Video games - effects, number of hours played

Exercises to work on the topic at home or at school

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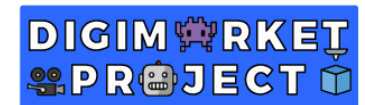
Video games - effects, number of hours played

"You are sitting in front of the computer all day again! Don't you care about anything else?" - Sound familiar?

Playing a game is a basic human need, and not just in childhood. While for children it means discovery, joy, experimentation and development embedded in the learning process in general, its impact on adults cannot be neglected. Playing games, whether board games, sports or, in our case, video games, remains important for relaxation, de-stressing and recreation.

But excess is not only a warning sign that the balance has been upset, it also warns of deficiencies and unmet basic needs. And if it gets out of control, its addiction-like manifestations can damage many areas of life over time.

When it comes to hobbies as a pastime, everyone thinks of something pleasant. Sports, arts and crafts, DIY, intellectual or scientific subjects. It's something that you enjoy doing in your spare time, something that you are interested in and sometimes something that you delve deeply into.

Nowadays, it is no news that we are using computers for more and more tasks and activities. Today's technology can help us in almost anything, whether it's learning, entertainment or even our social life. The degrading term 'nerd' is used to describe someone who is too much under the spell of technology, of computers. But what if your work, your interests, your talents and your hobbies are all tied to the computer? It's simply that it's what you're good at, it's what you enjoy, and you can have a social life, play sport, have fun, just like anyone else.

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Over-playing - addiction

In other words, you can basically overdo anything, even if it doesn't seem obvious at first. Certainly we know people who always put other people's problems and errands before their own, who relegate their needs and desires to the last place. This may also appear to be pro-social, supportive behaviour, someone who is kind and trustworthy - and these characteristics, regardless of the dynamic, persist - but there are other forces at work in the background that raise issues of conformity, likeability and acceptability.

Research shows that interpersonal, psychological and emotional problems underlie computer gaming disorder. So the game itself or its overuse may simply be a consequence, not to mention an attempt to treat or resolve the symptoms. Finding a community of like-minded people has always been important, and nowadays it is not uncommon to find this community online or through a game, for example by joining a gaming clan. It also happens that serious friendships and love affairs are formed, even if the participants have never met in person, and perhaps never will.

Dependency can have psychological symptoms, i.e. the search for opportunity, the compulsion to acquire the subject of the dependency, the craving, but it's also important to weigth the way of its manifestation. There is no withdrawal or abstinence syndrome, as there is no physical substance, but the cessation of the gaming session or cessation of the availability of the desired activity may trigger irritability, anxiety, tension as psychological symptoms. Question yourself: how many people would panic if there was no internet for a day or a week. How many people would wonder what to do with their lives? Here again, it is good to see the difference between the embeddedness of technology and its life-affecting, life-affirming, facilitating part, and its pathological, life-limiting use. Most of us, even if we are not happy that this has happened, have an idea, a solution or can occupy ourselves with something else. The majority would remain functional in their lives and even if they were to find a place or an opportunity to use the internet, the focus and priority itself would not be just that for them. This is an open debate, with many arguments to be heard, and the final (if you can ever say that) summary will be made in the future, hopefully taking into account changes in age, generation and the way the world communicates.

Social perception

The media also has a quite damaging effect in terms of articles and news reports that caricature the lifestyle and habits of gamers and attack the acceptance of video games as a legal pastime. There is also a lot of superficial writing on the Internet, which explains the subject and the symptoms in five sentences, not to mention articles promising a cure in a few sentences or points. In the search engine, they are very high up the list, perpetuating prejudices, reinforcing shallow 'analyses' and failing to provide the help they promise. The choice of subject is also often unfortunate, because it is the most blatant, often fatal and tragic cases that are seized upon and portrayed as a general source of danger. But it is the same as with a kitchen knife, for example. It can cause serious injury, but basically everyone uses it for its intended purpose. In other words, it is a tool and the rest is up to the user.

It's not easy to know what behaviour is rewarded and accepted by our environment and the social groups around us, but it is clear that everyone has the right to choose a hobby or to spend their free time doing something that is close to their interests, that they enjoy and that helps them cope with the stresses of everyday life, as long as they devote the same amount of time to their duties and tasks.

