

# Are Video Games Safe and Do They Make a Good Gift?

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Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling

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# Gaming Today

**Today's youth are  
technologically sophisticated**





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**Many Genres of Games**



# The most engaging learning experience

Built to create fearless learners

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Teachers, Sign Up for Free

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Learners across

**150+ COUNTRIES**

Used in

**1 in 3 US SCHOOLS**





## MindShift

# 10 Free Online Educational Game Sites

By [MindShift](#) Mar 27, 2014



By **Ryan Schaaf**

Web-based games can prove to be a treasure trove of learning opportunities, and there are a variety of content-areas, age ranges, and skill levels to choose from. The true pay dirt for browser-based learning games can be found on large online digital game hubs. Here are 10 game hubs players that teachers can use to as one tool in their arsenal.

## 1. Sheppard Software

Headed by Brad Sheppard, Sheppard Software hosts hundreds of free, online, educational games for kids. The site organizes its games into categories, which allow students and teachers to easily navigate by subject area and find a suitable game that caters to either an instructional need or a child's sense of curiosity and thirst of knowledge and challenge.

## 2. PBS Kids Games

PBS KIDS creates curriculum-based entertainment. The games site hosts a number of browser-based gaming experiences based on popular literary and media franchises such as The Cat in the Hat, Curious George, Sesame Street, and more. Games are organized by subject-type, which includes math, healthy habits, science, reading, and teamwork.



