

The background is a solid blue color. Three white spoons are positioned diagonally across the frame. One spoon is in the top left, another in the bottom left, and a third in the bottom right. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

spoons full of belonging

**instruction
guide**

welcome

Welcome to Spoons Full of Belonging—where teamwork, care, and a little strategy go a long way. This collaborative game playfully introduces research about belonging in museums and invites you to practice belonging strategies as you navigate challenges and build connections with your colleagues.

Belonging in Museums

As public institutions, museums are invested in creating spaces where everyone feels like they belong. Belonging helps us advance our missions, creates better workplaces, promotes health and wellness, and it simply feels good. Yet, it takes intentional effort to design spaces that foster belonging. This game helps us understand what is needed and begins building vital connections among staff.

The Role of Play

Belonging is a serious topic, and discussions about belonging can be difficult because they are personal and can surface differences between people's experiences and values. By creating a game, we are not trying to imply that belonging work is frivolous. It is actually because the work is hard that we think play is such a valuable tool: play enables us to practice skills in a lower-stakes context and to look at situations from different perspectives. If you want to know more about this, we encourage you to look into the field of serious play.

The Research

The cards you'll use in this game share the results of a three-year, national research study about what influences belonging for museum staff and visitors. The study engaged over 350 museum visitors and staff. It sought to elevate the perspectives of people who are marginalized based on their identities (especially people who are Black, Brown, disabled, neurodivergent, queer, and trans), cultures (including factors such as language and religion), and organizational positioning (particularly people in entry-level positions). When you play the game, you're exploring real-world, research-based strategies for fostering belonging in museums.

**Learn more about
the research here:**



Spoon Theory

This game is inspired by Spoon Theory, a metaphor developed by Christine Miserandino (2003) to describe her experience with chronic illness. The metaphor is widely used in chronic illness and disability communities to describe the amount of energy you have to complete daily tasks. It reminds us that we all have a limited amount of energy, or 'spoons,' to take care of ourselves and support others. In the game and in life, every action we take costs spoons—so we have to spend them wisely and help each other when spoons run low. Miserandino wrote:

The difference in being sick and being healthy is having to make choices or to consciously think about things when the rest of the world doesn't have to. The healthy have the luxury of a life without choices, a gift most people take for granted."

Belonging is similar: if you feel like you belong, you may take it for granted. But if you do not, it can constantly drain energy and detract from your work or visit.

In our research about belonging in museums, Spoon Theory came up many times as a useful way to talk about experiences of (not)

belonging. The game creators' experiences of neurodivergence and disability also give them a personal connection to the Theory. As with any metaphor, it may be helpful for some people and not for others—and that's ok!

The Creators

This game was designed by staff at Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, as part of a larger, collaborative research project including Fred Rogers Institute, Madison Children's Museum, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The research project was funded in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and this game is produced with support from the Eden Hall Foundation.

children's
museum
pittsburgh



FRED ROGERS
— INSTITUTE —
Saint Vincent College

museumlab



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



EdenHall
FOUNDATION

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (MG-251989-QMS-22) and the Eden Hall Foundation.



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Suggested citation: McKelvey, M. & Todd, K. (2026). Spoons Full of Belonging: A Collaborative Board Game. Pittsburgh, PA: Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

the basics



Time

The game is designed so you can learn how to play and play 1 round in 1 hour.



Audience

This game is primarily designed for adult professionals working in museums.



Number of Players

We provide materials for 3–4 people to play. If you have 2 people, each person can play as 2 players. If you have more people, you can use quarters or other common items to supplement the materials we provide.



Mission

The mission of Spoons Full of Belonging is to work with other players to make connections and complete goals that collectively earn 10 points.



Scoring points

You score points by completing goals. Each goal involves “Making Connections” by trading tokens with other players.

There are three goals that can earn you points:

Goal 1: Connect with one other player 4 times (4 points).

Goal 2: Connect with two other players, 2 times each (4 points).

Goal 3: Make a connection with the player on your left and the player on your right (2 points).



Making Connections

The game’s playing cards explain how to make connections. You will move around the board and collaborate with others to follow the cards’ instructions. When you make a connection, you swap tokens with another player.

Watch our
instructional
video here:



setup

- 1 Place the **game board** where all players can see it.
- 2 Give each player a **player mat**. The mats have instructions and places to store pieces.
- 3 Each player should get 10 **tokens** in the color that matches their player mat. One token will be the pawn that you'll move around the game board. Place this token at your Starting Location, shown at the top right of each player mat. Put the other tokens near your player mat.
- 4 Place the **spoons** in a pile next to the game board. Each player should take 2 spoons and put them on their player mat.
- 5 Shuffle the **cards** and put them in a face-down stack next to the game board.



a player's turn

The person with the soonest upcoming birthday goes first. That person will follow the "On Your Turn" instructions on their player mat, as follows:

- 1** **Draw a card** and read it aloud. Then put it on your player mat. Everyone will draw a card on their first turn. On subsequent turns, only draw a card if you don't currently have one.
- 2** You may do **up to two different actions**. Here are the action options:
 -  **Move:** You may pay spoons (return spoons from your mat to the spoon pile) to move your pawn to another location on the game board. As you travel, spend one spoon for every bus stop you land on (you may choose to pay multiple spoons to move multiple stops along the game board).
 -  **Play Card:** Follow the card's instructions to complete the action. There are three types of cards:

Belonging cards

These cards cost spoons and allow you to make connections (trade tokens) with other players. Each card will have a location, spoon cost, and the type of connection. You will need to be in the location with at least one other player and have enough spoons to pay the cost in order to play your card.

