

How to deal with

VIDEO GAME ADDICTION

A manual for parents and professionals

1st edition

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PUBLISHERS STATEMENT

How to deal with Video Game Addiction, a manual for parents and professionals is a practical guide to assist parents and professionals on how to deal with the impact of video games on their children/clients. Every care has been taken to ensure the contents of this book were accurate at the time of writing.

A book can never be a replacement for professional medical advice and if you are concerned about the health of your child in any way you should seek appropriate assistance from your doctor or health care professional.

The author, editor and publisher cannot accept any legal responsibility for anything arising from any part of this guide.

1st EDITION

This book is the culmination of 7 years of study into the impact of video games on children and direct work with young people who game excessively and their parents. I've been writing it for a year and I want to release this as a first edition and continue working on it over time. If you've purchased this edition you will have automatic access to all following editions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

STEP 1: ASSESS WELLBEING

- 1.1 What, why, how?
- 1.2 General Wellbeing Questionnaire
- 1.3 Fill out the framework

STEP 2: ASSESS THE GAMING

- 2.1 What, why, how?
- 2.2 Gaming Disorder Questionnaire
- 2.3 Classic profiles of gamers
- 2.4 Gaming Tracker
- 2.5 Balance the positives and negatives of gaming
- 2.6 Define the short and long term impacts
- 2.7 Fill out the framework

STEP 3: COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT

- 3.1 What, why, how?
- 3.2 Moratorium on gaming
- 3.3 Learn about gaming and its culture
- 3.4 Understand gaming concepts
- 3.5 Express your interest in gaming & discuss the positives
- 3.6 Express your interest in your child's gaming & praise their achievements
- 3.7 Discuss careers in gaming/technology
- 3.8 Introduce gaming networks
- 3.9 Fill out the framework

STEP 4: IDENTIFY UNDERLYING BELIEFS/THOUGHTS

- 4.1 What, why, how?
- 4.2 Typical Thinking Errors
- 4.3 Identify unhelpful thoughts about real life – The ABC model
- 4.4 Generate understanding with your child

STEP 5: CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

- 5.1 why, what, how?
- 5.2 identify the behaviours that make up the problem
- 5.3 understand the behaviours and its triggers
- 5.4 define change in behaviour terms (intervene early in the process)
- 5.5 set smart goals
- 5.6 define your child's role/responsibility
- 5.7 define the parent's responsibility
- 5.8 define the role/responsibility of others
- 5.9 define the changes to be made in your child's environment.
- 5.10 work out your reward system.
- 5.11 work out your consequences.
- 5.12 sign an overarching commitment statement or contract

A final word

About the Author


INTRODUCTION

When do you need this manual	8
Why do you need this manual	9
Who is this manual for	10
Why you should work with a professional	12
How to use this book	13
Document your progress on the Progress Summary	15

INTRODUCTION

How to deal with Video Game Addiction” is a practical manual for parents who want to find a **better balance** between gaming and real life.

This manual will:

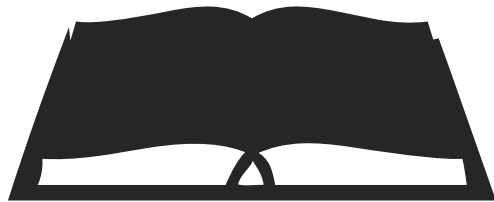


Improve your understanding of why your child plays video games.

Help you identify if your child is addicted to gaming.

Help you put the right measures in place to reduce your child's gaming.

THIS IS A WORKBOOK



Achieving a better balance and potentially reducing your child's gaming will take work, possibly the proverbial 'blood, sweat and tears'

This book with all its information is now yours. Use it for what it's worth, see what works, change what you feel needs changing for your situation.

I hope it give you inspiration and ideas on how to keep gaming in the home a positive and fun past-time

NOT A BOOK OF SPELLS



There are no quick fixes, magic spells or anything like that. It takes work, energy and your attention.

Remember, you are the expert on your children, not me. Use this book for what it's worth and develop your own strategies that work for your family.

WHEN DO YOU NEED THIS MANUAL?

WHEN GAMING IS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL

Does your child turn off their game when prompted?

Does he/she seem obsessive about video games?

Does he/she play them excessively and do you find it difficult to moderate their playing?

Would your child play video games non-stop if you would let them?

Do you find gaming difficult to manage in your house?

This book will give you many tips to achieve a healthier balance in your home.

WHEN GAMING LEADS TO CONFLICTS IN THE HOME.

