

Gaming and Internet Treatment Program

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What Makes Children Susceptible To This Addiction?

- Remember, even the healthiest children are vulnerable. The stresses of normal life for any child are great. It can be very hard learning to talk to the opposite sex; doing homework may not be enjoyable; what child looks forward to doing chores? When children are allowed to avoid the difficult tasks of childhood and escape into video game play without limits, they are vulnerable to getting hooked.
- Children with attentional deficits (ADD and ADHD) tend to be more vulnerable. There are two likely reasons for this. The stimulating effect of video games helps children with ADD and ADHD to focus, just as medication would do. Also, the mental processes demanded by many popular video games, for example, to scan and react in an ever changing screen environment, match the mental processes which are strongest in many of these children.
- Bored children who have depended on external sources of stimulation (e.g. T.V.) to cope with their boredom are delighted with the external stimulation of video games. Because these games are interactive and tend to be more stimulating than the passive entertainment of television, such children can quickly grow dependent on them.
- Lonely children can easily forget about their loneliness in the absorbing pastime of video gaming. When these children discover multi-user internet gaming where they can chat with fellow gamers, then they no longer feel so alone. In fact, many gamers feel their best friends are in their cyber community.
- Children with low self-esteem brought on by any number of things (e.g. poor body image) can easily find relief from their discomfort when they escape into a video game fantasy world where they can pretend to be fabulously powerful, beautiful, strong, smart, etc. Whatever trait or skill they lack in real life is something they can have in on-line fantasy.
- Children living in a home where there is abuse, neglect, or other painful dynamics want to escape their emotional misery. Games offer an easy way out.
- Children with Asberger's Syndrome or Autism, who have difficulty understanding social cues and therefore find it difficult to be socially successful (and may be the victims of bullying), find refuge in gaming and on-line chat where such skills are less important.