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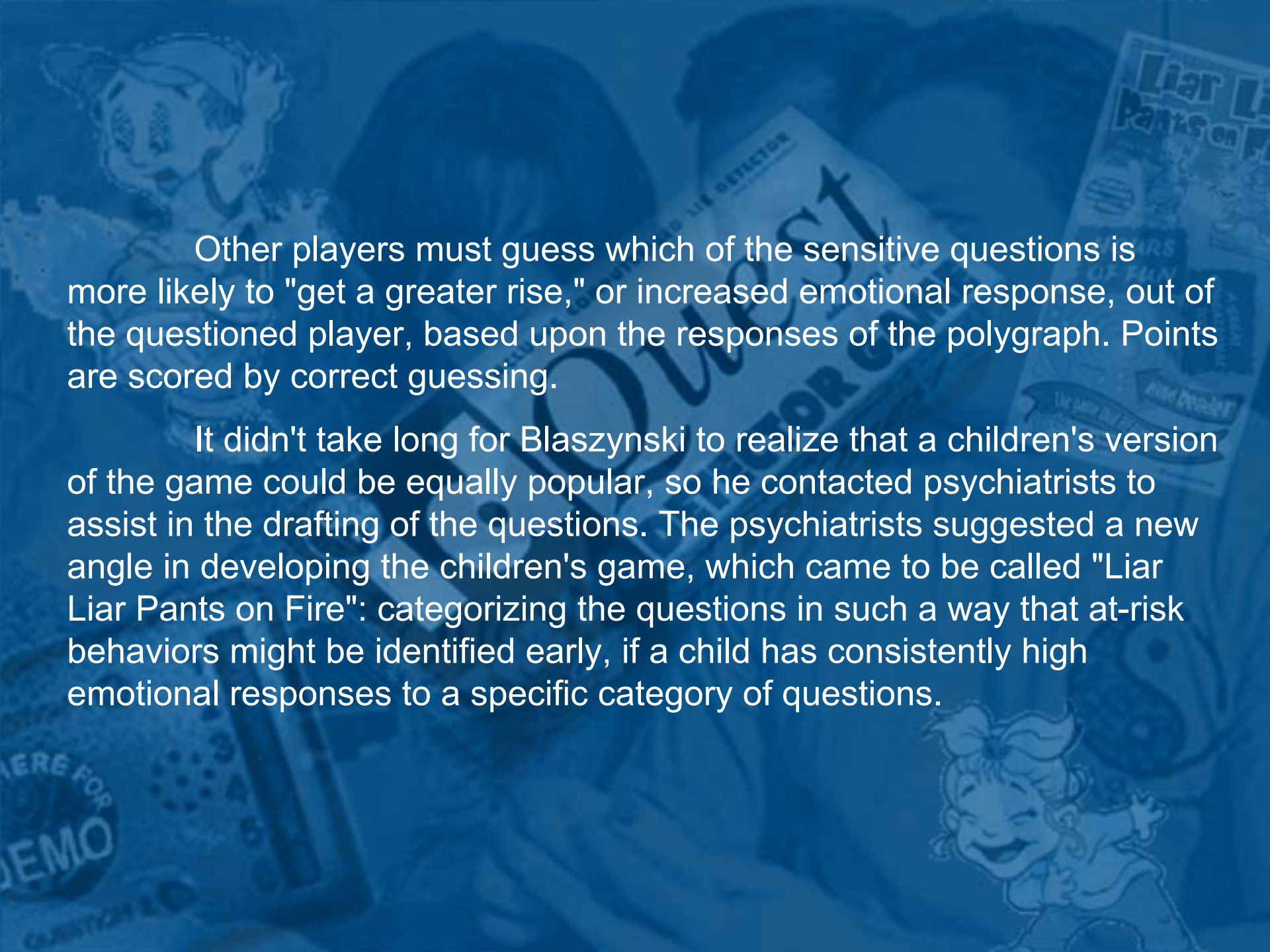


Party game has therapeutic use

Lorne Marshall

When John Blaszynski designed an adult party game based upon use of polygraph, or lie detecting technology, he never dreamed that it could be used for therapeutic purposes with children. But that is exactly what happened.

The party game is called idQuest, and it uses a miniature polygraph, powered by a 9-volt battery, to test responses in game participants. The object of the game is to ask each player four questions: two "baseline" questions during which the device adjusts to the player, and two more sensitive questions, such as "when using the rest room at a friend's house, do you go through their medicine cabinet?"



Other players must guess which of the sensitive questions is more likely to "get a greater rise," or increased emotional response, out of the questioned player, based upon the responses of the polygraph. Points are scored by correct guessing.

It didn't take long for Blaszyński to realize that a children's version of the game could be equally popular, so he contacted psychiatrists to assist in the drafting of the questions. The psychiatrists suggested a new angle in developing the children's game, which came to be called "Liar Liar Pants on Fire": categorizing the questions in such a way that at-risk behaviors might be identified early, if a child has consistently high emotional responses to a specific category of questions.

An exercise book provided with the game can be used to facilitate parent/child discussions related to a high-response category. It is important to note that the categories are identified by color only; this prevents a psychiatric diagnosis from being applied to a child prematurely. A number is provided for concerned parents to contact professional counselors at Children's Help USA if they suspect that their child is having a problem.

Blaszynski cites that even if the polygraph isn't used, the questions in both versions of the game bring about surprisingly candid conversations. And it creates opportunities for parents and children to discuss issues they might otherwise have avoided, making it easier to revisit those issues later.

"It's a game kids love to play," Blaszynski concludes, "and playing it could positively impact their future."

The game is available exclusively at Media Play stores.