# grand theft auto

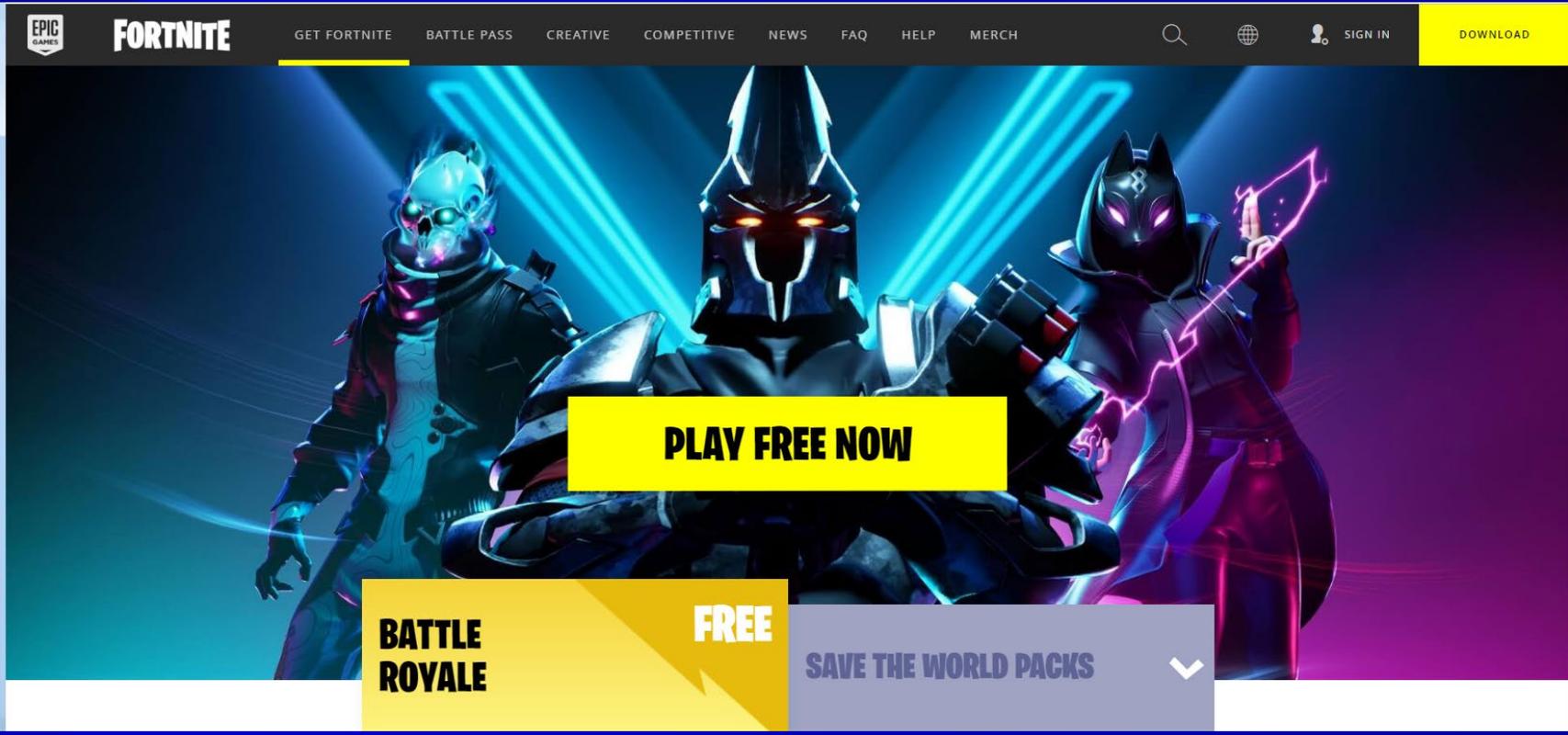
# MINECRAFT

WINDOWS 10 EDITION





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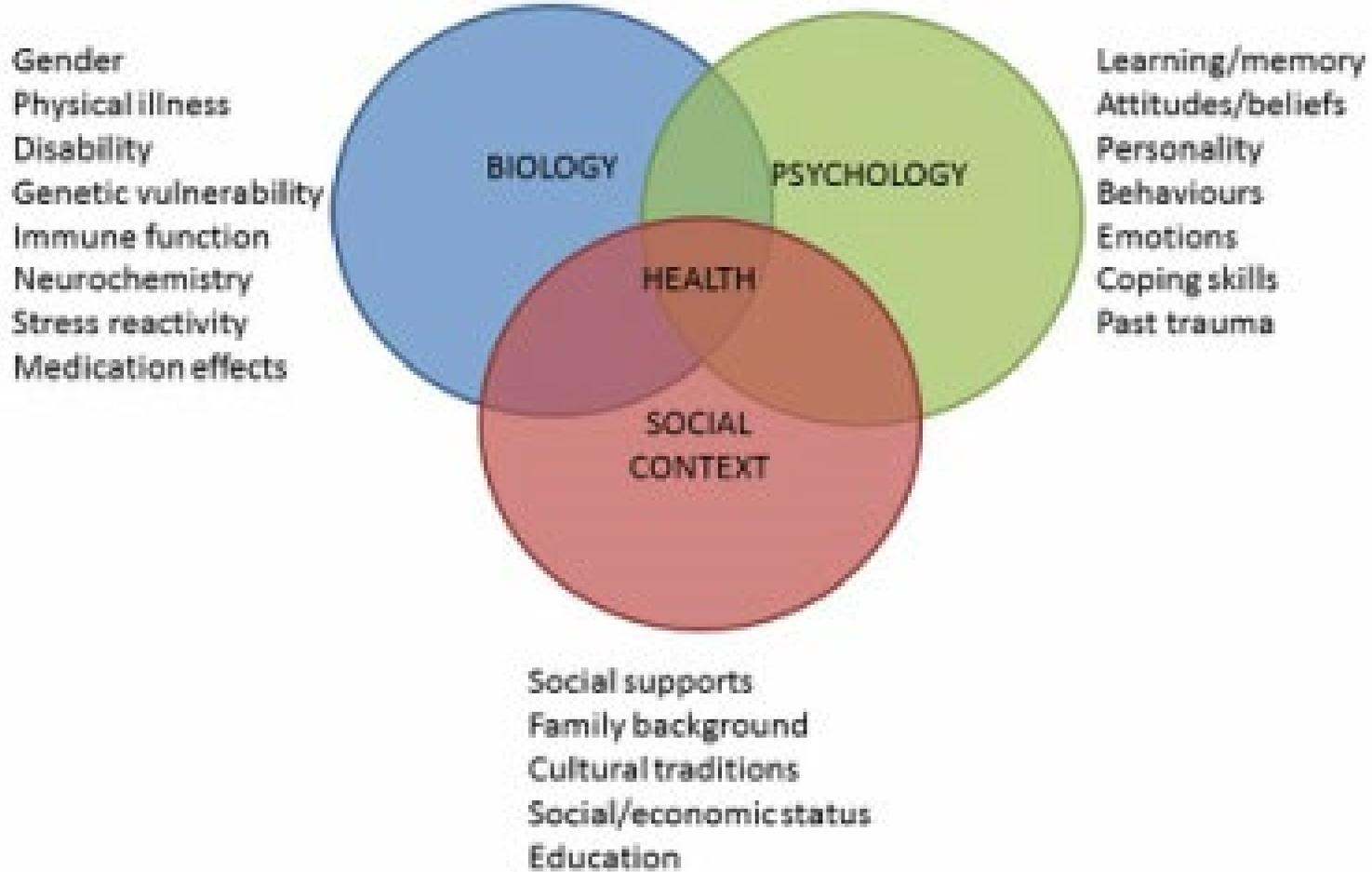
**PLAY FREE NOW**

