

Presence of Mind: Healthy Gaming vs. Gaming Overload

(Music plays)

On-screen: Presence of Mind, sponsored by Cloud9, Kaiser Permanente and Shatterproof.

Introduction

On-screen: [Healthy Gaming vs. Gaming Overload]

[Keara]: Hey everybody this is Keara Please. I am an artist, content creator and streamer. Now gaming will always have a special place in my heart because I'm just able to bond with the friends that I love and meet new people that I would otherwise never even meet. You might think I game 24/7, but, newsflash, I don't. Sometimes it's gets a little too much and I don't want to miss out on real life. Now you may be worried that you or a loved one might be gaming too much. Let me tell you about a story when it personally affected me.

Now there was a time when I wanted to stream every single day of the month. Which included a variety of different games. Now, while this was fun and invigorating and exciting, I noticed I stopped taking care of myself and I stopped doing my natural selfcare routine. So, I had to take a step back and really find that balance to make sure that I'm living a healthy lifestyle. You know if you are taking care of yourself making sure you're taking breaks and you're being healthy with it. Don't let anyone judge you for your gaming. Regardless of what others think it's not the amount of hours that you game but when you can't stop and you stop participating in real life. Watch this video and learn the many benefits of gaming and when gaming can be harmful and how to receive help. As a community we want to make sure we keep all the fun aspects of the things that we love. But, we want to be aware of the potential harm it may cause us as well. Take at this interactive video series, share it with your friends and family, and I'll see you here in the end.

On-screen: [Accessibility options: If you use a screen reader, we recommend using the Accessible transcript. For keyboard navigation, use these shortcuts:

- On PC:
Next screen Alt+]
Previous Alt+[
- On Mac:
Next screen Opt+]
Opt+[

If your navigation is not working, select an area inside the screen and try again.]

Our narrator

On-screen: [Introducing our narrator Caleb Browner, professional e-sports commentator and gaming show co-host.]

[Caleb]: Hi, I'm Caleb, a professional e-sports commentator and gaming show co-host. I'll be guiding you through this interactive video, so let's get started.

Learning objectives

This video focuses on helping you understand video gaming's impact on your mind and body. It will help answer the following questions:

- What are the good things about being a gamer?
- Why are video games so appealing?
- How can you tell if your gaming is becoming a problem?
- What can you do if you're worried about the gaming habits of a friend – or your own?

Why do people play video games?

Playing games is both entertaining and fun. It provides a way for people to interact with each other in a virtual community as they work together toward completing a common goal or teaming together in a competition. Gaming can also introduce us to new worlds, cultures, and concepts. There are over 227 million gamers in the U.S. with over half of those players being female.

Why is gaming so popular?

Games meet three basic psychological needs. Click each image to learn more.

- A desire to be **good at** something. To see a challenge and a way to tackle it. In games we can overcome adversity and go on adventures otherwise not possible.
- A need to express our ideal selves. In games we can take on a new identity, gender, or sexuality in a safe, anonymous environment, and take risks without real-world consequences.
- A longing to **build relationships** with other people to connect and belong. Online gaming communities offer the ability to find a place where you belong and where you can be yourself without the fear of rejection or embarrassment.

Voices from the gaming community 1 –John's Story

[Caleb]: Let's listen to John talk about how he found community in gaming.

[John]: Gaming, especially esports is a perfect place for building and participating in a community of liked minded people. There's something surreal about knowing that someone from across the world who you may never had a chance to meet before is connecting directly with you through their headset of their keyboard to accomplish a shared goal in a game. Cloud9 seems like the perfect example of this. Gamers and viewers from across the world are coming together to support the same team and the same goals in healthy open environment and that creates this kind of unfettered interpersonal understanding and growth between people that I've never seen before. Sometimes this comes in the form of discussing drama, something less than savory but that healthy growth that everyone's yearning for still accompanies it. And, more importantly these relationships that are being formed are always based a source of pure enjoyment and love. I began working on Cloud9's superfan subscription service while I was still in college as an intern.

