

MAHJONG & BRAIN HEALTH

Relationships & Longevity

Decades of research demonstrate that the quality of social relationships is the strongest predictor of long-term health and longevity. Mahjong fosters face-to-face connection, shared ritual, belonging, and community — foundational elements for well-being.

Executive Function & Cognitive Agility

Mahjong strengthens frontal lobe functioning through pattern recognition, tracking discards, real-time strategy updates, and decision-making under uncertainty. These processes build executive function, working memory, and cognitive flexibility.

Learning & Neuroplasticity

Learning new strategies and adapting gameplay forms new neural connections — a process known as neuroplasticity. Ongoing cognitive challenge strengthens memory and supports long-term brain health.

Emotional Regulation & Mental Toughness

Mahjong requires resetting after missed opportunities, managing competitive tension, and maintaining solution focus. This builds nervous system regulation and emotional resilience under pressure.

Stress Reduction (Active Meditation)

The rhythm, repetition, and tactile engagement of Mahjong anchor attention in the present moment. It functions as active meditation, reducing stress while maintaining engagement.

Creativity, Dopamine & Motivation

Creative engagement — including strategy experimentation and aesthetic expression — increases dopamine, supporting motivation, focus, mood, and stress reduction.

Selected Scientific References:

- Holt-Lunstad, J. et al. (2010). Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. PLOS Medicine.
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- Diamond, A. (2013). Executive functions. Annual Review of Psychology.
- Park, D.C. et al. (2014). The impact of sustained engagement on cognitive function in older adults. Psychological Science.
- Tang, Y.Y. et al. (2015). The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation. Nature Reviews Neuroscience.