**BATTLE ROYALE** **FREE** [SAVE THE WORLD PACKS](#) 

- *Fortnite* over 350 million users (2020)
- Revenue in excess of \$4.2 billion in 2019 selling upgrades and other merchandise (2020 estimate \$5 billion)
- Currently several class action suits pending concerning security breaches and the addictive nature of the game



# BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING HEALTH



# Problem Gaming Severity Continuum



# Gaming: Some facts

- Primarily 2 categories
  - ONLINE GAMING - played simultaneously by players who communicate with each other in real time-cooperating or competing with one another
  - OFFLINE GAMING - played alone; well defined start and end
- Online gamers spend more time, report having 'online' friends and report more satisfaction
- 70% of gamers prefer online games compared to offline games (De Prato et al., 2010)

# Gaming: Some Facts

- Since the 1990s video games have become more technologically sophisticated and increased in popularity
- Games are easily accessible via computers, tablets, game consoles and smart phones
- Over 2.6 billion+ active gamers worldwide (Newzoo, 2020)
- 97% of teenage boys play videogames; 83% of teenage girls (Pew, 2018); 96% of adolescents and 91.8% of young adults have played video games (Stark, Reynolds & Wiebe, 2020)
- 73.3% of adolescents & 61.9% of young adults downloaded a free game on their mobile or computer; 33.4% of adolescents and 24.5% purchased a game (Stark, Reynolds & Wiebe, 2020)
- Excessive gaming has become one of the leading causes of college dropouts
- 48% of student gamers report gaming keeps them from studying; 9% use gaming for that reason (Pew, 2003)

# Gaming Disorder: Some Facts

- CAMH (2016) estimated 13% of Ontario students-approximately 123,000 children have experienced symptoms of a video gaming problem (up from 9% in 2007). About 1 in 5 boys reported having problematic symptoms linked to their video gaming
- Online gamers are more likely to be problematic
- For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behaviour pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would *normally* have been evident for at least 12 months
- Worldwide estimates suggest 1-9% of gamers at risk of addiction (Gentile et al., 2018)

