

OSHKOSH MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY CENTER, LLC

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

VIDEO GAMES

Pros and Cons

There has been a debate for years on whether or not video games are beneficial or detrimental to individuals, especially our youth. Current research has found both individual and group benefits and individual and group harms stemming from video game play.

For example, let's say Gavin, age 13, spends four hours on weekdays and up to ten hours on weekends playing video games. First, we have to determine what kinds of video games Gavin is playing. Is the content age appropriate? Does he play continuously or does he takes breaks that are longer than merely going to the bathroom?

Second, we want to look at the context of the play. Is Gavin playing alone in his room? Is he playing in the living room or other public space that allows for parental oversight? Is he playing strictly offline on the console or online with other people? If he is playing offline, is he joined by other family or friends or does he

prefer to play alone? If he is playing online with other people, are these people friends he goes to school with or are they strangers? Are these other people family friends, extended family, or immediate family located outside Gavin's current residence?

IS THE VIDEO GAME A HOBBY...?

context. Are video games his way of having something to talk about with peers at school where he can be the expert telling them how to conquer an enemy or complete a difficult task? Is the video game playing a hobby and if so does he have other hobbies that engross his attention? Does playing video games interfere with his ability to connect with family, peers, or others?

Finally, what are his behaviors around ending video game play? Is it difficult for him to stop? Does he throw tantrums? Does he easily step away? Does he ask for more time and when given

Third, we want to address Gavin's social

ABOUT ME

I wanted to share a little with you about my expertise on video games and video gaming. I have played video games since I was in middle school, but sporadically until I met my husband. He is an avid gamer, with his first word being "tendo" for Nintendo. Gaming is a culture, a lifestyle for us that we greatly enjoy. I have devoted the past three years on researching video games for my eventual dissertation. During this time, I have gain so much knowledge and I look forward to contributing to this field beyond my dissertation. I think there is still more we need to know gaming and its effects on us.

stop easily or does he continue to ask for additional time and get upset when it is not provided?

As an additional note, what are family rules, chores, and expectations. Do family rules provide time limits on play? If so, are these clear with clear consequences that are consistently followed through on? Is Gavin required to clean his room or do the dishes, mow the lawn? If so, is he still able to complete these chores or do video games come before chores? Are chores rushed through so more time can be allotted to video game play? Are parents clear about their

expectations? If Gavin required to complete his homework before he is allowed to play video games? Has this expectation been made clear with followed through upon consequences when he disobeys?

These questions relate back to the notion that gaming is a culture, a lifestyle that affects us and the world around us. How we chose to treat those living with us as we game; how we care for our own body and mind before, while, and after gaming; and who we game with in the online world matter. Gaming is not an individual sport even when we

are playing in isolation. The characters in the game speak to us, the scenery depicted speaks to us, the mechanics of the game can make or break the experience. The plot or lack thereof can engage or disengage us.

How video games benefit and harm us are going to differ a bit from person to person, but overall, we can either use this media for entertainment, participating with others, being able to do things we would never otherwise be able to do without major repercussions, or become so absorbed in it that we neglect the world around us. We choose.

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