

IRENE CASTEEL ENDOWED SPEAKER SERIES

2025

The Applied Use of Tabletop Role-Playing Games in Therapy: **BUILDING EMPATHY AND RELATIONSHIPS WHILE ROLLING DICE**

May 1, 2025

7 p.m. | Dicke Forum

Dicke College of Business Administration

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There is a fundamental human need for play, as it helps us grow, develop, learn about culture, and connect with others. In this lecture we will explore various tabletop game types before focusing in depth on Tabletop Role-Playing Games (TTRPGs). TTRPGs offer a unique opportunity to help players cultivate empathy by requiring that players to step into different roles and understand a wide array of motivations. The focus on empathy is particularly important in our increasingly interconnected world. We will discuss how TTRPGs offer a unique avenue for empathy development by immersing players in collaborative storytelling, active listening, negotiation, and conflict resolution. We will also discuss the crucial role of safety tools in creating a supportive environment, enabling participants to take risks and build trust. Finally, we will review current research on the applied use of TTRPGs, highlighting areas where further exploration is needed to solidify their effectiveness in fostering social and emotional growth.

Dr. Megan Connell is a board certified psychologist, the co-founder of Health Quest Innovative Therapeutics and Geeks Like Us. She is the author of the “Tabletop Role-Playing Therapy the Guide for the Clinician Game Master, the first published book on applied use of tabletop games in therapy. She has been featured on NPR, the BBC, CBC, and in TIME for her work on using Tabletop Role-Playing Games in therapy. A US Army veteran, Dr. Connell serves on the board of Frost Call, a 501(c)3 charitable organization which seeks to bring veterans together through gaming. She is also an expert in working with women and girls on the Autism Spectrum. She speaks nationally on the use of tabletop gaming in therapy and has been a distinguished guest speaker at several universities. More information about Dr. Connell can be found at MeganPsyD.com.



MEGAN CONNELL

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