



The Benefits Of Playing Bridge

Bridge has long been a popular game for Welsh seniors, but science has recently shown that the benefits of playing bridge include boosting mental fitness.

Bridge is more than just an enjoyable pastime. Scientific studies have shown that playing bridge has demonstrable benefits for mental fitness and brain health in seniors.

Specifically, playing bridge is particularly effective at delaying the onset of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. The complex rules, bidding structure, and social interaction that are involved in playing bridge all force the brain to create new neural connections and prevent the build up of the amyloid deposits shown to cause Alzheimer's.

Recent studies into aging have found that the oldest, most active seniors play bridge regularly more than they engage in any single other pastime or lifestyle choice. A much more in-depth study is currently underway to investigate what it is about bridge that has such a positive effect on the longevity and quality of life of seniors:

In an influential article in the New York Times, neurologist Dr. Claudia Kawas referred to long-lived bridge players like Scott and Simony as “the most successful agers on earth.” She went on to note, “We think, for example, that it’s very important to use your brain, to keep challenging your mind, but all mental

activities may not be equal. We're seeing some evidence that a social component may be crucial."

Simony is a model of successful aging. At 93 she remains an influential figure in the worldwide bridge community was even profiled in an in-depth Wall Street Journal article titled, "A One-Woman Campaign for the Ladies' Bridge Lunch". She is also participating in a study of people aged 90+ ("nonagenarians") that aims to find factors linked to longevity.

She is convinced that bridge is among the reasons she has lived so well for so long...

The social aspect of the game is important, too. It's well known that relocation and retirement can cause social isolation and loneliness among baby boomers. It can be hard to make new friends when you are over 60, but playing bridge draws people together with a common interest and an easy ice-breaker. Recent studies even found that seniors with more social connections lived longer than those who were more isolated.

It's even been claimed that elderly bridge players save money each month, thanks to the health benefits of playing bridge ! This claim was a bit tongue-in-cheek, but it is true that the mental exercise of playing bridge, and the emotional benefits of getting out of the house regularly and enjoying social interaction with friends, also bring physical benefits. Seniors who are happier have a stronger immune system, and even the minimal exercise of going to bridge club can make a difference to stronger bones and joints.

With so many benefits to playing bridge, there's no reason not to start now. Don't yet know how to play? Contact Keith Butler, Welsh Bridge Union Education Officer through the [Welsh Bridge Union Website](#)

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