Kids LOVE games! And gaming will give them exactly what they need. Lots of rewards, dopamine, and fun!

As parents, we need to moderate our kids' gaming otherwise they would play 24/7.

This intervention can lead to conflicts between parent and child. In fact, gaming can be one of the first battlegrounds between children and their parents.

If gaming leads to conflict and is impacting your relationships with your child, you need to act immediately.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ADDICTED TO GAMING.

Between 3 and 10% of gamers develop an addiction to gaming. In this scenario, gaming completely takes over your child's life.

Like drugs, alcohol or gambling, gaming can be used to avoid or escape from underlying issues. These can be mental health issues, trauma, or other deep rooted concerns.

The manual will help you uncover those issues and work with you towards a better balance between gaming and real life.

Working with a professional will be imperative to achieve a better balance.

WHY DO YOU NEED THIS MANUAL?

In this day and age, children are introduced to video games and other interactive technologies at a very early age. We marvel in delight how our 2 year old is so smart and can completely independently start the tablet or phone, open up their favourite app and swipe away on its brightly lit screen.

Exposing our children to this new technology will have an impact on their brain development. This is not unusual of course. Anything you expose your child too will leave an impression and your child will learn from his or her experience.

At this very young age the brain has what's called a high plasticity, which means it is very impressionable and learns quickly. The experiences your child has as a baby, toddler and all the way to their early twenties will affect the wiring of the brain.

Children however have a right to get access to the internet, modern day technologies and video games. They are the future and if we want our children to be competitive in the job market they will need the skills to successfully engage and interact with these modern technologies.

So instead of banning all technology, we need to teach our children how to live with it in a safe and balanced way. And that's where we, as parents, have a responsibility. Kids are kids and they will want to play. Just like they will want to eat lollies all day. It's our job to moderate their access to gaming, teach them how to self-moderate and provide them with the skills to identify and avoid the risks.

If you're not sure how to go about that, you'll need this book.

WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

Most kids are introduced to screen based gaming before they reach five-years-old. As parents we cannot expect our children to self-moderate or manage something that is designed to keep you engaged.

This book is useful for all parents!

Your kids are under 10?

Perfect! You're starting to consciously manage their gaming intake and learn how to keep gaming a positive piece of entertainment for them. This book will help you understand the negative impacts gaming can have and you'll be able to identify when gaming is getting out hand.

The most relevant chapters in this book will be:

Step 3 – Communication and Support

It will give you lots of information about how gaming works and ideas on how to stay connected to your child.

Step 5 - Change behaviour

Our behaviour change plan will give you practical ideas on how to manage your kid's obsession.

Your kids are between 10 and 16?

This is when children experience adolescence and will test the boundaries set by their parents. Gaming often becomes a battleground. (Usually it's the first one!)

How do you deal with this? You may not be a gamer and fully understand why your child is gaming so much, or why s/he likes it so much. The last thing you should do is give up or ignore their gaming. Your child still needs guidance and it's your parenting duty to keep your kids safe and healthy.

It's in adolescence that kids deal with numerous other challenges as well. These can affect their mental health and gaming can become a great escape from real life issues. Early identification and intervention is your best chance of keeping your kids safe and well supported.

Your conversations about gaming can help you with the conversation you need to have about real life issues. The behavioural worksheets may be relevant, if it's made age appropriate.

Your kids are over 16?

Your kids are gaming excessively and you've tried to reduce this but have been unsuccessful. In this case it's likely that you'll need to investigate any underlying issues. Ask yourself why your child is gaming so much and why he's disconnecting from the real world.

This book will help you identify thoughts and beliefs that are unhelpful. It will also give you a good understanding of what needs to be done and which behaviours need to change.

At this age you'll probably need some professional help too. This workbook can guide you in the work that needs to be done at home and a Clinical Professional can support your child with some of the underlying issues that are causing gaming disorder.

WHY YOU SHOULD WORK WITH A PROFESSIONAL

We suggest you undertake this journey with someone you know. This could be a friend, a family member or a professional like a Counsellor, Youth Worker, Social Worker or a Psychologist.

A professional is preferred because he or she will look at your situation with a trained eye. They can also offer you objective and honest feedback. This may be more difficult for a friend or family member.

A Professional will help to clarify the issues, identify the underlying issues, explore treatment options, develop strategies and increase self-awareness.

Everything you discuss with the counsellor is confidential, except in a small number of specific cases, such as where the counsellor is required by law to report a crime.