At first it seemed like facilitating this community of people would be just another task I'd have to begrudgingly complete. As I eased my way into it, I came to see that it wasn't like that at all it was really fun. We'd spent all night talking about movies, music, gaming the organization in general and a host of other topics like we'd been friends for years. I learned from many of them later down the line that when they joined the community that I was building they were just as scared as I was to interact and be themselves. But, setting up those boundaries allowed them to be themselves without fear of being judged and they seized that opportunity to make friends and, it really did pay off.

Emotional and Physical Benefits of Gaming

You heard from John what drew him to gaming.

In games, you can enjoy a sense of accomplishment. You get to be your true self and build strong relationships with other like-minded gamers.

There are also physical benefits to gaming. Research has shown playing action games can lead to improved alertness while boosting hand eye coordination. It's even been shown to improve your memory!

When is Gaming an Issue?

John's story talked about when he found a community in gaming. But, when is gaming a problem?

Games are designed to keep things interesting and to keep us playing. With practice and skill building we can master new challenges garnering trophies and achievements in a new world. That's a good thing. But, the reward systems in games makes it easy to develop a daily habit that uses up our time, money, and pulls us from in real life activities. Missions with promises of loot or mystery boxes entice gamers. With so much drawing a gamer in, how do you know if gaming is a problem for the user.

Sometimes, it can be hard to tell.

Voices from the gaming community 1 –Avril's Story

[Caleb]: Let's listen to Avril talk about when gaming became an issue for her.

[Avril] Hello, it's Siena Avril and I'm here to share a little story about my relationship over the years with gaming. I've been gaming since I was little from Halo Split-Screen Campaign with my brother to now being an aspiring pro-league player. Gaming only became an unhealthy coping mechanism when I started High School. Not only was I dealing with all the emotions that most High School kids go through but I was feeling this immense weight on myself. That I was not the gender that I wanted to be externally. Being 14 I coped horribly with these emotions and I fought my mother daily so that I did not have to go to school.

There were some days that I won but she didn't let off easy. I looked at my report card and saw that I had almost 100 unexcused absences that year. Surprisingly I even passed. My Mom handled the situation very well and put into on-line school

Now I have my diploma and I think I've had a pretty good experience of life but I do sometimes day dream about what my life could have been if I had a high school experience. Obviously I have no regrets now because I'm part of Cloud9 but, moving forward I want to make sure I'm gaming out of passion and that I am enjoying myself from it and not because I'm escaping reality and missing out on all the experience of life.

What are the negative impacts of gaming?

Gaming is not necessarily a problem simply based on how many hours played. But, when gaming begins to interfere with a person's life that can be a sign of a more serious issue. Does the player feel like they have crossed the line between loving to play and needing to play? Is the player using gaming to distract themselves from other aspects of their life such as family, friends, school, work, or other commitments? Or is the player neglecting physical needs such as not eating, sleeping, or exercising to game?

Mental Health issues:

A person who has feelings of anxiety or depression may find themselves drawn to games as a distraction and a way to suppress negative feelings. But, video games can make these issues worse

by making someone anxious about the things they aren't addressing in real life. Unhealthy gaming can impact sleep, appetite, mood and energy.

Relationship issues:

For many, gaming communities provide a social outlet. Though these connections are valid and important, real-life social connections are necessary and can help ease anxiety and depression, reduce stress, and improve self-esteem.

Physical Health issues:

While some video games encourage physical exercise, most do not. In fact, video game play is associated with increased food intake, regardless of appetite. Stress injuries in arms and hands and vision problems can also occur.

Financial issues:

Though many games are marketed as free to play, they often require or offer in-app purchases or "microtransactions". These can quickly add up as those extra lives, coins, weapons, or unlocking levels cost real money. While children, teenagers, and people who have issues with gambling are most vulnerable, anyone who plays video games is a target.

Diagnosing a Problem

The American Psychiatric Association has nine signs that gaming may be a problem. Meeting five or more consistently over the course of several months may indicate a serious problem that should be evaluated by a healthcare professional. But, meeting any of them could suggest the need to take action now so that a modest problem does not become worse.

Are you thinking about your or someone else's gaming? Think about the signs listed below:

- Is the gamer preoccupied or obsessed with games?
- Is the gamer irritable or anxious when they are unable to play: Spending time thinking about gaming and how to get back to it when not playing?
- Does the time spent playing continue to increase?
- Are they unable to quit or reduce the time playing?
- Have they given up other hobbies or life outside the game?
- Are they continuing to game despite problems?
- Do they lie about their playing time?
- Is the gaming used to help negative moods, such as guilt or hopelessness?
- Are they risking their jobs, relationship, or other parts of their life due to gaming?

