



LAND OF PSYMON

A Cognitive
Psychotherapy Game
Revised Edition

by Eric B. Vogel, Psy.D.

Leader's Guide and Playing Instructions

This guide is intended for the therapist only. The back page of this rule booklet features separate rules for players who wish to read the rules of the game.

Purpose

Land of Psymon uses a board game format to teach cognitive behavioral therapy concepts and skills to children in an enjoyable way. The game incorporates the ideas of several theorists, including: Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck and David Burns. It is best if therapists have at least a basic understanding of cognitive behavioral therapy before the use the game with clients.

Age Range and Number of Players

Land of Psymon can be played by 1 therapist and 1-5 children, age 8 – 14 years. The therapist teaches the game and facilitates the game; the therapist may choose to also act as one of the players or not, as preferred.

Contents

1 Game Board, 1 Die, 5 Pawns, 80 Think Cards (small cards), 40 Red Psymon Cards (large cards), and 24 Blue Psymon Cards (large cards).

Setup

Place the game board face-up. Lay out the Red Psymon cards face-up, around the outside of the game board. The therapist holds on to the Blue Psymon cards. The therapist can either shuffle the Think Card deck, or read through the cards and place particular cards at the top of the deck. Place the Think Card deck on the marked space on the game board. Each player chooses a pawn, and places it on the Start space of the game board. Have the players each roll the die, and let the player who rolls highest take the first turn.

Introducing the Game

Before the therapist starts teaching the rules, they should introduce the game by saying something like this:

“In this game, monsters called Psymon have invaded people’s thoughts. The Psymon are trying to make people unhappy by making them think that things are worse than they really are. Your job is to look at people’s unhappy thoughts, so you can spot the Psymon in their thought and capture it! When you have captured all the Psymon, you win!”

Goal of the Game

The players take individual turns, but score points as a team. The goal is for the players to capture all the Red Psymon Cards, and as many Blue Psymon Cards as possible.

Game Play

At the start of a player turn, the player rolls the die. Whatever number they roll, they advance their pawn that number of spaces around the game board. The game board track loops back around to the start space.

If the player lands on a space that instructs them to move forward or back some number of spaces, they do so.

If the player lands on a space marked Think Card, then they draw a Think Card from the face down deck.

Think Cards: describe a challenging situation from a young person’s life (triggering event) and a negative thought that the young person has about that situation (automatic negative thought). After drawing a think card the player should read it aloud, or have the therapist read it aloud. The player then looks over the Red Psymon cards and chooses 1 that they think is “hiding” in the thought on the Think Card.

Red Psymon Cards: each depict a monster that represents a pattern of negative thinking (cognitive distortion). The Psymon card has a cartoon of the monster, with a word bubble that provides a snapshot of the kind of negative thinking that distortion promotes. The card also has a longer description of the negative thought content associated with the distortion, and a description of how to combat this form of negative thinking. After the player chooses a Red Psymon card, the therapist judges whether they have identified the Red Psymon in the thought correctly. If they have, they move the Red Psymon card to the captured Psymon space of the game board.

If the player lands on a **Psymon Tries to Escape** space, the therapist chooses one Psymon from the players’ Captured Psymon, and says *“This Psymon is trying to escape. I am going to give you a challenge. If you do the challenge successfully, you can keep the Psymon in your capture pile. Otherwise, it will escape. Your challenge is:”* and then the therapists gives the player a challenge related to the Psymon card. Typical challenges might be *“Tell me something this Psymon might make someone*

think.” or “What is incorrect about the way this Psymon makes people think?” or “What is a thought you’ve had in the past that you think had this Psymon in it?” If the player makes a good effort to respond to the challenge, then the therapist returns the Psymon to the captured pile. If the player won’t respond, or gives a minimal response, then the Psymon is placed back around the outside of the game board.

If the player lands on a **Blue Psymon Contest** space, the therapist chooses one of the Blue Psymon cards, and gives the player a challenge related to it. The first time this happens, the therapist should introduce the Blue Psymon by saying *“These Blue Psymon are on your side. They want to help you capture the Red Psymon. I am going to give you a challenge about this Blue Psymon, and if you succeed, you can add the Blue Psymon to your capture pile!”*

Blue Psymon Cards: each depict a friendly monster, that represents a thinking skill used to combat particular thinking patterns. These also have a word bubble and description that explain how the thinking skill works to combat distorted thinking. The therapist can pair the Blue Psymon with a particular Red Psymon, and say *“Tell me how this Blue Psymon would help you defeat the Red Psymon?”* The therapist could take two Blue Psymon, and ask the player which one would be most helpful in defeating a particular Red Psymon. The therapist could ask the player to say what the Blue Psymon might say about a situation on one of the think cards, or in the player’s own life.

Game End

When all 10 Red Psymon have been captured by the players, the game is over, and the players have won. The Blue Psymon cards are counted as bonus points, so the player’s score is the total number of Psymon cards they have captured.

Tips for the Therapist

Early in the game, it may be best for the therapist do a lot of the reading cards aloud. The therapist can give hints to the players by emphasizing the key words on cards when they read them. It is also best to tell players their answers are correct early in the game, even if they are not the best answer. This will ensure the players feel a sense of mastery.

As the game goes along, the therapist can gradually ask the players to do more of their own reading, expect more correct answers from them, and give them more demanding and personal challenges.

Sometimes players will draw a Think Card for a Psymon that has already been captured. When this happens, the therapist should let them know that the Psymon for the card is already in the capture pile, and then ask them if they can see which Psymon from the capture pile it is. Therapists can make this happen less often by stacking the Think Card deck.

Stacking the Think Card deck with cards most relevant to the player’s lives can enhance the therapeutic value of the game.

Land of Psymon Player Rules

Hostile monsters called Red Psymon have invaded people's thoughts! They try to make people feel bad by making them think their lives are worse than they really are. There are 10 different Red Psymon and each one has a different attack. To capture the Red Psymon, you examine people's thoughts and figure out which Psymon are hiding in them. If you catch all the Red Psymon, you win! There are also Blue Psymon that are on your side. If you understand how they help you defend against the Red Psymon, the Blue Psymon will become your allies and give you bonus points!

How to Play

Pick a pawn, and place it on the start space of the game board.

On your turn, roll the die, and move your pawn the number of spaces you rolled.

If your pawn lands on a space that says to move forward or back some number of spaces, move your pawn as it says.

If your pawn lands on a THINK CARD space, draw a Think Card from the face down deck, and read it aloud, or have someone read it aloud for you. The Think Card will tell you about a situation from somebody's life, and the unhappy thought they have about that situation, but that thought is not right – because there is a Red Psymon hiding in it! Read over all the Red Psymon Cards, and try to guess which one is hiding in the thought on the Think Card (HINT: Read the Red Psymon's word bubble first!). If you guess right, you capture the Red Psymon card and put it in your capture pile on the game board!

If your pawn lands on a RED PSYMON ESCAPE space, you will be given a challenge to stop the Red Psymon from escaping your capture pile. Succeed, and you keep it! Otherwise, it goes back to the outside of the game board and you have to capture it again.

If your pawn lands on a BLUE PSYMON CONTEST space, you will be given a challenge. If you succeed, you capture a Blue Psymon to help you!

Winning the Game

If the player(s) capture all 10 Red Psymon, the game is over, and have won! Your score is the total number of Red and Blue Psymon you have captured, so every Blue Psymon captured is counted as a bonus point.

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