When you look for a professional you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel comfortable with this person? Am I able to talk freely about deeply personal thoughts and emotions?
- Do I feel this person understands and respect me?
- Can I imagine seeing this person on a regular basis?

If you decide that the counsellor isn't right for you, don't go back. You are under no obligation to continue seeing a counsellor if you aren't comfortable with them.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK?

This book is set up to be a guide, not an instruction manual. It provides you with information, ideas, template and tips on how to support your child who is gaming in an unhealthy way. Unfortunately there is no 'one size fits all' approach that can be applied here. You need to read the book and use what's relevant to your own situation.

THERE ARE 5 STEPS; EVERY CHAPTER IS ONE STEP.

1. ASSESS WELLBEING

Objectively assess your situation and identify the underlying issues that cause the excessive gaming.

2. ASSESS THE GAMING

Objectively assess the gaming and its impact. This includes positive and negative impacts.

3. COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Prepare for change. Understand gaming and why your child plays it. Create a supportive dialogue between you and your child that will allow you to assist your child to make changes without getting into conflict.

4. IDENTIFY UNDERLYING BELIEFS/THOUGHTS

Identify the thoughts and beliefs that are unhealthy and unhelpful in achieving this new balance. These thoughts may not be gaming related but will be part of the reason why your child is retreating into games.

5. CHANGE THE BEHAVIOUR

Develop goals and work towards changing the actual behaviour of gaming.

I suggest you start with step one and work your way through all of the steps.

14 | HOW TO DEAL WITH VIDEO GAME ADDICTION

If you find yourself skipping back and forth between steps, that's totally ok. Changing complex behaviours is not a straightforward process.

Some steps will be more relevant than others.

For example, the behaviour chart in step 5 will work with most kids, but older kids may think it's childish. Forcing a behaviour chart will not work because it requires a positive and voluntary engagement from your child.

However, setting clear goals and working towards changes in behaviour will be important. You may not go as far as a behaviour chart but setting behavioural goals will be an important part of achieving new, better-balanced behaviours.

Every child is different and there is no better expert on your child than yourself. Trust in yourself and your parenting actions; you will make progress.

DOCUMENT YOUR PROGRESS ON THE PROGRESS SUMMARY

The progress summary is there to help you keep an overview of the situation.

As you work through this book and fill out the Progress Summary, the situation, issues and underlying issues will become clearer.

More clarity will lead to better interventions and more success.

You will find the Progress Summary on the next two pages.

Fill out the Progress Summary whenever prompted

The progress Summary is divided into the 5 steps/chapters.

The subheadings refer to the exercises/information in the manual.

You will be reminded to fill out the Progress Summary after each chapter and sometimes after specific exercises.

ASSESS YOUR CHILD'S WELLBEING

1. General wellbeing
2. Education & Employment
3. Family & Friends
4. Other:
5. Other:
IDENTIFY RISK ISSUES: Call emergency services
PROFESSIONAL HELP NEEDED? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

ASSESS YOUR CHILD'S GAMING

GAMING DISORDER QUESTIONNAIRE	
<input type="checkbox"/> PREOCCUPATION	<input type="checkbox"/> WITHDRAWAL
<input type="checkbox"/> TOLERANCE	<input type="checkbox"/> LYING
<input type="checkbox"/> FAILED ATTEMPTS TO STOP	
<input type="checkbox"/> LOSS OF INTEREST IN OTHER ACTIVITIES	
<input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUED OVERUSE DESPITE PROBLEMS	
<input type="checkbox"/> USING GAMING AS AN ESCAPE	
GAMING PATTERNS	
-	-
-	-
Positives	Negatives
IMPACTS	
-	
-	
-	

COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT

GAMING DISORDER QUESTIONNAIRE
<input type="checkbox"/> BREAK THE CYCLE
<input type="checkbox"/> INTEREST IN GAMING IN GENERAL
<input type="checkbox"/> INTEREST IN YOUR CHILD'S GAMING
<input type="checkbox"/> DISCUSS THE POSITIVES
<input type="checkbox"/> PRAISE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF YOUR CHILD
<input type="checkbox"/> DISCUSS GAMES DEVELOPMENT CAREER OPTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> INTRODUCE SOCIAL GAMING NETWORKS

SUMMARY

IDENTIFY THINKING ERRORS

THINKING ERRORS
ABC's Activating Event: Behaviours: Consequences:
REFRAME BELIEFS & THOUGHTS

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

BIG GOAL		
LITTLE GOALS		
MY RESPONSIBILITY	CHILDS RESPONSIBILITY	OTHERS RESPONSIBILITY
BIG REWARD	LITTLE REWARDS	
CONSEQUENCES		

STEP 1

ASSESS WELLBEING

1.1	Step 1 – Assess wellbeing	19
1.2	General Wellbeing Questionnaire	21
1.3	What’s next	28
	Progress summary instructions	29

STEP 1 – ASSESS WELLBEING

An assessment is the process of identifying what is impacting your child in order to get a deep understanding of what your child is dealing with.

