming for Seniors

Bridge also encourages a form of mindfulness. To play well, you have to be fully present. You're not just moving cards around. You're also paying close attention to every play, every bid, and every nonverbal cue from your partner and opponents. This requires a level of focus that pulls you away from distractions and into the moment.

This isn't just about winning or losing. It's about the process - quiet concentration, subtle communication, and the shared experience of solving a puzzle together. This mindful approach can help improve concentration and train your brain to stay focused for longer periods, skills that are useful in all areas of life.

The game also offers a sense of routine and purpose, which are incredibly important for overall well-being. Showing up for a regular game or lesson provides a dependable rhythm to your week and a chance to feel productive and engaged. Bridge and mental wellness is the perfect combination for players of any age.

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Ready to Play Bridge for Your Mental Wellness?

The **health benefits of playing bridge** are clear! From strengthening cognitive function to relieving stress and building social connection, bridge is more than just a pastime. It's a powerful tool for staying sharp, finding purpose, and connecting with others. The health benefits of playing bridge are clear, from strengthening your cognitive function to providing a much-needed outlet for stress. As a game, it nurtures both your brain and your spirit.