



Slow down and see the world around you

A collection of traditional games created during the celebration of European Mental Health Week 2026.



**Emine ELMAS. bedriye pekmez
özel eğitim ve uygulama okulu
Nizip/ Gaziantep/ TÜRKİYE**



Tail grabbing is a lively outdoor game where players try to collect their opponents' tails without losing their own scarves (tails) that they wear around their waists or in their pockets. The player who loses their scarf is eliminated or becomes the "it"; the player who collects the most tails or loses their tail last wins.

Kindergarten of Metaxochori-Alexiou Panagiota



“Musical Chairs” is one of the most popular and entertaining traditional group games in Greece, as it combines music, dance, speed and observation. To prepare for the game, chairs are placed in a circle with their backs facing inwards, in an open space, while the number of chairs is always one less than the number of players (e.g. 10 players and 9 chairs). One person takes on the role of “DJ”, controlling the music without seeing the players. During the game, when the music plays, the participants move or dance around the chairs; however, as soon as the music suddenly stops, everyone must sit down quickly.

Anyone who does not have time to find a chair is out of the game. Before each new round, one chair is removed, so that there is always one less than the remaining players. The game continues in the same way until there are two players and one chair left, so the last one to sit down is the winner! Importantly, no pushing or inappropriate behavior is allowed, and in the event that two players sit on the same chair at the same time, the winner is usually the one who has sat more firmly or the one the referee decides. Sometimes the round may be repeated! Have fun!

kindergarten of Metaxochori-Alexiou Panagiota



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Dječji vrtić More, PPO Bulevard, Croatia, teacher Suzana Srića



Tikajić – A Quiet Kvarner, Croatia Childhood Game

“A quiet childhood game that nurtured patience, focus, and shared joy.”

Tikajić is a traditional children’s game from the Kastav region, once played on rainy days when outdoor play was impossible. Using only a slanted wooden board and a coin, children would gently roll the coin downward, trying to make it stop as close as possible to a marked line without crossing it. Simple, rhythmic, and full of anticipation, the game brought children together

Irina Grinčenko, Klaipėdos l/d "Pakalnutė", Lithuania.



Game Rules

Children move freely around the room in different directions.

When the teacher gives a signal and calls out a number (for example: 5, 4, 3, or 2), the children must quickly form groups of that size.

Each time, the number is chosen so that one child cannot find a group. This child leaves the game.

The game continues with fewer players each round.

The last remaining pair of children is the winner.

Italy- Maria Gabriella Pappalardo

Kindergarten D.Alighieri-DDS Poggiomarino 2 sez E

Tijelo

One, two, three...Star! game

Game Rules

One child is chosen to be the "leader" and stands with their back to the group. The leader calls out loudly: "ONE, TWO, THREE ...STAR!". While the leader's back is turned, the other players run toward them. As soon as the leader says "Star!", he spins around quickly. At that exact moment, all players must freeze perfectly still, like statues. If the leader catches someone moving, that player must return to the starting line. The first player to reach and touch the leader wins and is a new leader.



Theodora Bourliakou. 12th Kindergarten Nea Ionia, Volos, Greece

“Pass Along, Little Bee”

Two children, called the “mothers,” stand facing each other with their arms raised and fingers interlocked, forming an arch. They clap their hands rhythmically and sing:

“Pass along, pass along the little bee,
with her little bees,
with her little bees
and with the little children.”

The other children form a line and walk underneath the arch. When the song stops, the “mothers” catch the child who is passing beneath their arms at that moment and quietly ask, so the others cannot hear: “What do you choose? Apple or orange?” or “Yellow or red?” or “Rose or Jasmine?” etc.

Before the game begins, each “mother” has secretly chosen one of the two options. If a child says “apple,” they stand behind the mother who represents the apple; if they choose “orange,” they go behind the mother who represents the orange.

The game then starts again from the beginning, and the same process continues until all the children have been chosen. In the end, two groups are formed, each one behind its own mother. Most of the time, the two groups do not have the same number of children.

At this point, the children form two chains by holding onto each other behind their mothers. The two mothers hold hands, while the children at the back pull their teams from behind. The team that manages to pull the other team toward itself wins the game.