One of the researchers on the subject, Mark Griffiths, believes that, contrary to the colloquial meaning, the mere fact that someone gambles too much, in this view, is not a sufficient condition for addiction or problem gambling. In the same way, he raises the phenomenon of healthy enthusiasm, which implies not only an increased interest but also a high level of time spent on a particular subject or activity. This is seen as a positive benefit in one's life, whereas problematic use is destructive and must be accompanied by other negative effects. It should also be remembered that this is part of a process and that often underlying the phenomenon are deficiencies or dysfunctions that have appeared or developed in other areas of life.

In addition to what has already been mentioned, children are even more vulnerable in this respect. In particular, it is important to be aware of their vulnerability to: the absence of a supportive parental presence, a divorce, a death, a low number of successes, lack of social relationships, poor social skills, or if the computer becomes the universal tool after the TV, which then keeps the child busy.

In adults and adolescents, but also in children, the following things are common, and can also be caused by deficits and dysfunctional areas of life:

- loss of sense of time during play

- continuous prolongation of playtime, often at the expense of sleep time

- withdrawal-like symptoms

- feeling the need to play rather than experiencing it as a source of pleasure

- escaping from problems and difficulties, unpleasant emotions into play

- lying about the amount of time spent playing

- irritability and acting out when interrupted or forced to stop playing

- Above a certain level or time spent with the activity, this will affect social relationships, friendships, relationships and family, performance at work or in studies, self-esteem and health.

- Often, it is just one period. It can be caused by a recent normative crisis (a natural crisis, resulting from a change in life course or life cycles), or by an enthusiasm for something new. A new game or a novelty that has galvanised the online community may also mean that you will spend more hours playing than usual. In the case of distance relationships, the number of hours spent online may increase because of distance, but the computer can also help people to learn and find information.

- According to Jane McGonigal, author on gamification and the effects of video games, 20 to 24 hours a week is the maximum time a video game can have a positive effect, after which the positive effect not only stops increasing but also reverses.

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Pozitív hatások

A játék pozitív és hasznos élmény lehet, ha ismerjük a mértéket és nem hagyjuk, hogy életünk más fontos területein is eluralkodjon. A videojátékok pozitív hatásainak megtapasztalásához a rendszeresség mellett fontos a motivációnkkal is tisztába lenni, vagyis azzal, hogy mire használjuk a játékkal töltött órákat.

- Az online játék megtaníthat minket kompromisszumkészségre, empátiára, de segíthet a taktikai és stratégiai képességeink fejlesztésében is.

- A reflexekre, gyors reakciókra épülő játékok javíthatják a szem-kéz koordinációt és a döntéshozási vagy más kognitív képességeinket is magasabb szintre emelhetik.

- Miért hasznos ez egy online csapat tagjaként? Például felmérhetjük, hogy kivel érdemes összedolgozni vagy ki szorul segítségre, de szintén ez segíthet előbb reagálni egy problémára, vagy hamarabb átlátni egy helyzetet.

- Our imagination and creativity can be greatly enhanced by playing on a platform where we have to build and create,

- We can even acquire useful real-life lexical knowledge and skills - e.g. foreign languages, history, geography can be learned through play, as the setting and story of a video game often has a lot of background material and research behind it.

- In many games, we are tested by dilemmas and problems, and we can take on the role of firefighters, scientists or wizards, who are given interesting and useful tasks and exciting adventures.

- Friendships can also be forged online, not just through playing together, but also through providing help, support and encouragement.

A leggyakoribb és leghasznosabb kérdések

- The role of the parent: The attitude and example of the parent, the importance of digital devices, the amount of time spent with them, the importance of the devices are guiding and paramount. Making rules, discussing them and setting and sticking to them will not work (especially for adolescents!) if they see that the other party does not take them seriously but only demands compliance. A solution and a great help can be to develop a digital policy together, with common ideas, demands and taking into account the experiences of all ages.

- Curiosity, openness: even a single conversation can help a lot, but it is also important to be curious and interested in young people's hobbies and pastimes - especially young children's digital content consumption and experiences. We should be open to the issues, dilemmas, questions and experiences that it raises and not dismiss it as not interesting for us.

- Rules at home. It is the parent's responsibility to create boundaries, including when and how many hours a day a child can play, what toys and equipment they have access to. Consistency is an important ingredient, and this needs to be accompanied by some flexibility, as too much strictness is not helpful.

- Balance between online and offline: it is important to be aware of the online world and to find a balance between activities, opportunities and programmes. But while there are advantages, we should be aware that technology will never be able to replace the experience of meeting, touching and experiencing moments in person.