During an assessment you typically gather information about:



How do we perform the assessment?

We assess by answering the general wellbeing assessment questionnaire. It gives us a series of guiding questions that will get you to consider the general wellbeing of your child.

You'll also look for significant events that had a big impact on your child's life.

Why are we performing an assessment?

We're trying to better understand your child by taking a step back. This allows you to take a neutral and objective view and identify all the things that make your child's life easier or harder.

We're looking for patterns, recurring events.

A good assessment will make it much easier to determine what needs to be done to change your child's behaviour. Good assessments significantly improve your chances of being successful.

Assessments are not an exact science.

It requires you to objectively look at your child's life and identify what is going well and what is not. The questionnaires will give you a series of guiding questions.

What about the gaming itself?

In Step 2 we'll also look for gaming specific information. This includes which games s/he plays, which platforms, who with, and so on...

Why it's done better with a professional?

A professional can be a youth worker, social worker, counsellor, or anyone experienced in human services.

The reason for this is that they're not only trained and experienced in performing assessments; they are also an objective person that can see the situation in a non-judgemental and rational way.

1.2 GENERAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

ASK SOMEONE TO HELP YOU!

Ideally you should fill out this form in conversation with someone else.

This could be your partner, a family member, a friend. This person doesn't necessarily need to know your child.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

You will notice the questionnaire only has open questions and no scoring mechanism. This is intentional. We believe it is impossible to 'score' questions around mental wellbeing. It's just not that easy.

If a certain question causes concern, you can highlight or underline it so that you can return to it later or discuss it with a professional.

PROGRESS SUMMARY

Summarize the main issues your child is dealing with on the Progress Summary

This will keep you on track later on in the process.

CONTACT A PROFESSIONAL

Making a good assessment is not easy. Contact a professional if you need help in assessing the health and wellbeing of your son/daughter.

Your local GP is a great initial contact to assist you in finding the right assistance.

GENERAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Date Completed _____ Completed By _____

GENERAL WELLBEING

How would you rate your child's general wellbeing?
Are they moody or grumpy?
Are they anxious/socially withdrawn/overly shy?
Are they in a depressed mood often?
Do they seem to have fun?
Does your child eat healthy and regularly?
Does your child sleep well?
Is your child bored?

Notes

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

What does your child do for fun?
Any involvement in sports?
What other activities does he do?
What is your child interested in?
How does your child express this?

Notes

EDUCATION

How is your child performing at school?

Have there been any recent changes?

Does he like going to school?

What is his relationship with the teachers like?

What are his favourite subjects?

Does the school system 'work' for him?

Does s/he have plans for further study?

Are there any interests that are not catered for at school?

Notes

EMPLOYMENT

Is your child employed? If not, why?

What are his plans for employment?

Does s/he have a dream job?

Notes

SOCIAL NETWORK

Does your child have friends?

If so, how many?

How regular does s/he see her/his friends?

Do they connect with them after school?

Do they connect with them online?

How well do you know his/her friends?

Does your child make friends easily compared to other kids?

Notes

RELATIONSHIPS

Does your child have adults they trust and can confide in?

How is your relationship with your child?

Does your child confide in you?

Is there a two-way trusting relationship?

Are there any other family members or significant others your child trusts?

Notes

MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

Has your child experienced any major life events or traumatic experiences? (E.g. death of a family member or close friend, robbery, moving house, separation of parents)

Has your child experienced bullying?

How recent was this bullying?

How did your child deal with this?

Notes

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

What is your child's biggest achievement?

Does your child recognise this as his/her biggest achievement?

Does your child value this achievement?

Notes

MEDICAL HISTORY

Are there any major health issues?

Does your child take any medication?

Are there any mental health concerns?

Does your child think they have any mental health concerns?

Have there been any clear changes in this recently?

Notes

DRUGS/ALCOHOL:

Does your child use any alcohol?

Does your child use any illicit drugs?

Is there any alcohol/drug use in the family?