# Gaming Disorder: Some Facts

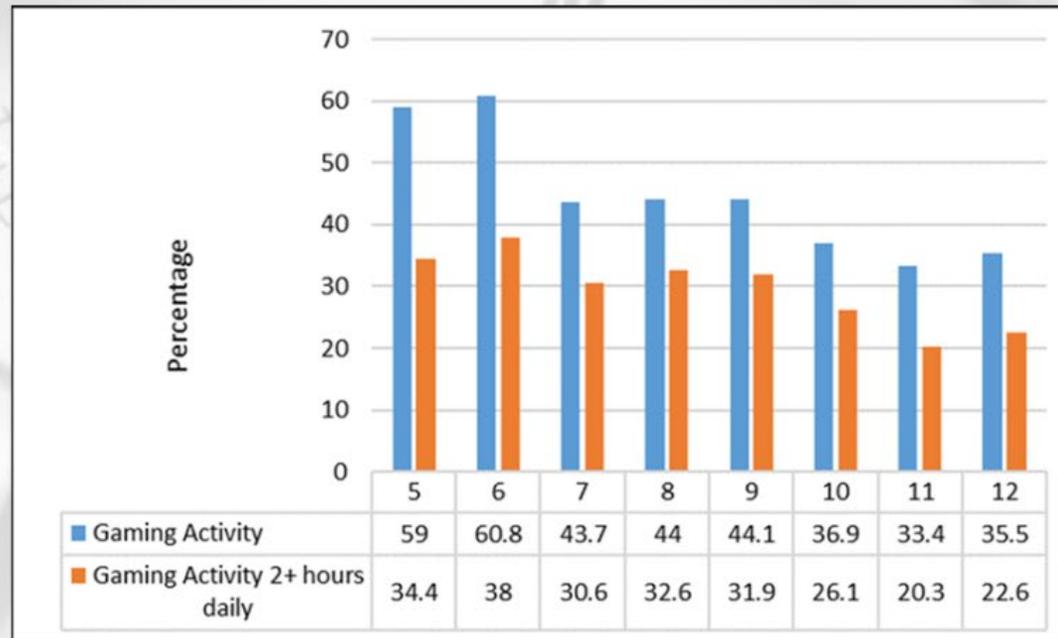
- IGD and anxiety 92%
- IGD and depression 89%
- IGD and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) 85%
- IGD and social phobia and OCD 75% (Gonzalez-Bueso et al., 2018)
- Social media & gaming can strengthen friendships & provides emotional support (Anderson & Jlang, 2018),
- Gaming 30 hrs/week has been associated with a gaming disorder
- While many games are free to begin, individuals can use micro transactions to purchase items or open “Loot Boxes” (using real money to purchase keys with a chance to win virtual items)

# Adolescent Gaming

## Adolescent 'Gaming'



Gaming activity is any gaming-related activity that has been played either from a computer/lap-top or from a gaming console or any other kind of device (phone, tablet) on or offline



# Adolescent Gaming

## Adolescent 'Gaming'



Teens took an Internet Disorder Gaming Scale (Pontes, 2015) – 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade males reported the highest levels of problem gaming



# Why Excessive Gaming?

- Gaming fulfills specific emotional/psychological needs: escape, social connection, success
- Games are intentionally designed to keep players engaged (hooked) using behavioral psychology strategies
- Games are fully immersive and provide hyper-stimulation (dopamine)
- Gaming is a safe place to fail - real world failures can be permanent
- Gaming is a community and culture-relationships are meaningful (may be their only relationships)
- Gaming is normalized and socially accepted

# The Good...

- Provides a form of relaxation/distraction (stress reduction)
- Helps minimize loneliness & boredom
- Great escape from reality
- Provides another venue for interaction
- Can provide employment opportunities
- Can be educational and provide learning opportunities
- Can maintain/improve social relationships-staying connected
- Providing and receiving social and emotional support
- Opportunity to meet new friends
- Sharing with friends
- Increased self-esteem
- May enrich people's lives

# The Bad...

- Can impede/limit face-to-face-interpersonal social interactions
- Can result in difficult familial and peer relationships
- Can interfere with educational and employment responsibilities
- Can interfere with one's health (eating, exercising, sleep, etc.)
- Increasing aggressive thoughts, feelings & behaviors
- Little transfer of learning from non-academic gaming to other academic tasks
- Source of conflict between parents and children
- Can become costly
- May interfere with help-seeking