- Don't ban: banning, stigmatising, shutting down creates tension, resistance and often just more curiosity. Not only have we made video games more attractive, but the creative child will find a way to access them without our knowledge. This can lead to a breach of trust and behaviour where he learns to lie and mislead, and alongside this, our relationship is almost certain to become vulnerable.

- Frameworks, boundaries, dangers. The balance between online and offline is also best made part of a child's life from an early age, and they should be taught that human relationships are best built in person and that live programmes and encounters are important.

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Let's talk to the children aboutthe topic

The questions on the next page
can help you do this.

Questions that can help to process this section

- What do you think about video games? Are there good or bad sides to gaming?

- If you play, why do you play and how much? How long is it a useful pastime or hobby and how much is harmful?

- Video games have long been seen as a childish, silly pastime of hobby, but this view has changed - where do you think we stand now?

- Some people play video games for a living and show it to other people (streaming). Would you like to do the same? Are there downsides to this?

- Are there content creators/influencers that you know or follow because of video games? Who are they and why is it worth to follow them?

Situational exercises help to raise awareness

What are the pros and cons of video games?

Where is the line between hobby and addiction?

The situational exercises on the next page will help answer these questions.

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Exercises and techniques for discussion and debate

- Talk about the pros and cons of video games!

- Come up with a YouTube page where you have to build an audience by playing video games - what would you play, how often and how much? Would it be easy or difficult?

- Split into two groups and describe the characteristics of those who play video games too much and those who do so at a healthy rate! What is the difference between them and why?

Task card

Talk about the pros and cons of video games!

Come up with a YouTube page where you have to build an audience by playing video games - what would you play, how often and how much? Would it be easy or difficult?

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Task card

Split into two groups and describe the characteristics of those who play video games too much and those who do so at a healthy rate! What is the difference between them and why?

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Help children to recognise the positives and dangers of video games!

You can print out a small version of the infographic on the next page and hand it out to your children, or post it on the wall in a larger size to keep it in front of them.

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Why is it fun to play?

- It's fun, it's exciting, it's an enjoyable experience.

- The graphics are beautiful.

- Develops skills, strategic thinking, intelligence, creativity.

- You can also do it together, meet new people, even find friends with whom you can share interests outside the game.

What are the downsides of games?

- Addictive, some games are deliberately designed that way. Addiction to games can damage our lives, for example by damaging friendships or making us feel unwell.

- Other players can put pressure on us, persuade us to do things we would not otherwise do (e.g. spend money in-game)

- Excessive gambling is unhealthy, harmful to the eyes, body and muscles, but it's also bad for your mood if you play all day
- without getting up from
- the chair

How can we avoid them?

- Make a digital contract at home with your parents! This should be done by mutual agreement, taking everyone's views into account!

- Set your own limits on how much time you spend in front of the screen!

- Keep a balance between the online and offline world! Technology will never be able to replace the experience of meeting in person, touching and experiencing moments in real life.

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As parents, what can we do to avoid gambling addiction?

As parents, we have many opportunities to reduce our children's screen time by setting a good example and setting the right rules for family life.

You can print out a small version of the infographic on the next page and hand it out to parents, or post it on the wall in a larger size to keep it in front of you.

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What to know about video game addiction?

- Not when the child "plays too much"! You can play a lot and stay perfectly healthy, just out of sheer enthusiasm.

- It is when other parts of your life are at the expense of play. Addiction is addiction because it damages your life.

- There is a difference between one or another game. Some games are deliberately designed to be addictive, others are simply for the enjoyment of the game. You can find out more about malicious game design methods at https://www.darkpattern.games /patterns.php

The harmful effects of gambling addiction

- He neglects his family, friends and real-life acquaintances.

- He neglects his duties.

- Instead of solving his problems, he escapes into play. (Play is a healthy form of stress management, but only if the player does not avoid solving the problem.)

- Losing control over how much and when he plays (e.g. regularly playing late into the night at the expense of sleep).

- He loses interest in other things, it doesn't keep him busy, what they used to do before.

How to talk to your child about video game addiction?

- Playing is an important part of every child's life, so remember that it is a sensitive subject. If your child feels you want to keep them away from games in general, they may withdraw from discussing the topic.

- It is important to remember that it is not just game addiction that works this way. While our children are addicted to games, adults can fall victim to social media or serial addiction in the same way. If we treat the topic as if it is only a threat to the child, they may shy away from the conversation because they may feel patronised.

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