Notes

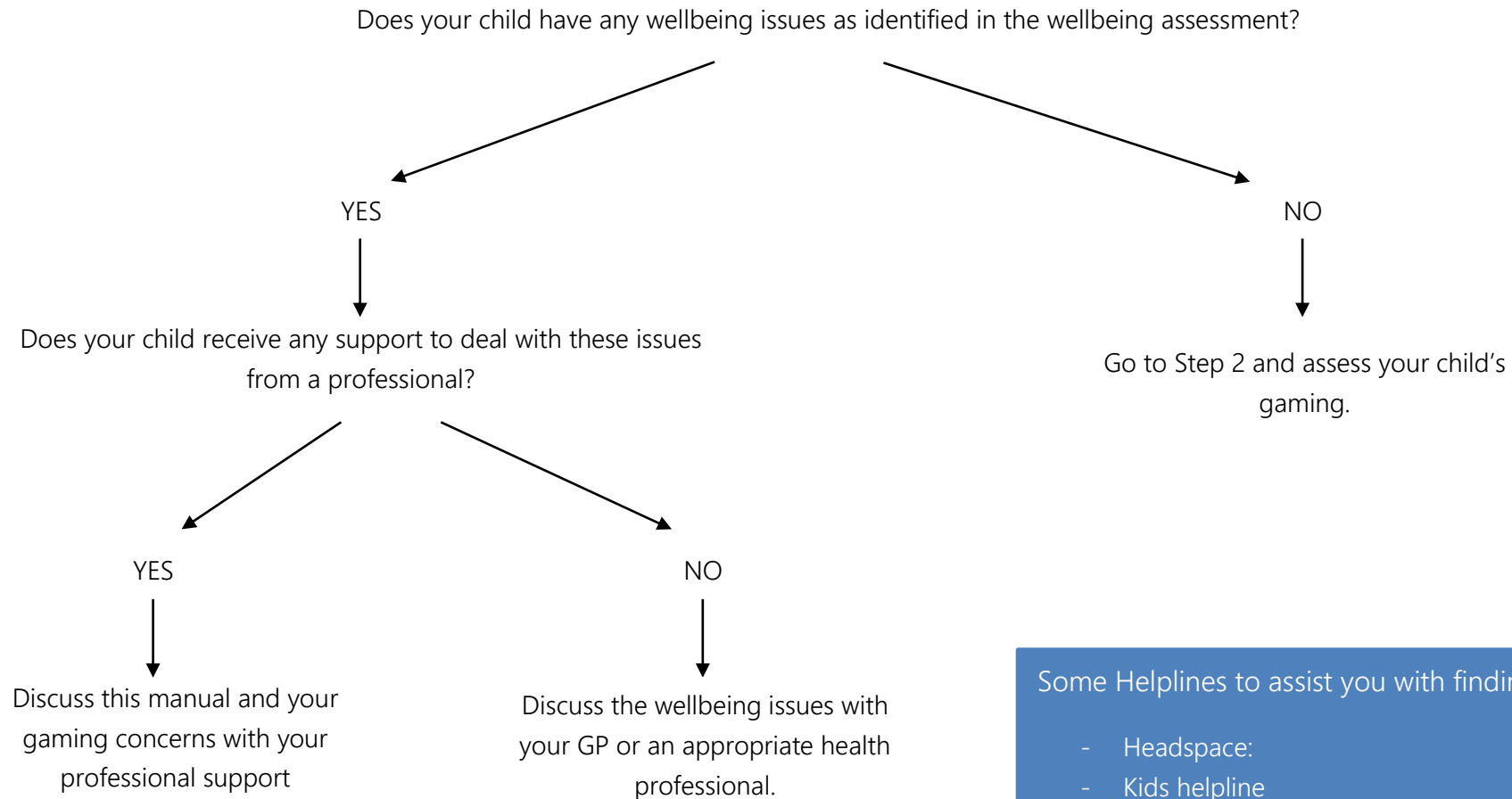
RISK ISSUES

Is your child at risk in any of the following areas?

- Hopeless/helpless feelings
- Past depression episodes
- Past suicide attempts
- Self-harm
- Aggression or violence toward others
- Being harmed by others

If so, please contact your GP or OOO in case of emergency.

1.3 WHAT'S NEXT



Some Helplines to assist you with finding support:

- Headspace:
- Kids helpline
- Your local government youth services

PROGRESS SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS

Go through your notes on the general wellbeing assessment questionnaire and pick out the areas in which your child requires extra support. Write these areas on the framework and include a brief description of the issues that are presenting themselves.