# The Ugly...

- Excessive gaming can result in an addiction (World Health Organization; ICD-11, 2019)
- Can result in increasing frequency, duration & intensity
- Can become the most important activity in the person's life and dominates his/her thinking, feelings & behavior
- Can result in unpleasant emotional/physical states when trying to cut down or stopping the behavior
- Can result in neglect of other activities (e.g., social life, work, hobbies, interests, and inter-personal relationships, school)

**When is gaming too much??**

# Some Factors to Consider

- Age
- Context
- Is gaming resulting in some impairment/difficulty?
- Can children self-monitor and regulate their behavior?
- Are there health related concerns?
- Gaming 20-29 hrs/week is a red flag; 30+ hrs/week a real problem

# Risk Factors Associated with a Gaming Disorder

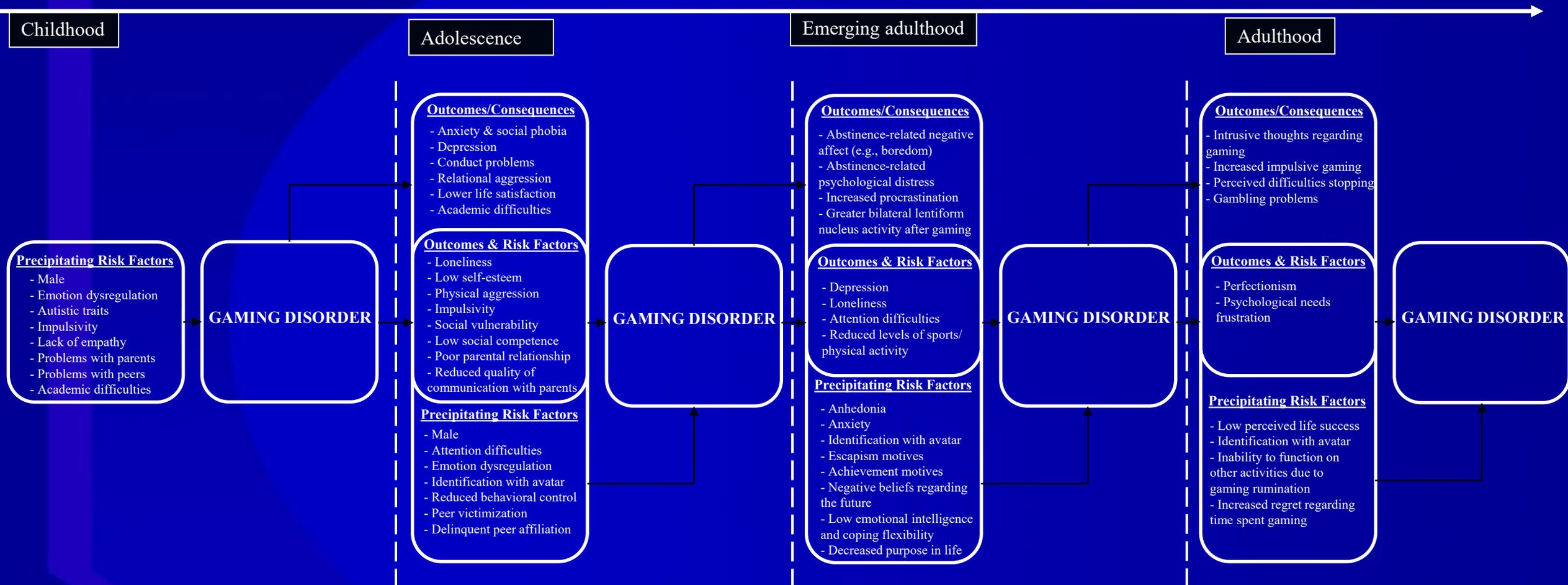
- Attention problems
- Emotion dysregulation
  - exhibiting emotions too intense for a given situation
  - difficulty calming down when upset
  - difficulty understanding emotional experiences
  - becoming avoidant or aggressive when dealing with negative emotions
  - experiencing more negative emotions
- Problematic family relationships
- Depressive symptomatology
- Negative self-esteem
- Social isolation
- In-game needs satisfaction

