

Gaming and Internet Treatment Program

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Signs and Symptoms of Gaming Addiction for Parents

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- Unable to predict the amount of time spent on gaming.
Older children and teens should be able to give you an estimate of how long they will be on a game.
- Failed attempts to control personal gaming behavior for an extended period of time.
Frequent power struggles over gaming, not able to stop at a predetermined time
- Having a sense of euphoria (an exaggerated sense of well-being) while playing.

Ask: How do you feel when you are in the game?
- Craving more gaming

How often does he or she talk about the game or ask to play. Is it the first thing that he is drawn to upon arriving home? Is it the last thing he wants to do at the end of his day?
- Neglecting family and friends

Would he prefer to play the game instead of playing with others? Does she opt out of family events? Are friends calling less often? Are their fewer invitations for sleepovers or events?
- Feeling restless, irritable and discontent when not gaming

Is he unhappy when he's not gaming? Is there an increase in anger and fighting when he is un-plugged?
- Lying to family or authority figures about gaming behavior

There are software programs that will track the amount of time spent on gaming. Have you ever had to lock-up the key board, disconnect the modem or hide the mouse to because you don't trust your child?

Problems with school or job performance as a result of time spent gaming

Have grades declined since he began a new game? Does she miss her first class of the day, or is she often tardy to school? Are there more power struggles over doing homework? Has he been unwilling to seek a part-time job? Has he been fired for poor attendance?

Feelings of guilt, shame, anxiety or depression as a result of time spent on gaming

Would your child feel proud to talk to parents or teachers about his gaming habits?

Changing sleep patterns

Gaming all night and sleeping the day away, creates havoc with circadian rhythms and establishes patterns that are difficult to reverse.

Developing health issues such as Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, eye strain, weight change and backaches

Has there been weight gain or loss of 10 – 15 pounds or more? Have you needed to change the prescription strength for eye glasses or contact lenses?

Denying , rationalizing and minimizing adverse consequences stemming from gaming

“I don’t have a problem”, “My friends play a lot more than I do”, “You’re too old to understand”, “I can stop anytime”, “It’s no big deal”, “I have lots of friends on-line, so it’s not like I’m spending time alone”

Withdrawing from real life hobbies and social interactions

Quitting the team. Turning down opportunities to participate in hobbies that would have appealed to him before he started gaming.

Obsessing about the game

When not gaming, does she talk incessantly about the game? Ask if she has ever dreamed about being in the game. Does she draw game characters? Spend hours doing research in order to improve her character?

Creating an enhanced persona to find friendships or cyberlove

What type of characters does he choose to represent himself? Observe his chat and interactions with the other characters. Is he a flirt? Does he create a character of the opposite gender in order to get closer to the girls?

Evaluating your child's score:

- 0 – 2: Gaming is not a problem for your child. You encourage him to keep it light, keep it fun. You have already probably established fair rules and boundaries for gaming. Stay involved. Be willing to be tough if need be to enforce your rules and help your child maintain a healthy balance.
- 3 – 4: Gaming is becoming problematic for your child. It is time to review your house rules regarding gaming, and establish some healthier boundaries. You may be afraid to set more stringent limits but if you do not change your child's habits now you could very easily find him addicted to gaming. If that occurs it will be that much more difficult to teach him to gain control over his habit. Self-regulation is no longer an option.
- 5 or more: Gaming has become addictive for your child. Because time spent gaming takes away from time spent building real world connections, everyday that goes by increases the potential damage for children and teens. These real world connections are essential for their healthy psycho-social development. It's time get help. Most family members probably have already noticed what your child fails to see - that he is missing out on significant parts of real life. Your child needs your help, but it make take awhile before you get a "thank you".