Try and assess whether certain issues maybe underlying the gaming issues. Often gaming issues are an expression of how young people are feeling in general. If you have uncovered some deeper underlying issues, they will need to be addressed as well. Highlight those issues on the framework.

If you identified any risk issues, please act accordingly and contact the emergency services, your GP or another professional.

If in this overview you feel overwhelmed by the severity of your child's needs, please contact a professional for assistance. This could be your local GP, Headspace, Lifeline or any other health professional you trust.

STEP 2

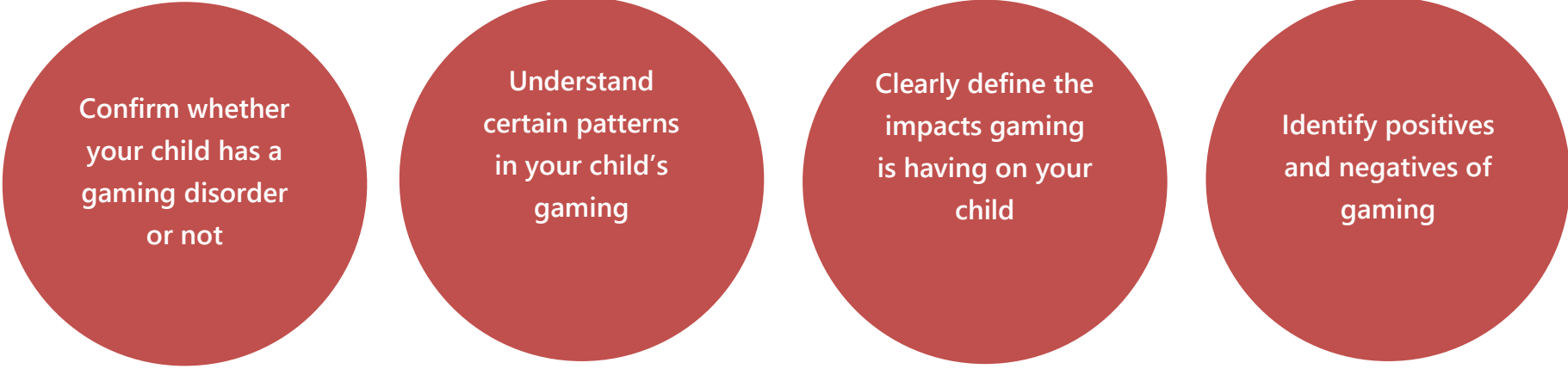
ASSESS THE GAMING

2.1	Step 2 – Assess the gaming	31
2.2	Gaming Disorder Questionnaire	33
2.3	How to assess gaming disorder criteria	36
2.4	Classic profiles of gamers	47
2.5	Gaming Tracker	52
2.6	Balance the positives and negatives of gaming	54
2.7	Define the short and long term impacts	57
	Progress Summary Instructions	

STEP 2 – ASSESS THE GAMING

A Gaming Assessment uncovers the **quality of their gaming engagement** and considers the positive and negative impact video games are having on your child.

Performing a comprehensive gaming assessment will:



Confirm whether
your child has a
gaming disorder
or not

Understand
certain patterns
in your child's
gaming

Clearly define the
impacts gaming
is having on your
child

Identify positives
and negatives of
gaming

HOW DO YOU ASSESS YOUR CHILD'S GAMING?

To assess your child's gaming we will use the following tools:

- ✓ GAMING DISORDER QUESTIONNAIRE

Does your child have a disorder?

- ✓ PROFILE IDENTIFICATION

What type of gamer is your child?

- ✓ GAME TRACKER

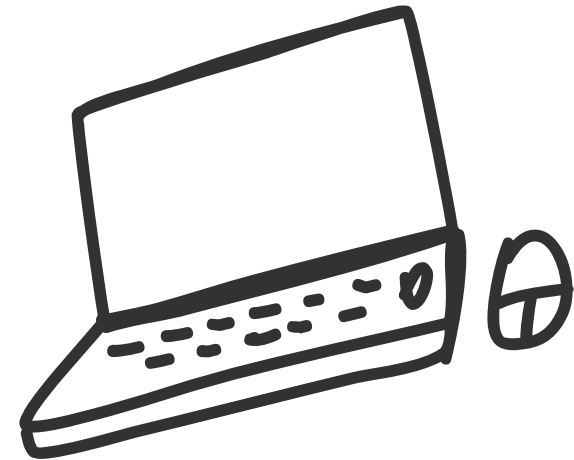
What are the patterns of playing?