# Gaming During the Pandemic

- Significant increase in remote learning
- Has become the “go-to entertainment” for people in quarantine
- 73% growth (April,2020) revenues of \$1.5 billion
- *Fortnite* increased by 28 million players
- 46% increase in U.S.; 41% in France; 28% in U.K.; 23% in Germany

# Gaming disorders do not exist in a vacuum





# **Assessing Internet Gaming Disorder**



**World Health  
Organization**



# Gaming Disorder

- The World Health Organization in its revision of ICD (11<sup>th</sup> edition) (2018) identified Gaming Disorder as a recognized disorder.
- A pattern of gaming behaviour (“digital-gaming” or “video-gaming”) 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.
- The behaviour pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in *significant* impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months.

# DSM 5 Section III: Internet Gaming Disorder



## **Proposed Criteria:**

Persistent and recurrent use of Internet to engage in games, often with other players, leading to **clinically significant impairment or distress** as indicated by **5 or more of the following in a 12 month period:**

1. Preoccupation with Internet games.
2. Withdrawal symptoms when Internet gaming is taken away.
3. Tolerance: the need to spend increasing amounts of time engaged in internet games.
4. Unsuccessful attempts to control the participation in Internet games.
5. Loss of interests in previous hobbies & entertainment as a result of, and with the exception of, Internet games.
6. Continued excessive use of Internet games despite knowledge of psychosocial problems.
7. Has deceived family members, therapists, or others regarding the amount of Internet gaming.
8. Use of Internet games to escape or relieve a negative mood.
9. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of participation in Internet games.

## **Specify Severity:**

- Mild, Moderate, or Severe

# Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD 9 – SF)

1. Do you feel preoccupied with your gaming behaviour? (Some examples: Do you think about previous gaming activity or anticipate the next gaming session? Do you think gaming has become the dominant activity in your daily life?)
2. Do you feel more irritability, anxiety or even sadness when you try to either reduce or stop your gaming activity?
3. Do you feel the need to spend increasing amount of time engaged gaming in order to achieve satisfaction or pleasure?
4. Do you systematically fail when trying to control or cease your gaming activity?
5. Have you lost interest in previous hobbies and other entertainment activities as a result of your engagement with the game?

## Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD 9 – SF)

6. Have you continued your gaming activity despite knowing it was causing problems between you and other people?
7. Have you deceived any of your family members, therapists or others because of the amount of your gaming activity?
8. Do you play in order to temporarily escape or relieve a negative mood (e.g., helplessness, guilt, anxiety)?
9. Have you jeopardized or lost an important relationship, job or an educational or career opportunity because of your gaming activity?

Scoring: Never(1),Rarely(2),Sometimes(3),Often(4),Very Often(5) 32+ problems

# Help for Gaming Disorders

- Online help and support for parents, gamers, professionals
- On-Line Gamers Anonymous Organization
- Few professionals trained to deal with youth
- Specialty clinics (e.g., China, South Korea, U.K.)
- Question of harm reduction vs abstinence
- Traditional CBT models - identifying the underlying causes
- Skill training-alternative use of time

# Parents Can Help

- Don't call your child an addict or say they are addicted
  - This is confrontational, stigmatizing and hurtful - discuss the behavior
- Individuals often engage in gaming to 'escape'
  - Academic difficulties, parental/familial conflict, social and interpersonal problems
- Parents as role models
- Lying and deception are common
  - Time spent gaming, amount of money invested
- Greater need for unplugged time
- Closer parental monitoring

# Strategies for Change

- Track changes in behavior
- Understanding aggressive behavior/Irritability common when trying to cut back gaming
- Encourage social face-to-face activities
- Establish and maintain realistic rules
- Patience is key
- Positive reinforcement

# Strategies for Change

- Identify underlying causes
- Choosing games together
- Adult supervision
- Family Media Plan
- Positive family activities
- Review games and game ratings

# ESRB Ratings

ESRB ratings provide information about what's in a game or app so parents and consumers can make informed choices about which games are right for their family. Ratings have 3 parts:

