

MediaWise Video and Computer Game Addiction Quiz™

Are you concerned about your video game playing?

Think about your video game playing.

Look at the statements below. If you agree with the statement, check the box.

Agree

- I feel great while playing a video game.
- I feel unhappy, cranky or irritable when not playing.
- I feel angry when someone asks me to stop.
- I crave more playing time.
- I think about the game when not playing.
- More and more of my friends are "on line friends."
- More and more of my friends are gamers.
- I neglect family and friends in order to play video games.
- I neglect responsibilities at home or at work.
- I try to cut back on playing time but can't.
- I play more often than I plan.
- I play for longer periods than planned. I can't seem to quit.
- I lie about my playing time.
- I sometimes sneak time to play. Sometimes late into the night.
- I spend more than twenty hours a week playing.
- I continue to play in spite of negative consequences.
- My family and friends think I play too much.
- I have arguments with family or friends about how much time I spend playing.
- I have large phone or credit bills for on-line games.

**The higher the number of boxes checked, "Agree",
the more likely that video game addiction is a problem.**

Computer and Video Game Addiction

Computers, video games, and the Internet have become entrenched features of our daily lives. Computer use has reached beyond work and is now a major source of fun and entertainment for many people. For most people, computer use and video game play is integrated into their lives in a balanced healthy manner. For others, time spent on the computer or video game is out of balance, and has displaced work, school, friends, and even family.

What is computer and video game addiction?

When time spent on the computer, playing video games or cruising the Internet reaches a point that it harms a child's or adult's family and social relationships, or disrupts school or work life, that person may be caught in a cycle of addiction. Like other addictions, the computer or video game has replaced friends and family as the source of a person's emotional life. Increasingly, to feel good, the addicted person spends more time playing video games or searching the Internet. Time away from the computer or game causes moodiness or withdrawal.

When a person spends up to ten hours a day or more rearranging or sending files, playing games, surfing the net, visiting chat rooms, instant messaging, and reading emails, that easily can reach up to seventy to eighty hours a week on-line with the computer. Major social, school or work disruptions will result.

Symptoms of computer or video game addiction:

For children:

- Most of non-school hours are spent on the computer or playing video games.
- Falling asleep in school.
- Not keeping up with assignments.
- Worsening grades.
- Lying about computer or video game use.
- Choosing to use the computer or play video games, rather than see friends.
- Dropping out of other social groups (clubs or sports).
- Irritable when not playing a video game or on the computer.

For adults:

- Computer or video game use is characterized by intense feelings of pleasure and guilt.
- Obsessing and pre-occupied about being on the computer, even when not connected.
- Hours playing video games or on the computer increasing, seriously disrupting family, social or even work life.
- Lying about computer or video game use.
- Experience feelings of withdrawal, anger, or depression when not on the computer or involved with their video game.
- May incur large phone or credit bills for on-line services.
- Can't control computer or video game use.
- Fantasy life on-line replaces emotional life with partner.

There are even physical symptoms that may point to addiction:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Sleep disturbances
- Back, neck aches
- Headaches
- Dry eyes
- Failure to eat regularly or neglect personal hygiene

For the computer or video game addicted person, a fantasy world on-line or in a game has replaced his or her real world. The virtual reality of the computer or game is more inviting than the every day world of family, school or work. With the increased access to pornography on the Internet and in games, this fantasy world may be highly sexual.

The first step to healing is to recognize the symptoms. Help from a professional is often needed.

Sources

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MediaWise Video Game Addiction

What should you do?

If you have the signs and symptoms of video game addiction yourself:



- Try to listen to the concerns of others in an open and non-defensive manner.
- Take the MediaWise video game addiction survey as honestly as you can.
- Keep a ruthlessly honest diary of game play for one month. Write down when and for how long you played every day.
- Write a list of any negative consequences you have experienced as a result of your video game play. Share the list with a concerned person to see if he/she thinks it is realistic and honest.
- Make a commitment not to play for a period of at least two weeks. See if you can keep the commitment and determine how not playing affects your feelings and your mood.
- Ask your non-game playing friends or relatives whether or not they think you are addicted. Do not respond to what they say, just try to understand it.
- Make a written inventory of how you think your video game play has affected your relationships with the important people in your life who are not gamers.
- If your game play continues to be out of control seek professional help from a professional who understands addictions or from a treatment program that would be willing to treat video game addiction.

Video Game Addiction Resources

Important things to ask when you are looking for help in treating video game addiction:

1. Do you believe that video games can be addictive?
2. Have you ever treated anyone for computer or video game addiction?
3. If not, what is your approach for treating addiction?
4. Do you believe that video game addiction needs to be treated directly as a primary problem? Or merely as a symptom for an underlying problem? [You want to work with someone who will treat video game addiction as a primary problem, not as a secondary issue.]

On-line resources and specialists:

The National Institute on Media and the Family does not endorse any of the following resources. We offer these resources as information.

1. Dr. Maressa Orzack, Licensed clinical psychologist, on the Harvard Medical School faculty, Coordinator of Computer Addiction Services at McLean Hospital, at www.computeraddiction.com.
2. Dr. Kimberly Young, Executive Director, Center for Online Addiction, at www.netaddiction.com.
3. Support group for people addicted to computer or video games, at www.olganon.org/Links/links.html.
4. Intervention Center, intervention for addiction, at www.intervention.com.
5. Parents Network Advice about Teenagers - Computer Game Addiction, at www.parents.berkeley.edu/advice/teens/gameaddiction.html.

Further research and print resources:

1. "Video Game Addiction Among Adolescents: Associations with Academic Performance and Aggression" (April, 2003). A paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Conference by Dr. Marney R. Hauge and Dr. Douglas A. Gentile, at www.psychology.iastate.edu/faculty/dgentile/SRCD%20Game%20Addiction.pdf.
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3. "Video Games and Public Health" (February, 2004). *Journal of Adolescence*, 27, 1.
4. "Internet Addiction: A New Clinical Phenomenon and Its Consequences" (December, 2004). By Kimberly Young in *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, page 402.

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