- ✓ POSITIVE AND NEGATIVES

What's helpful and what's not?

- ✓ DEFINE THE IMPACTS

What are we trying to change?



The information collected from these assessment tools is crucial if we want to change the actual behaviour of playing video games. We need to clearly understand what your child is doing and why he or she is doing it before we can intervene.

2.2 GAMING DISORDER QUESTIONNAIRE

Gaming as a mental health disorder

In 2013 the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) was released. The DSM is the handbook used by health care professionals as the authoritative guide to the diagnosis of mental disorders.

The DSM contains descriptions, symptoms, and other criteria for diagnosing mental disorders. It provides a common language for clinicians to communicate about their patients and establishes consistent and reliable diagnoses that can be used in the research of mental disorders. It also provides a common language for researchers to study the criteria for potential future revisions and to aid in the development of medications and other interventions.

Internet Gaming Disorder is identified in Section III as a condition warranting more clinical research and experience before it might be considered for inclusion in the main book as a formal disorder.

Gaming Disorder Criteria

A group of international experts from Europe, North and South America, Asia and Australasia collaborated to discuss and achieve consensus about how to assess internet gaming disorder as defined within DSM-5. A set of criteria was set to detect whether someone has a gaming disorder or problem gaming issue.

The nine criteria are outlined below:

1. **Preoccupation or obsession** with Internet games.
2. **Withdrawal** symptoms when not playing Internet games.
3. A build-up of **tolerance** - more time needs to be spent playing the games.
4. The person has **tried to stop** or curb playing Internet games, but has failed to do so.
5. The person has had a **loss of interest** in other life activities, such as hobbies.
6. A person has had **continued overuse** of Internet games even with the knowledge of how much they impact a person's life.
7. The person **lied to others** about his or her Internet game usage.
8. The person uses Internet games to **relieve anxiety or guilt** – it's a way to escape.
9. The person has lost or **put at risk an opportunity** or relationship because of Internet games.

If 4 or more of these criteria are met within a one-year period, you can conclude that gaming is having a considerable negative impact on your life. In this case you should enlist professional help to treat gaming disorder.



WARNING!

For the purpose of this manual this list and questionnaire is only to be used as a guide. If you're not a health professional you're ill equipped to diagnose mental health issues.

If you are concerned and recognise some of these criteria in your child's behaviour, we strongly recommend you **seek professional help**.

2.3 HOW TO ASSESS THE GAMING DISORDER CRITERIA?

In the following pages we explain the nine criteria and formulate a number of guiding questions. Follow the instructions to assess the criteria.

INSTRUCTIONS

1

Read the gaming disorder criteria carefully.

2

Answer the guiding questions and make notes on the page.

3

Review the criteria and decide if it applies to your child.

Remember the criteria must be present for a minimum of a one-year period.

4

Fill out the Progress Summary by ticking the box of the criteria that apply to your child.

5

Count the criteria that apply to your child.

If there are more than 4 criteria ticked your child maybe suffering from gaming disorder

1. Preoccupation or obsession with Internet games.

Preoccupation relates to spending substantial amounts of time thinking about an activity. For this criterion to be met, your child must be thinking about games not only while playing but also during times of non-play, with excessive thoughts about gaming occurring throughout the day.

Questions

Does your child spend a lot of time thinking about games even when s/he is not playing?

Does your child plan when s/he'll be playing next?

Does your child read, research about his/her favourite game?

Does your child watch youtube or twitch videos about his/her favourite games?

Does your child start playing games at the first available opportunity?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

YES / NO

2. Withdrawal symptoms when not playing Internet games.

Withdrawal refers to symptoms that emerge when one is unable to engage in a behaviour or is attempting to reduce or stop it. Withdrawal symptoms associated with gaming must be distinguished from emotions that arise in response to an external force preventing or stopping a gaming episode. If a parent abruptly disconnects the internet during a game, a child is likely to express extreme emotions. These abrupt emotional responses, however, are not withdrawal. Withdrawal refers to symptoms that arise when one is unable to initiate gaming, and/or when one is purposefully trying to stop gaming.

Questions

Does your child feel anxious or irritable when s/he can't access her games?

Does your child feel moody or angry when s/he can't play games?

Does your child feel restless when attempting to cut down their gaming?

Would your child find it difficult to give up gaming for a week?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

YES / NO

3. A build-up of tolerance - more time needs to be spent playing the games.

Tolerance is characterized by an increasing amount of time spent in an activity to feel its desired effects. For gaming, desired effects usually relate to excitement. Tolerance refers to feeling the need to play games for longer periods of time to experience excitement; it may also involve the need for more exciting games or more powerful media equipment.