Afterward, the mothers change, and the game begins again from the start.



Kindergarten Duga, Zagreb, Croatia - teacher Valentina Glavica



Rules of the Traditional Croatian Children's Game "It's Dark in the Cellar" (U podrumu je tama)

Number of players: 8 or more children

Age: 5+

Materials needed: a scarf or blindfold

Preparation

1. The children stand in a circle holding hands.
2. One child is chosen to stand in the middle of the circle and is blindfolded.
3. The remaining children form a circle around the child.

How to Play

1. The children move around in a circle and sing:

"It's dark in the cellar,
but why should it be alone,
when the bright sun is shining,
guess who I am."

1. When the song ends, the blindfolded child in the centre walks towards one child in the circle.
2. The child may gently touch the other child (shoulders, hair, hands or clothing) to try to identify who it is.
3. If the child guesses correctly, the two children swap places. The identified child goes to the centre of the circle and puts on the blindfold.
4. If the child does not guess correctly, they remain in the centre and the game continues with the song repeated.

Safety Rules

- The child who is guessing should touch the other child gently and respectfully, without invading personal space.
- The children in the circle should not reveal their identity by speaking, laughing or giving clues.
- Everyone should help ensure the blindfolded child can move safely around the playing area.

Aim of the Game

The game encourages the development of attention, tactile perception, listening skills, concentration, memory, mutual trust, social skills and a sense of belonging within the group.

