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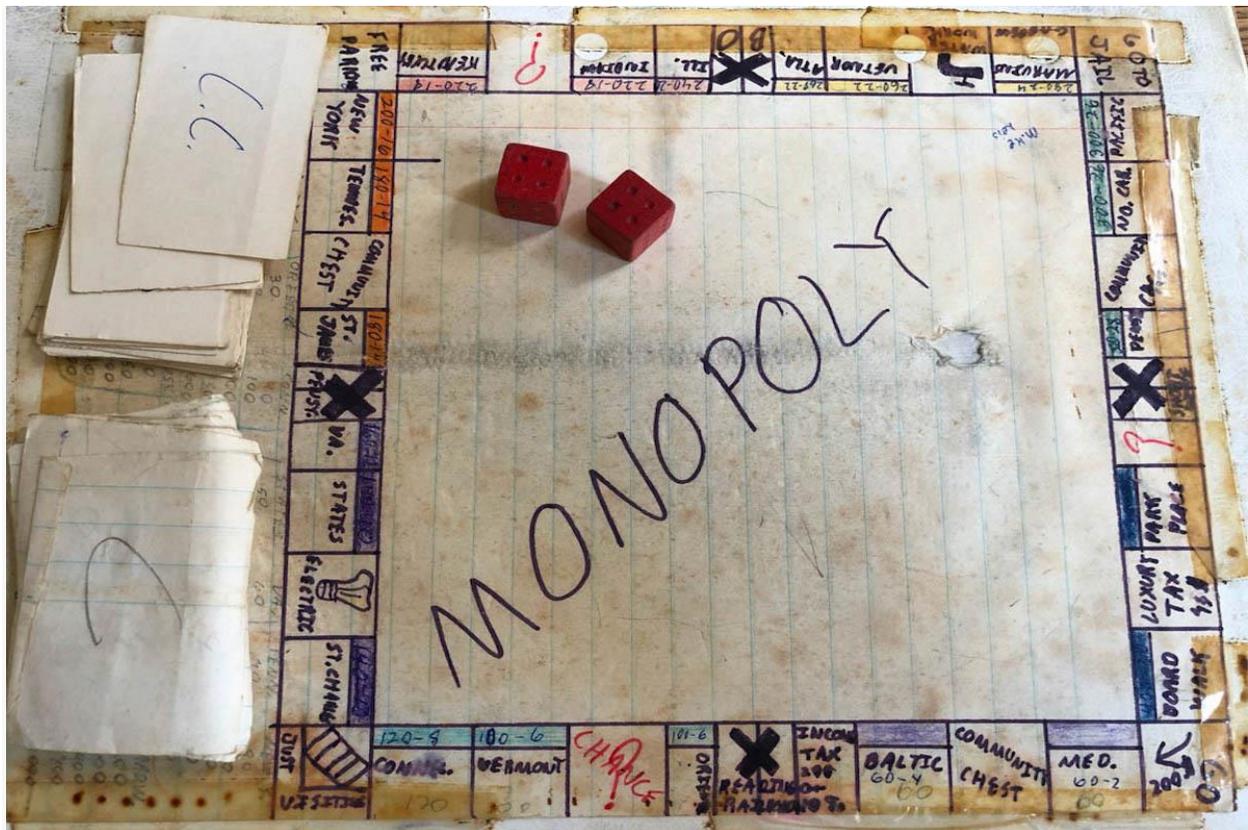
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Lessons Learned from Monopoly (and My Brother)

By Camille Dolan
UCF Forum columnist
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UCF Communications Coordinator Camille Dolan's brother's hand-drawn game board that survived hours and hours of play.

I was introduced to Monopoly as a child by my older brother, Damian. He must have been desperate for an opponent, and as I was the only one in the house at the time, he proceeded to teach me the game.

The thrill of sliding my colorful money under the board, as I'd seen Damian do countless times, was intoxicating. I got to pick my own token, but not the hat because that was Damian's. I settled for the racecar.

I didn't know the meaning of the word "capitalist" then, but I learned the importance of spending money wisely and taking calculated risks. Monopoly and Damian also taught me that sometimes life throws curve balls and nothing is guaranteed.

Damian, of course, was always the banker. I revered Damian. I didn't know it at the time, but he is the smartest person I've ever met. Even in middle school, he had an astounding breadth of knowledge and endless curiosity.

It's almost as if Monopoly prepared him for a life of responsibility and hard work.

He collected soda bottles and redeemed them for a nickel apiece. He used proceeds from his hunting and gathering to fund his comic book hobby. He also was a young numismatist and philatelist (and taught me what those words meant). He also had one of the largest newspaper routes as a junior high student – more than 100 customers, to whom he delivered each afternoon, and from whom he collected payment. It's almost as if Monopoly prepared him for a life of responsibility and hard work.

Damian, who is an anesthesiologist, nearly died as a baby from bacterial meningitis. He had brain surgery and spent 100 days in the hospital; physicians told my parents he would probably have some brain damage because of his prolonged illness.

In kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery, cracks are seamed together using lacquer dusted with gold or other precious metals. The technique highlights, rather than hides, imperfections. Sometimes I wonder if Damian's brain was somehow "repaired" using a similar technique.

Damian makes the best artisan bread and cinnamon rolls I have ever tasted. He used to take homemade goodies to the nurses at the hospital where he was completing his residency; one of those nurses is now his wife.

There might be a method to his madness.

In Monopoly, as in life, Damian always played by the rules. There was no money in the middle of the board to collect when one landed on Free Parking. He understood there was a finite number of houses and hotels upon which to make money; the goal of the game was to have one rich person at the end, not to spread the wealth.

In his real life, Damian has an eye for stray coins in parking lots, and will occasionally risk oncoming traffic to dart in and scoop up a quarter. He also collects aluminum cans, much to his wife's chagrin. In one year, this hobby netted him \$350.

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The Monopoly jail didn't bother my brother. He figured that one of his three rolls was bound to be doubles, and that saved him from forking over \$50 to the bank. He knew it was important to save his money so he could invest in real estate.

Let others have Boardwalk and Park Place, Damian was happy with the less-costly properties of light blue and orange. He also liked owning all four railroads; a trip or two around the board was profitable for him, near-fatal for his competitors.

His obsession with the game continued through high school, when he drew a picture of the board (color-coded, even) on the inside of his binder. He and his like-minded friends would spend their free time in the library playing the game. All of them had the prices of the deeds memorized and the number of spaces to move with each roll of the dice was calculated instantaneously.

I have one triumphant memory. Damian must have taught me the game too well; it became apparent, as he mortgaged property after property, that I was winning. The final blow was when he landed on my hotels on Boardwalk and Park Place. I may have smirked. As he assessed his holdings, he realized he was ruined. He unceremoniously flipped the board over. My little racecar was sent flying.

Monopoly did not teach either of us to be gracious in victory or failure.

And though neither Damian nor I were cool kids in high school, Monopoly also taught both of us to not be the iron or thimble – or any other token that was introduced and quickly phased out due to lack of popularity.

I also learned to savor my small victories – like beating my older, smarter brother – or finally getting to use the hat as an adult.

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