Action cards

These cards are a chance for you to try out something that can foster belonging. Follow the instructions on the card to get bonus spoons, movement, or tokens!

Bad Day cards

These cards cost spoons, and may require you to move to a location. You cannot draw spoons if you have a Bad Day card. You cannot discard a Bad Day card. You may need to work with other players to resolve your card. If you don't have enough spoons to resolve your card by your next turn, the game ends!



Share Spoons: You can give one or more spoons to any other player(s) at your current location. No player may ever have more than 8 spoons.



Gain Spoons: If you are at home or your starting position, you can gain up to 3 spoons. If you are anywhere else, you can gain 1 spoon. You cannot have more than 8 spoons at any time. You cannot draw spoons if you have a Bad Day card.



Discard a Card: You may place a Belonging or Action Card in the discard pile if you do not want to play it. You cannot discard a Bad Day card. On your next turn, draw a new card.

gameplay

After the first person's turn, proceed clockwise, with each person following the steps in the "On Your Turn" section on their player mats, as described above. The game continues this way until it ends one of two ways:

You collectively score 10 points: Once enough goals are completed that there are 10 tokens on the game board, you win! (You can adjust the number of points to win based on how much time you have- we recommend 10 points for a 1-hour session.)



You fail to complete a bad day card: If a player draws a "bad day" card and doesn't have enough spoons to complete it by the end of their next turn, the game ends. If someone is in danger of this happening, other players should work together to try to gift this person enough spoons to resolve their bad day on their next turn. Sometimes bad days get to us all. It's ok if the game ends. You can try again!



keeping score

Tracking Progress Towards Goals

As you Make Connections, place these tokens in the goal section at the bottom of your player mat to track your progress. You can move tokens around between goals until you achieve a goal. Once you achieve it, move the tokens from your player mat to the goal tracker on the game board.

Getting Points

Once you achieve a goal (filling all the circles under Goal 1, 2, and/or 3), move the tokens from your player mat to the goal tracker on the game board. Once there are 10 tokens on the game board score tracker, you all win!

spoons
full of
belonging

Yellow Player

Start here:

On your turn:

1 Draw a card if you don't have one

2 Choose up to two different actions:

➡ Move: Pay one spoon per space you move.

📄 Play card: Follow the card's instructions.

👉 Gift spoons: Give spoon(s) to a player in your location.

🏠 Gain spoons: If you're at home or the library, gain 3 spoons. Anywhere else, gain 1.

♻️ Discard a card: Return it to the discard pile.

Place card here

Spoon storage

Goals

Goal 1: Connect with one player four times. (4 points)

Goal 2: Connect twice with two different players. (4 points)

Goal 3: Connect with the players on your left and right. (2 points)

Goal 1

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 2

Goal 3

Goal 1

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 2

Goal 3

Score tracker

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Nice work together, everyone wins!

reflection

After you play, we encourage you to discuss the experience, what you learned, and what follow-up activities you might engage in. You might address questions such as:

The actions in this game are based on data about what affects people's sense of belonging in a children's museum, but everyone is different.

Which cards were most memorable to you? Did any surprise you?

Which actions represented on the cards do you think most influence your own sense of belonging?

Were there any cards that you do not think would influence your sense of belonging?

What aspects of the game felt (un) realistic? Why?

What idea(s) did the game give you about how you can support your own or others' sense of belonging?

What costs and replenishes "spoons" in your life and/or work?

And finally, we'd love to hear what you thought about the game and how it could be improved. You can send an email to evaluation@pittsburghkids.org.

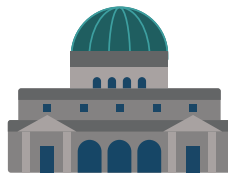
icon key

Locations

When a card lists a location, you must go to this spot on the map to play that card. To exchange tokens or spoons, at least one other player must be at the location with you.



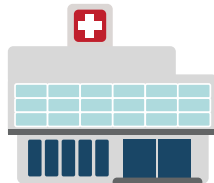
Pool



Museum



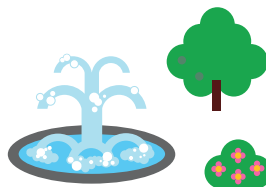
Theater



Hospital



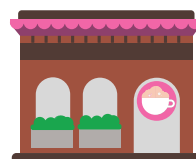
Library



Park



Home



Cafe



Gain 1 spoon: If 2 or more spoons are depicted in the icon, gain that number of spoons.



Share out loud: Follow the prompt on the Action Cards and share out loud with all players.



Lose 1 spoon: If 2 or more spoons are depicted in the icon, lose that number of spoons.



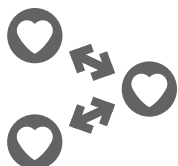
Move: You can move to a new location if prompted by a card.



Trade a token: Give another player one of your color's tokens and they give you one of theirs.



Give a token: If prompted by an Action Card, give one of your tokens to another player.



Trade tokens with all players in your location: If there is only one other player in your location, you can just trade a single token. If there are multiple other players, they only trade with you, not with each other.