Floriana Mirela Băjan Grădinița cu PP nr.5 Mizil România

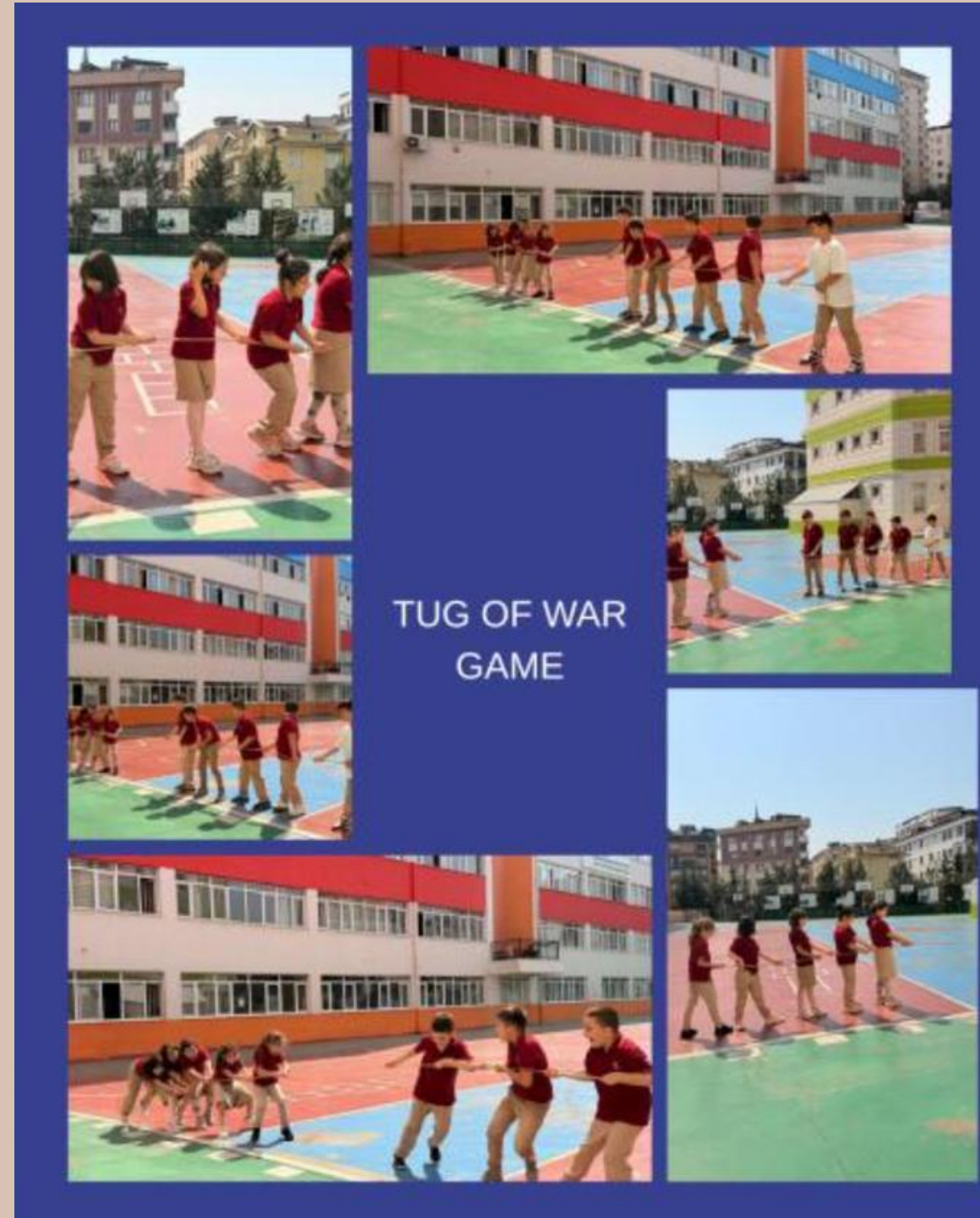


Parachute Game

This is one of the favorite games of the children at our Kindergarten. The children have to move the parachute, but at the same time not to lose the balls.

This way the children relax, learn to work in a team, to cooperate. It is at the same time a cheerful, dynamic game that trains attention

BAHAR KÖSE MUZRAK-TURKİYE-ÖZEL İSTANBUL MAHİR İLKOKULU-2nd GRADES



We organized a traditional outdoor game activity called Tug of War, which is a fun and energetic team game played in many cultures around the world. In this activity, students were divided into two equal teams and stood on opposite sides of a rope. A line was marked on the ground as the center point, and the aim of the game was for each team to pull the rope toward their own side.

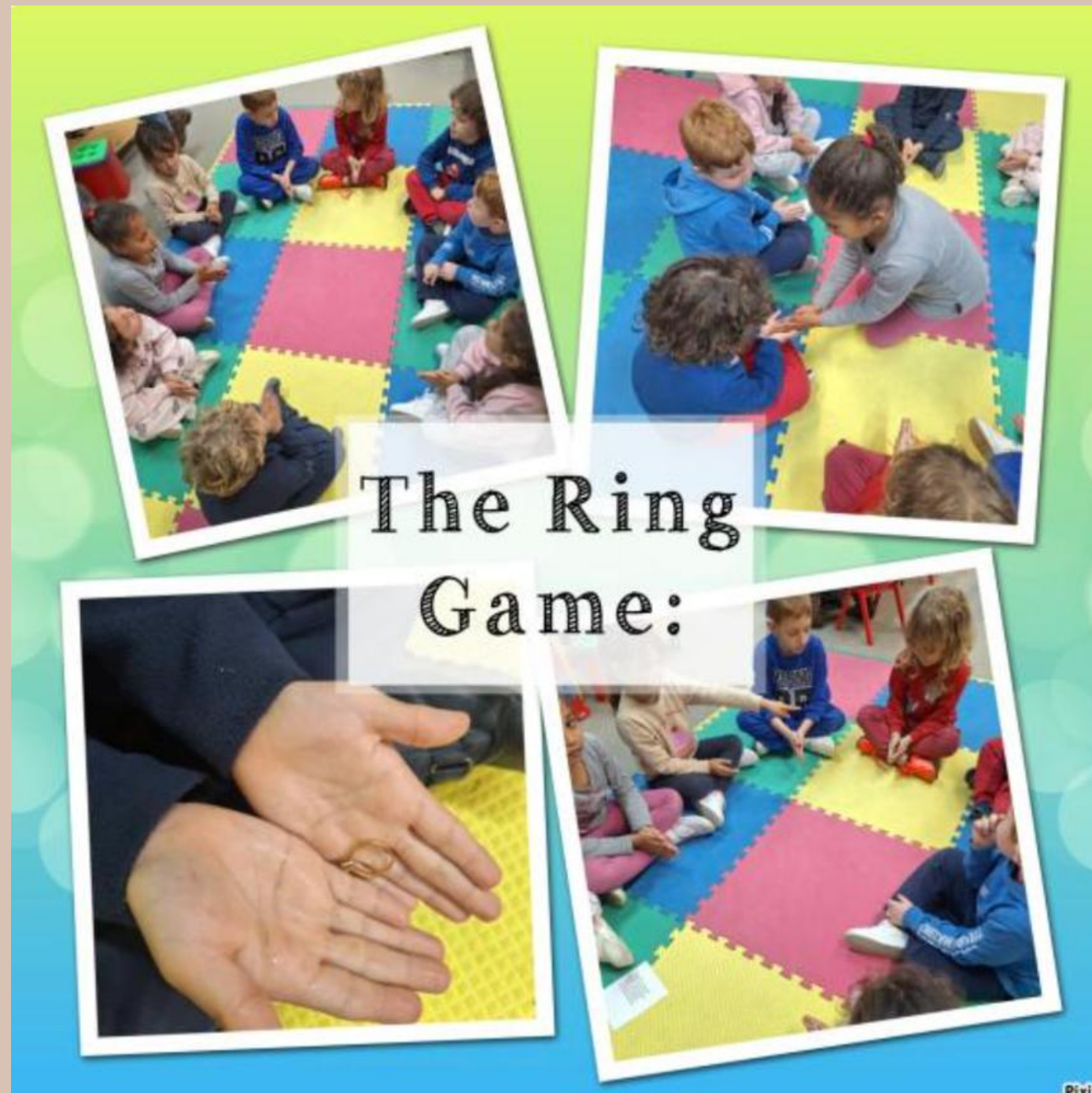
Before starting the game, we talked about teamwork, cooperation, and fair play. Students learned that strength alone

