



When Does Video Game Playing Become an Addiction?

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In June 2018, the **World Health Organization** published the 11th edition of its **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)**. ICD codes are required for health insurance reimbursement, and one of the noteworthy additions to their list of diagnosable conditions is **Gaming Disorder**.

Gaming disorder is defined as "a pattern of gaming behavior characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences." Gaming behavior can be continuous or episodic and recurrent and must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning, and evident for at least 12 months.



What Does the APA Have to Say?

In the United States, many mental health professionals use the **Diagnostic and Statistics Manual, Fifth Edition (DSM-V)**, published by the **American Psychiatric Association**, for making diagnoses. In the DSM-V, Internet Gambling Disorder was added as a diagnosis, but not Internet Gaming Disorder. However, more recently the committee that reviews and recommends additions and changes to the DSM have developed a draft description of Internet Gaming Disorder requiring at least five of the following symptoms:

- A preoccupation or obsession with Internet games
- Withdrawal symptoms when not playing games
- A tolerance for gaming so that a person needs to spend more time playing to be satisfied
- At least one failed attempt to stop or cut back on playing games
- A loss of interest in other life activities
- Overuse of digital games despite realizing the impairment they have caused
- Lying to others about game usage
- Using gaming to escape or relieve anxiety or guilt
- Relationships that have been lost or risked because of gaming

Most parents likely feel that their child's video game playing is a problem, but it is important to note that "video game addiction" refers to students who are struggling academically and socially (with friends and family) and maintain a reclusive and sedentary lifestyle due at least in part to playing video games.

The Scope of the Problem

According to research statistics, approximately 8% percent of children who play video games in the U.S. are addicted. A similar statistic (roughly 4-10%) is found in other countries.

The attraction to video games is strong in today's technology-based world. In addition to the enjoyment children receive from playing video games, many of their social interactions are based on either discussion of video games or playing (at times, remotely) with each other. Many students also enjoy watching others play video games on YouTube. Therefore, parents will face challenges in enforcing boundaries around video game playing.

Are You Concerned about Your Child's Video Game Playing?

Please keep in mind that Morrissey-Compton's psychologists are available for consultations to discuss options.

Quick Tips

Here are some rules to follow, particularly in the early days of your children's game playing:

- Both parents must agree and enforce rules about game playing. Lock up game consoles, laptops, etc. when not in use.
- Negotiate and discuss the rules with your child (e.g., rules such as no game playing on school nights; or game playing for 30 minutes on school nights only after homework and chores are completed and that does not interfere with normal bed time; or how much time is your child allowed to play on weekends or school vacations).
- Set a timer so that your child knows when they reach the time limit. Consider giving them a 10-minute warning. If a child does not stop when required, each minute over time will be deducted the next day. Avoid taking away video game playing for extended periods of time unless you are 100% sure that you will enforce it. Some of our students tell us that they know they can "wait out their parents" who forget the length of punishment and allow them to play again before the date told to them.
- Consider other activities during the week, such as sports, groups, clubs to limit amount of free time on school nights.

Additional Resources are Available Online, for Example:

- Through online forums and descriptions of treatment programs
- Local Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOPs)
- Summer programs through online forums and descriptions of treatment programs