



Gaming

How is mental functioning affected by gaming? Risks

Disturbed Sleep due to exposure to blue light, over-arousal levels, difficulties coming away from games especially if peers are on them late at night.

Cognitive Skills

- Marked reduction in concentration
- Many games are designed to provide fairly immediate gratification which can lead to reduced drive and perseverance
- Reduced opportunities for creativity and use of initiative

Poor Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Studies have found high links between low self-esteem and gaming behaviour. This may be a consequence of having difficulties already and using games as an escape or way of building and alternative identity, where a person can feel more effective and skilled. Immersion in gaming can make the problems grow in the long term.

Depression

Links have been made between low mood and excessive levels of gaming. However, there is still lack of clarity of whether over-reliance on gaming results from having low mood or causes low mood. Often gaming is linked to low mood due to it often co-existing with lack of face to face social contact and sedentary behaviour.

Anxiety

Gaming has also been linked to anxiety including OCD. Aspects of gaming that may increase anxiety are playing high stress or scary games, playing online team games, the escapist quality of games that may allow players to avoid real life situations they find anxiety provoking.

Aggression

Games with violent content and competition against other online players have been linked to an increase in aggressive thoughts and behaviour, both short and long term, reduced empathy and prosocial behaviour. Terminating play may trigger feelings of frustration that have built up during the game to be expressed, resulting in angry outbursts – often directed at the person asking them to come off.



Gaming

Advice:

- Come off all screens at least 1 hour before bedtime
- Remove electronic devices from bedrooms at night
- Keep consistent boundaries around night time screen use – even at weekends
- Encourage young people to play a wider variety of games/sports that are likely to develop different skills
- Ensure that young people are not substituting development of skills in the real world through their game play – find real world alternatives that also develop the same and other skills
- Ensure that screen use for gaming is time limited and not at the expense of other priorities.
- Find opportunities for your child to develop confidence in the real world by taking on new challenges and interests – joining social groups etc

- Move gaming devices to communal parts of the house so your child is encouraged to interact as well as play
- Use games as a way of helping your child to feel connected to you – enter their world – get them to teach you how to play, play multiplayer games, have a family tournament
- Limit screen time so it is not impeding their motivation to fulfil other responsibilities

- Ensure the content of games is suitable for your child, encourage a variety of types of games, especially ones that are more calming and creative – e.g. Minecraft creative mode.
- Encourage physical and social activities and limit screen time to fit around these

- Use real life opportunities to talk about the impact of violence and aggression
- Ensure games played are age appropriate
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for managing their mood by self-soothing approaches such as deep breathing, taking a break, eating and drinking
- Ensure there is a clear agreement about when a young person will switch off and if they are not able to manage this follow the tip below
- Help young people disengage from the games they are on by sitting with them towards the end of their screen time, commenting on what they are doing and gradually take the conversation to what they will be doing when the game comes to an end to help re-orientate them