1st Kindergarden of Volos-PAPATOLIA GEORGIA



To support a smooth transition to primary school, our kindergarden participated in joint activities with the 1st Grade. In particular, we took part in physical education lessons together, giving the children the opportunity to become familiar with the new school environment, interact with older students, and feel more confident and secure about their next step.

Margarida Paim, EBI da Praia da Vitória(JIFOC), Azores-PORTUGAL



The Ring Game: is one of the oldest and most popular traditional Portuguese children's games. It's a game of cunning, observation, and simulation that can be played by four or more participants, both indoors and outdoors.

Preparation: All participants sit in a circle with their hands cupped together (palm to palm). One player is chosen to be the "passer," who holds a ring (or a small stone/coin) hidden between their hands. The Action: The passer slides their joined hands inside the hands of each participant. They pretend to open their hands to all of them, but discreetly drop the ring into the hands of only one player. After going around the entire circle, the passer opens their empty hands and asks a player of their choice: "Where is the ring?" (or "Who has the ring?").

Resolution: If the chosen player guesses correctly, they win the right to be the new passer in the next round. If they guess incorrectly, the question is passed to another player until the ring is found.

Dječji vrtić More, Rijeka, Croatia, PPO Bulevard, Doris Griguljak



Gummi gumi is a traditional children's game with an elastic band, popular in many European countries, especially in Croatia and neighboring areas. The game combines rhythm, coordination, and jumping, and is often part of school holidays or outdoor gatherings.

Rules and how to play

At least three players participate in the game: two hold a stretched rubber band around their ankles, and the third jumps in a certain pattern. The rubber band is gradually raised - from the ankles to the knees, hips.

GRIGORE MĂDALINA GABRIELA, GPP NR.5, MIZIL, ROMÂNIA

GRIGORE MĂDALINA

GPP NR.5, MIZIL
ROMÂNIA



The old blind woman

Game type: movement

Age: 5-10 years

Targets: stimulating motivation and cooperation, developing attention, learning and remembering the colleagues' names.