How to Help

How to help yourself

If you're concerned about your own gaming and feel a loss of control, consider speaking with a healthcare professional. A professional can help if anxiety or depression are contributing to a gaming problem.

You don't have to completely give up the fun and community of gaming to discover more control. While addressing mental health concerns, a therapist can guide you in using your gaming interest in the real world to encourage socializing. Many popular games have conventions and places to play

together. A professional may encourage you to pursue positive options for managing excessive gaming to make sure time spent with both online and in-person relationships is equally rewarding.

How to manage finances

If gaming becomes a financial burden there are steps you can take to avoid impulsive, unplanned, or unauthorized in-game purchases. Set a gaming budget. Remove credit card information from devices used for gaming. Watch out for confusing interfaces that can trick you into making a purchase with real money. If you are still struggling to resist the urge to make purchases, consider having someone else set the account password to a code you don't know or can't access.

How to help someone else

What can you do if you're concerned about someone's gaming? Here is a model used previously to help others: Notice, engage, support.

Notice

Are you noticing the person is absent from events? Are they using gaming as an excuse to avoid others? Do you see changes in their appearance, manner, or interests?

Engage

When you have time with them ask the person how they're doing? Ask – "is there anything you're not doing much of lately?" Repeating or rephrasing what they say will help show that you're really listening. Use phrases like, "so you feel", "it sounds like you", "you're wondering if".

Support

Even if they don't see a problem, let them know you're concerned about their mental health, physical health, relationships and finances. Use "I" statements such as "I feel sad we don't do activities together outside of gaming."

Suggest activities that you can do together like sharing a hobby or finding a new one. You want to be spending time in real life away from screens.

Voices from the gaming community 1 –Bobby's Story

[Caleb]: Let's listen to Bobby talk about the actions he took when he recognized his unhealthy gaming habit.

[Bobby]: So back quite a number of years ago when I was working at Sony online entertainment this hot new MMO game called World of Warcraft was really picking up the pace and gaining a lot of attention including my attention. Which I developed a bit of an unhealthy obsession and habit with you know playing it at night and talking about it with co-workers during the day and really just spending 24/7 thinking and obsessing over this game. I realized that it was a bit unhealthy and if I'm already spending so much time why not leverage it to maybe channel that energy and that's what I did.

I applied to work at Blizzard because I was so passionate about working with the game and the company and it worked out. It was a bit lucky that I got to be able to have that experience, but it was a positive experience to be able to channel something that was unhappy and unhealthy into something that was really able to be something life changing for me.

Keep Gaming a Healthy Past Time

(upbeat music)

On-screen: [Screen recording of gaming, crowds of people cheering while watching a screen.

We all know gaming is thrilling and rewarding. But it's important to keep your life in balance.

A group of people holding up a trophy smiling.]When fitting your video game use into your life, think about your whole-body health and a need to keep everything in balance.

Playing video games can be an entertaining and social activity. It's best when integrated into a healthy lifestyle that includes community involvement and plenty of sleep, exercise, and a healthy diet.

How to get help?

Find Your Words, a website full of resources

Sometimes it can be hard to talk about gaming, something you love and know if there is an issue. Please check out [FindYourWords.org](https://www.findyourwords.org) to get additional support.

On the home page for Find Your Words, select Support center. Here, you can find all kinds of support, for yourself, or for someone you care about who might be struggling.

You can also connect with others and explore support resources, people that you can talk, text, or chat online with.

Wrapping up

[Keara]: Thanks you so much for taking the time to watch this video. I love being a part of the gaming space and I am so lucky to have a career that allows gaming to be a part of it. But, we need to watch out for each other when it comes to unhealthy gaming. There is a wonderful life outside of gaming too. You don't want to miss out on building deeper relationships exploring new places and even finding true love! Which tends to best be experience in real life. But most importantly use what you learned in this video to not only help yourself, but to help others as well. Have some positive vibes. Happy positive gaming vibes and take care.

On-screen: [Congratulations on completing the training! Your actions make a big difference. Please complete a [short survey](#).

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