- Rating Categories
- Content Descriptors
- Interactive Elements

**Ratings:** E (Everyone); E10+ (Over 10 years of age); T(Teenagers); M (Mature 17+); A (Adult 18+); RP (Rating Pending)

# Strategies for Parents

- Try to reduce # of days gaming
- Abstinence or reduction?
- Encourage breaks in game
- Limiting access (less than 2 hrs per day)
- Setting and maintaining limits
- Watch for signs of improvement and provide positive reinforcement for changes

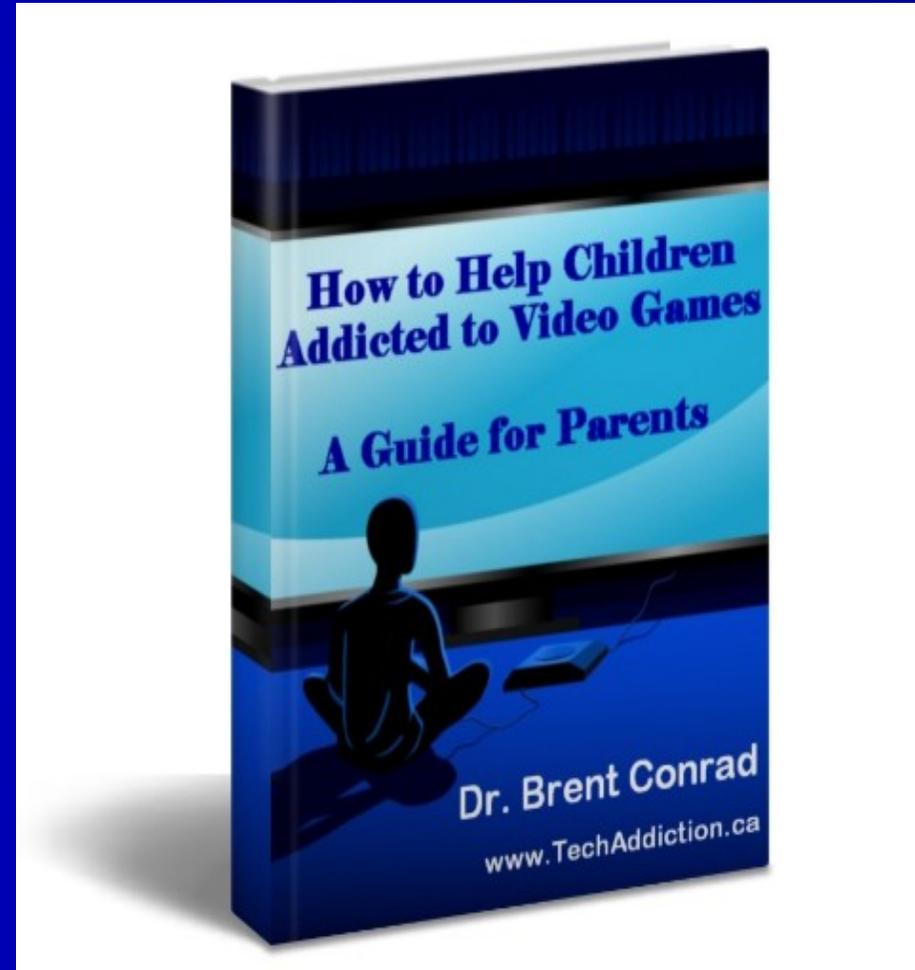
# More Strategies for Parents

- Talk WITH children, not at them
- Understand psychological triggers (stress, anxiety, boredom, game-related events-e.g., new releases, advertising, invitations to friend's home to play new game)
- Watch for credit card charges
- Web blockers

# Resources

**[gamequitters.com](http://gamequitters.com)**

Dr. Brent Conrad,  
clinical psychologist



# Professional Help

# Other Concerns

**e-Sports**



# **Gaming as a Vocation**

**players, bloggers, programmers**

# **Migration Between Gaming & Gambling**



wii

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