Materials: a scarf

Participants: minimum 3

Location: indoor / outdoor

Inclusion in formal/ informal
education: physical education classes,
recreation, park, camps, hiking

Duration: 15-30 minutes

Game description

There is a well delimited playground out of which children are not allowed to come out. Whoever goes out of this

Jenny Kotortsi / 10th Kindergarten Thessaloniki Greece



The Handkerchief -"To Mantilaki" is a classic Greek traditional outdoor group game, known for improving speed, reflexes, and teamwork. It is usually played with 10 or more children in a circle.

How to Play

1. Children sit in a circle facing inward. One player is chosen to stand outside the circle holding a handkerchief.
 2. The player walks around the circle while the others sing a nursery rhyme like: "The handkerchief has passed, and the maiden seeks it, where will she find it?"
 3. The player drops the handkerchief behind one of the seated players and continues walking or starts running.
 4. As soon as the seated player realizes the handkerchief is behind them, they must grab it and chase the standing player around the circle. The goal is to reach and sit in the empty spot before being tagged.
- This is a typical game for school kids ages 4 to 7-8 years old offering plenty of exercise and fun

Italy-Marianna Painsi-Kindergarten D.Alighieri-DDS Poggiomarino 2 sez B



EMPTY BAG, HALF BAG WITH THE CIRCLE

Consolidate postural patterns tension/relaxation and introduce topological concepts _inside/outside_ and quantity _full/vacuum/medium_ through the movement and use of a tool.

EXPLANATION OF THE GAME*

Every child has a circle on the ground in front of him. It is his "sack." At the command of a companion:

Full bag!The child enters the circle _inside_, stands upright and stiff with his arms along his hips.Empty BAG!* The child comes out of the circle and collapses to the ground _soft_ near his circle. The circle remains "empty."

3. *HALF BAG!* The child puts one foot in and one foot out of the circle, standing "on horseback." The circle is "half full."

Rule: Those who fail to command are eliminated and become helper to give commands. The winner is the one who stays until the end.

51 Kindergarten school of Heraclion, Xristinaki Despoina



Pass around the bee 🐝

“Pass Around the Bee” is a traditional Greek children’s game that has been played for generations. Children sit or stand in a circle while singing a traditional rhyme, and one player walks around the group carrying a small object, usually a handkerchief. The object is secretly placed behind another child, who must quickly notice it and chase the first player around the circle.

The game encourages movement, attention, cooperation, and social interaction, while helping children connect with Greek traditional culture and folk songs.

Italy -Miranda Annunziata and Pesce Maria Antonietta kindergarten "D.Alighieri" DDS Poggiomarino 2 class



Let' s make the jar of calm.

Italy -Miranda Annunziata and Pesce Maria Antonietta kindergarten "D.Alighieri" DDS Poggiomarino 2 class C



Traditional italian game:"Witch commands color".

Game rules:

The color Witch orders two children to bring her a color, the first one to reach her wins.

Italy-Maria Gabriella Pappalardo Kindergarten D.Alighieri-DDS Poggiomarino 2 sez E



Activity Objectives

Integrating this game into Mental Health Week is strategic for several reasons:

Self-Control and Motor Inhibition: It helps children manage impulsivity by learning to stop their bodies instantly (essential for brain development).

Body Awareness: It develops balance and the perception of one's body in space.

Resilience and Frustration Management: Learning that being sent back to the start is just part of the game helps children handle small setbacks in a healthy way.

Social Development: It strengthens the sense of community and respect for shared rules within a group.

Stress Reduction: Outdoor play and collective laughter are powerful natural tools for lowering stress levels.

Clever 4th Class, Secondary School „ Constantin Găvenea”, Tulcea, România, teacher Deliu Ancuța



The students had as a guest the institution's nurse, who, in collaboration with the school counselor, prepared a presentation on students' mental health. They discussed information about stress, how to manage it, and how negative and positive emotions can influence our well-being. They also covered few exercises through which students can self-regulate in situations that cause extra stress. Additionally, bullying situations that can negatively impact their academic journey were also discussed.

We would like to thank all the teachers and students who patiently recorded and printed out the rules of the game. It was nice to learn new games. We learned that some games are played the same but have different names.



This is a reminder that we are simultaneously different and yet similar.