

## Dealing With Teen Video Game Obsession

Games can be addictive - But obsession is something else.

The following article is meant for parents of a teen who might be obsessed with video and/or computer games. While in some of our other articles we may sound as though we encourage obsession, we share a concern over teens who tend to shun other interests in life in favor for gaming activities to the point where they withdraw from society. We would never encourage this kind of behavior, and that's why we've taken time to describe some of the signs of game obsession and offer some advice on how to deal with it.

Recognizing the signs of teen game obsession isn't as easy as one thinks. It always starts off as first, an interest, and it then starts to grow into an addiction. The problem with identifying the beginning stages of game obsession begins with the teen. By the time our children are 15 and up, they've learned some rather impressive debating skills. So when we question their motivations for repetitive game play, they may rebut our concerns with logic and even make it a point to question our own flaws as parents.

Since no parent ever really wants to admit a flaw, we can sometimes cave in and convince ourselves that maybe 4 hours in front of a video game isn't that bad. After all, we spend that much time at the computer, on the phone, or transmitting data back and forth between our Palms, Blackberries, and Cingular cell phones.

Be careful not to fall prey to the logical teen. Video games can be addictive and if the time spent playing them is not carefully monitored, they'll consume everything that a teen used to care about.

The moment you notice your teen's grades falling, homework missing, or social life starting to drop off, nip that game time in the bud. If you wait too late to restrict game time, you may experience pre-adult temper tantrums that you aren't prepared to handle correctly (cursing, breaking things, stealing, running away from home, etc.). At this point, the child is obsessed and will do anything to get his or her hands on a game controller.

Another sign of obsession is a behavioral change. A child obsessed with gaming will lose patience with things and with others, be quick to anger, and react to situations without fully thinking of the consequences. If you've paid any attention to video and/or computer games, you'll notice that they require this kind of behavior to win or to advance to a higher level.

It's unfortunate, but a teen obsessed with this kind of violent gaming is

literally being trained to react in the manner described above. That's why it's pertinent that as an adult, you restrict access to this kind of entertainment and replace it with activities that slow thinking (such as art, music, theater, etc.) and expose your child to other non-violent pleasures (swimming, dance, skating, etc.).

There are a lot of debates circulating around about the impact that video games have on today's youth and some of it might warrant paying closer attention to. As a mother or father of a teen, you will do well with your teen's desire to "get his game on" by keeping a close eye out for undesirable changes.

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