



Mental Health Bulletin July 2023

Video games and online gaming

Lots of people like to play video or online games and can spend many hours gaming. For lots of people this is ok, and they are able to have other hobbies and interests, see friends, and still get on with their everyday lives. For others, this love of gaming can tip into being unhelpful, and impact on their life in a damaging way.

This is what it might look like, or feel like if someone is struggling with problematic gaming

- Constantly thinking about or wanting to play the game
- Feeling irritable and restless (fidgety) when not playing.
- Lying about how much time they've spent playing, or playing in secret (such as in the middle of the night);
- Tiredness, headaches or hand pain from too much screen time, and use of controllers.
- Not wanting to pay attention to things such as personal hygiene (eg, washing) or eating.
- Not wanting to go to school so that they can game.
- Sleep disturbance (difficulties getting to, or staying asleep, or restless sleep with or without nightmares).

Please remember that if a young person is experiencing some of these signs and symptoms it does not necessarily mean that they have a problem with gaming but it may be important to seek further help and advice.

Here are some things that might help you to support someone who experiences problematic gaming:

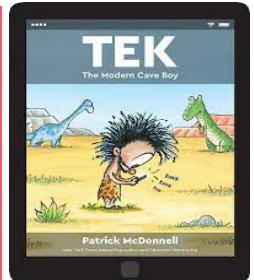
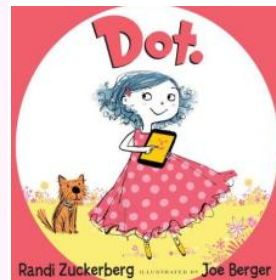
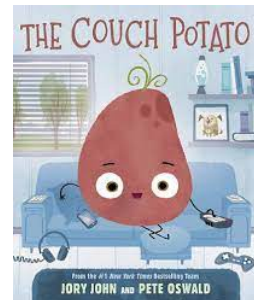
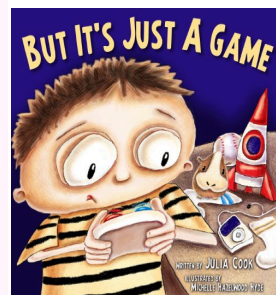
- Try to help your child to develop an awareness and understanding of their gaming behaviour, and how this is having a detrimental impact on their wellbeing and/or functioning.
- If your child is gaming, ensure that they are playing age appropriate games. They have age ratings just like films. Pan European Game Information provides detailed age ratings to help you decide how appropriate a game is for your child.
- Make sure your young person knows how to protect themselves online by not sharing personal information. Some games allow players to connect and interact with others, including people they may not know.
- Aim to work together with your child in reducing the time spent gaming. This may need to be done in stages.

- It might help to think together about how to stop a gaming session. Strategies such as using a timer to remind them how long they've got left, use in-game timers to set a fixed play time, or agree the stopping point in a way that works for the game they're playing – for example, stopping at the end of a particular level may be helpful;

- Think about other activities that the young person can engage with to replace or fill the time they previously would have spent gaming. It will be important to acknowledge that other activities may not be as enjoyable, or be seen as important to do for the young person, so their motivation to do these may need regular encouragement;

- Set family boundaries for time spent on technology such as TV/phones/ games consoles/ computer systems, etc. This could include cut off times for WIFI or use of technology.

Here are some books that might be useful;



You can find out more about keeping your child safe when gaming online on the NSPCC website.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-games/>

Please come into school and speak to Mrs Allen (Mental Health lead) or Miss Newman (Federation SENDCO) if you have concerns about your child.