

In my profession in the healthcare world, there is a growing concern about the power of internet games becoming so consuming that an individual increasingly craves game time to the point that they suffer many negative consequences in their lives—in their relationships, academics, work, mental health, and more. The consensus is mounting on the need to officially recognize this as a behavioral addiction—also called a process addiction.

Yesterday the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that it will be adding [“gaming disorder”](#) to their International Classification of Diseases. WHO [states](#): “Gaming disorder is defined....by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.”

This move by WHO is very important. A formal classification of the disorder will help open up access to treatment for many more families and help cover costs for treatments in clinics and rehab settings, including residential treatment programs.

In [Screenagers](#) we follow the [story of Andrew](#) who we meet in a residential treatment program for internet gaming addiction. We see him embracing his new life after running away from college having flunked his classes due to his gaming addiction. He was fortunate that his parents were able to pay for him to go to [reSTART](#) because insurance does not cover residential treatment for this type of addiction.

I have heard from parents all over the country about their concerns that Fortnite will consume their kids’ time this summer. Regulating time spent on Fortnite and other games is critical.

I recently interviewed a former gaming addict, Cam Adair. After nearly a decade of eating, sleeping, and gaming up to 16 hours a day, he quit and in January of 2015 started the website, [GameQuitters](#). What started as a way to help him find his purpose and keep him away from the consoles, has turned into a

community 30,000 strong. I asked Cam for some advice for parents around Fortnite, but first I asked this:

Q: What helped you quit?

The biggest thing that helped with the cravings was becoming aware of them and disassociating with them. Meditation and exercise helped me a lot, but the biggest thing that helped with the cravings was becoming aware of them. I started to feel the sensation in my body and recognize that it was controlling me. The more I craved it and didn't feed the craving validated that I shouldn't be gaming.

Q: Why do you think so many kids are obsessed with Fortnite?

Anytime a game is this viral ([40 million people](#) played it in May alone), it creates challenges, especially for teenagers, because everyone is playing it. To not play Fortnite in a high school right now is to be a social outcast. That's hard for a teenager. Other than the virality, the Battle Royale element in Fortnite can also be problematic because there is no way to pause in the middle of a game without losing. It's also very competitive and we know competitive games tend to be more addictive. In this [interview](#), Jordan Foster, a clinical psychologist, shared how Fortnite is a combination of many popular games like Pokémon Go, Minecraft, and Call of Duty. In Fortnite you can find fighting aspects, economic aspects, and social aspects, which appeal to many different teenagers.

Q: What advice would you give parents?

Parents have to get more educated and firm with their children's relationship with technology. It's challenging these days because as a parent you are up against a billion-dollar tech industry that has a greater interest in selling their technology than they do in your child's health. Games are different than they were when I was growing up, especially with the integration of gambling-like game design, loot boxes, and in-app purchases. If you notice technology causing problems in your home, or your child has mood swings

without them, you must take action immediately. You must set firm boundaries, and stay strong in them. Lastly, it's easy to feel a lot of shame and guilt as a parent, especially if your child is having challenges, but you must let go of that and open yourself up to help. Parents need to come together more on this subject.

Q: What advice would you give kids?

Learn more about why you do what you do. Why do you behave the way you do? What needs does gaming or technology fulfill for you? What draws you to it? What voids would be created in your life without gaming? The more you understand about your own relationship to gaming and technology the more power you will have to make informed decisions for your highest good. It's not about gaming being good or bad, it's simply about whether it's serving you. It's about whether gaming or technology is aligned with your values, goals, and the vision you have for your life. Yes, gaming and technology are fun and entertaining, but fulfillment comes from engagement, not entertainment. Living a life of purpose comes from being a creator of the life you want, not as a passive consumer of content.

Q: What advice do you give parents around the game Fortnite?

One simple tip is to understand the natural pauses in the game. Most games of Fortnite last 20-30 minutes, so if for example you ask your son or daughter to come for dinner and they are in the middle of a game, you will meet resistance because if they stop now they will lose. When they play for prestige and to be the best amongst their peers, losing can hurt their social standing. Instead, try to plan ahead. If you see they are halfway through the game and dinner will be ready in 20 minutes, tell them not to start another one after it's done so they will be ready for dinner - and if they do, you will unplug the modem and they will lose their game. When your kids know you understand how their games work and you will maintain your boundaries while also being compassionate and working with them, they are likely to respond better than if it's

abrasive and a fight. Most importantly, parents need to be educated on video game addiction and the warning signs.

If you made it this far down in my blog today, I want to give one more tidbit because clearly you, like me, really take this stuff seriously. Psychiatrist and Gaming Addiction Specialist, Dr. Clifford Sussman says “The more time one spends online, especially in one sitting, the more a process called downregulation causes a drop in the number of dopamine receptors in the reward processing area of the brain. This causes a decrease in our ability to feel pleasure, resulting in a need to seek more stimulation.”

For this TTT, talk to your kids about gaming addiction:

- Have everyone talk about their favorite video game or all other consuming internet activities. What makes them so appealing?
- When does each of us use the internet or play games with an intention? In what situations do each of us do those things to escape?
- How easy is it for you to set your own limits around using the internet and gaming and then stop when the time is up?
- When you have tried to stop and failed, what things did you learn at that moment? The more we let kids know it is not a moral failing to not be in control, the better, and the more we engage them in thinking scientifically about the process of willpower, the better they become at it.
- What do you think the limits should be this summer?

For more discussion ideas, you can peruse [past Tech Talk Tuesdays](#). If you are interested in seeing Screenagers, you can [find event listings](#) on our site and find out how to [host a screening](#).

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Warmly,

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