EFFECTS OF VIDEO GAME ADDICTION

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Comparison to Gambling and other Addictions

- Definitions and symptoms often stolen from those of pathological gambling
- In gambling, larger bets are needed to combat tolerance
  - With gaming, playing for longer doesn’t inherently increase the stimulus
Negative Consequences – Time Loss

- Study of 280 video game players
- 82% experienced time loss frequently or all the time
  - Felt guilty
  - Missed appointments
  - Conflict
- Positive features
  - Indicates a game’s ability to engage
  - Provides relief from everyday stresses
- Other time consuming activities aren’t presented as addictive
Violence

- Violent games occupy over half of video game playing time
- Players possess more physical aggression and aggressive language
- The effect of violent video games on aggression has been shown to be as strong as the effect of condom use on risk of HIV infection
- Longitudinal research is lacking
Violence and Prosocial Behavior

- **Aggression**
  - No significant difference between heavy players, moderate players, and non-players of violent games

- **Prosocial Behavior**
  - Heavy players behave less prosocially than moderate and non-players

- Preference for violent games was shown to correlate with less prosocial behavior

- MMORPG users were far more likely to prefer in-game experiences to real world equivalents
  - 35% find it easier to talk to people in game sessions
Academic Achievement and Relationships

- School performance
  - Negatively correlated with gaming
  - Moderate direct and indirect correlation
- 23% of gamers got into fights almost weekly
- 34% had been in a physical fight in the past year
  - Gender bias does exist
Positive Consequences

- Gamers have better hand-eye coordination
  - No relationship between coordination and length of exposure
- Multiple object tracking
- Mental rotation
- Visual short-term memory
- Task switching
Methodology

- **Participants**
  - Played at least seven hours of games per week
  - Control group played zero hours per week

- **Games played**
  - Played Rise of Nations, Medal of Honor, and Tetris

- **Cognitive tasks were administered on computers**

- **Played 20+ hours to see if consequences materialized**
Video Games as an Escape

- Many “addicts” identified gaming as a coping mechanism
- Parents overlook underlying causes for extended game playing
- Parents are detached from child’s game playing
Cultural Response

- **Media**
  - Video game addiction as an epidemic

- **Parents**
  - Concerned about excessive gaming

- **Treatment centers have appeared in the US, China, Korea, Canada, and the Netherlands**
Chinese Rehab Centers

- Parents bring children out of fear
  - Drugs and lies used to lure children
- Boot camp
  - Military training
  - Strictly enforced bedtime
  - No access to games or internet
- Harsh; deaths have been reported
- 3-4 month duration
Tying up Loose Ends

- No official medical definition
- Gameplay aspects used to promote addiction
- Some people do play video games too much
- Research exists to support and refute claims
- Affects sociability and academic achievement
- Violence-related results are inconclusive
- Are video games an acceptable escape/coping strategy?