

Is My Child Addicted to Video Games?

by Burt Segal, LCSW

Riverpoint Psychiatric Associates

More and more parents are concerned- “Is my child addicted to video games?” With the advances in technology and more advanced game systems, children are more drawn to these than ever. They spend hours engaged in trying to reach new levels and defeat opponents or earn a higher status within the gaming world. These games can draw our youth into the depths of the “gamer’s” fantasy world.

To answer this question I would share with you what my mother has always said: “too much of anything is not good.”

There are many reasons that excessive game video playing is a problem. Our society has become too sedentary and obesity is at an all time high. Children and teens need to get outside and exercise more frequently.

Playing these games also keeps our youth from participating in other activities. They may neglect their school work, and they miss out on opportunities for interpersonal interactions with friends.

As a parent, when in doubt, trust your instincts. If it feels wrong that your child spends long periods of time on video or computer games, than it probably IS excessive.

Consider if your child’s grades in school have declined. Are they socializing with their peers? Has their sleep been affected by these games? Are they able to control the amount of time they spend on these activities? Any of these may be a sign of excessive use of these games.

If you are concerned about this problem I would suggest the following:

- Set clear time limits on video/computer game use.
- Use these as an incentive/reward for completing homework, chores, etc.
- Insist on healthy eating habits and a reasonable exercise regimen.
- Be aware of the negative effects and curtail use if there are negative social, physical or familial results.

Contrary to our children’s beliefs, you should remember that these activities are a privilege, not a right. As a parent your responsibility is to stop them from doing anything that may be harmful to their well being.