

Karma OT Skill Connections

Karma is a game mainly played for fun and entertainment. The fact that it teaches, strengthens and exercises an abundance of skills makes it one of the best possible tools for Occupational Therapy. Because it is fundamentally a game people enjoy, Karma inspires an intrinsic motivation and desire to “play”. The repetition of playing again and again encourages progress and success.

Karma Strengthens

- Cognitive Development
- Visual Perception
- Physical Development
- Social Development
- Emotional Development



Ages: 8 to adult

Players: 2 to 6

About Karma

Karma is playfully competitive and infectiously fun! Race to get rid of all your cards by playing a card of equal or higher value. Use your Karma Cards to avoid picking up the discard pile. There are four types of Karma Cards — Five or Below, Give the Pile to a Friend, Bottoms Up and Play a Table Card — you play them like wild cards, but be sure to use them wisely because in this game...What Goes Around...Comes Around! In Karma, there are multiple winners. You never really know who’s going to lose until the very last card. The dramatic ending calls for an instant rematch! Doing a large group activity? Combine two games and play with up to 12 people!

How Karma Develops Skills

Cognitive Development:

- **Analytical Skills & Critical Thinking:** When there is a draw pile, players must keep at least three cards in their hands. Because they draw new card(s) each turn and the inability to predict what card they will follow, players must continually analyze their cards to figure out which is best to play. Towards the end of the game players also need to evaluate what cards other players have, so they can play their cards accordingly and not be the last player left with cards.
- **Attention:** The enjoyment of play and drive to win instinctively keeps players’ attention throughout the game. Because Karma is a game of strategy, it is important for players to focus on what cards other players have played and picked up. Karma is fun, so players repeatedly practice this skill, which is crucial for development.
- **Cognitive Flexibility:** Most players think it is best to play the lowest card they can on their turn. Although this is often true, there are times when players need to change their thinking. For example, there are times in the game when its more advantageous to play a higher card.
- **Executive Functioning:** Throughout the game players organize, plan, strategize and exercise their working memory.
 - **Organization & Planning:** Organization and planning are key to avoid being the last player with cards. Players tend to organize numerically and then by Karma Cards. This helps players plan ahead, making sure they keep easier-to-play cards, like higher numbers and Karma Cards, for later in the game. It also allows them to move through their cards faster by playing doubles and triples of identical cards on their turn.
 - **Strategy:** There are a variety of strategies players use when playing Karma. Many players change their strategies throughout the game. Some strategies used are:
 - choosing to pick up the discard pile when it contains Karma Cards,
 - waiting to play Karma Cards and high number cards,
 - playing identical cards at the same time,
 - playing identical cards one at a time,
 - keeping track of cards that have been played,

- keeping track of cards in the discard pile and
 - choosing who to give the pile to when the “Give a Pile to a Friend” Karma Card is played.
- **Working Memory:** Players need to remember the rules and goal of the game. It is advantageous for players to recall previously played cards and remember what cards other players have picked up.
- **Logical Reasoning:** Players practice their logical reasoning skills by determining when it’s most effective to use Karma Cards, when to play three identical cards to clear the pile and when it’s advantageous to pick up the pile.

Visual Perception:

- **Visual Perception:** Karma builds players’ abilities to effectively and efficiently see, interpret and analyze the visual information that surrounds them. Players continually process visual information to determine the best way to play their cards each turn.
 - **Form Constancy:** The cards use an uncommon font and have different sized and orientated numbers, exercising the players’ ability to recognize what number the form creates.
 - **Visual Sequencing:** Players continually practice visual sequencing by playing a card that is equal to or higher than the previous card. Each turn, players organize their cards to know which numbers they have to play.
 - **Visual Memory:** In Karma, it is beneficial for players to exercise their visual memory for many reasons.
 - Tracking how many of a card have been played:
 - “Give the Pile to a Friend” Karma Cards, can bring players, who have already gone out, back into the game. Knowing if all 3 have been played helps players determine whether there is still a chance to bring or be brought back into the game.
 - Remembering what cards are in the discard pile:
 - Helps a player decide if it’s advantageous to voluntarily pick up the pile.
 - If another player picks the pile up, it gives the player a strategic advantage because they now know what cards their opponent has.
 - **Visual Sequential Memory:**
 - All players must remember the sequence of numbers to play. For example, if the previously played card is a 2, the player needs to exercise their visual sequential memory by looking at the cards in their hand to determine what cards are equal to or higher than a 2.
 - More advanced players also exercise their visual sequential memory when they remember what cards other players pick up and pay attention to the sequence in which those cards are played. Good visual sequential memory is often the difference between being one of the winners and being the last player left holding cards.

Physical Development:

- **Bilateral Coordination:** Playing Karma enhances bilateral coordination and provides opportunities to strengthen individual skills like symmetrical integration, asymmetrical integration and crossing the midline.
 - **Symmetrical Integration:** Shuffle the cards using the *riffle* technique—where half of the deck is held in each hand with thumbs inward and the cards are released by the thumbs so that they fall to the table interleaved. This type of shuffling and using both hands to hold all the cards after picking up the pile improves symmetrical integration.
 - **Asymmetrical Integration:** There are many opportunities to practice asymmetrical integration while playing Karma: holding the deck with one hand while dealing with the other; holding cards in one hand and using the other hand to draw, organize and discard.
 - **Crossing the Midline:** Players naturally cross the midline many times while playing Karma. If players need to work on this skill have them hold their cards on the side of their body furthest from the discard pile and only use the closer hand to draw, discard and organize their cards. This will require them to reach across their body and reinforces crossing the midline.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Playing Karma helps strengthen *in-hand manipulation*, *hand arches*, *pincer grasp* and increases overall *dexterity* and *motor planning*. Shuffling the cards, dealing cards to each player, flipping over cards, discarding or picking up each turn, and holding a fan of cards all build, strengthen and refine these skills.

- **Motor Planning:** What players do each turn frequently changes in Karma. Players may play a single card or multiple cards. They may have to draw a card or pick up the entire pile. They may play cards from their hand or from the table. If they play three identical cards, they must clear the discard pile and play again. Gameplay is situational and the players naturally analyze their options, conceive plans, and carry out non-habitual motor acts in the correct sequence to complete their turns.

Social Development:

- **Social Skills:** Playing Karma provides multiple opportunities for learning and exercising proper social skills such as: *verbal and non-verbal communication, following instructions, taking turns, using appropriate vocal volumes and words, coping with losing and acting within social conventions when winning.*

Emotional Development:

- **Confidence:** As players repeatedly play Karma their cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills continually develop building their overall self-confidence. This increase in confidence shows while playing the game and extends to other areas of their life.
- **Intrinsic Motivation:** Playing Karma is enjoyable so players are intrinsically motivated to play again and again. This repetition is key to developing skills. The intrinsic motivation to win triggers players' desires to recognize useful cards and strategies faster.
- **Mood Enhancement:** Karma offers children and adults a way to improve or maintain essential skills in a fun and positive way. The enjoyment of playing and the feeling of success every time a player goes out naturally enhance moods. It's purposeful play that impacts each player's environment and mindset in a very positive way.
- **Self-Esteem:** Playing Karma increases players' skills and abilities, which builds their confidence, improving their overall self-esteem. A strong, positive self-esteem directly relates to players' abilities to think and cope with challenges throughout their lives. It is the foundation of success and happiness.