Questions

Is your child playing more frequently than 6 months ago?

Does your child feel the need to play for increasing amounts of time to feel the same enjoyment?

Does your child ask to play more exciting games?

Does your child want more powerful equipment?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEA

YES / NO

4. The person has tried to stop or curb playing Internet games, but has failed to do so.

Inquiries about this criterion should focus not only on attempts to stop but also attempts to cut down or reduce gaming. Similarly, desiring to cease or cut back on a behaviour, but being unable to do so, would reflect the criterion, because such desires presume that play has risen to a problematic level.

Questions

Does your child realise they are playing too much?

Does your child admit they are playing too much?

Does your child want to play less but is unable to?

Have you tried to reduce your child's gaming but were unable to do so?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEA

YES / NO

5. The person has had a loss of interest in other life activities, such as hobbies.

This usually looks like the gamer expressing less interest in the hobbies or activities they were involved in. This may end up with the person quitting their other hobbies or activities or at least attempting to reduce their involvement.

Questions

Has your child reduced their participation in their organised hobbies (sport clubs, recreation,...)

Has your child reduced their participation in other interest? E.g. playing soccer in the backyard

Has your child reduced seeing and connecting with his friends?

Would your child rather play games than meet their friends?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

YES / NO

6. A person has had continued overuse of Internet games even with the knowledge of how much they impact a persons life.

The individual continues to play even though he is aware of significant negative consequences of this behaviour, which are more likely to be psychosocial than physical in nature. Some negative consequences are: being late to school/work, spending too much money, having arguments or neglecting important duties due to gaming.

Gaming may adversely influence health (e.g. losing too much sleep), although implicit in the criterion is that the problems are persistent and significant. To fulfil the criterion, negative consequences must involve central areas of functioning, and effects of little clinical relevance should not be considered (e.g. neglecting household chores that do not cause difficulties). Social and developmental aspects should be considered because dysfunction will manifest differentially based on age (e.g. school, work, parents, partners).

Questions

Does your child realise the negative consequences their behaviour is having on their life?

Does your child choose to continue playing games despite these negative consequences?

Does your child play late at night making them tired the next morning?

Is your child's school attendance and performance negatively affected by the gaming?

Does your child spend excessive amounts of money on their gaming?

Does your child get headaches, red eyes, sore back, wrist pains from playing video games?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

YES / NO

7. The person lied to others about his or her Internet game usage.

Typically, deceit is directed towards family members, friends or other important people. The social environment should be considered in assessing this criterion. Adults living on their own may be less likely to lie about or hide gaming than a child living with parents. Nevertheless, gaming that has risen to a level such that the individual is hiding it from others implies that it has become problematic.

Questions

Does your child lie about her gaming?

Does your child ignore negative consequences of gaming?

Does your child become angry/defensive when asking about her gaming?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

YES / NO

8. The person uses Internet games to relieve anxiety or guilt – it's a way to escape.

The problem gaming becomes a method to modify moods or cope with difficulties. This criterion can relate to playing games to escape from or forget about real-life problems or relieve negative emotional states.

Questions

Does your child play games to escape other issues or problems? (This could be bullying, school problems, relationship issues,...)

Does your child play games to relieve uncomfortable feelings such as guilt, anxiety, helplessness or depression?

Does your child neglect his or her hygiene?

Does your child ignore her immediate surroundings (e.g. her room)?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

YES / NO

9. The person has lost or put at risk and opportunity or relationship because of Internet games.

This criterion is intended to reflect on more substantial issues than neglecting a homework assignment or being late for school or work due to gaming, behaviour more consistent with criterion 6. Arguments with parents about gaming usually do not rise to a level in which relationships are severed, but if a relationship is jeopardized due to gaming (e.g. arguments involving physical force or leaving home) then this criterion would be met. Similarly, if neglecting studies in order to game occurs to the extent that a much worse than usual overall course grade is achieved, courses are failed or the person drops out of school, then this criterion would be met.

Questions:

Does your child have difficulty staying in education?

Does your child have difficulty keeping their job?

Has your child lost some important relationships?

Are other family members or friends concerned about your child's gaming?

HAS YOUR CHILD MET THIS CRITERIA
FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

YES / NO

PROGRESS SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS

You assessed each of the nine gaming disorder criteria and noted if the criteria was met for more than a one year period.

You'll find a short list of the criteria in your Progress Summary. Tick the boxes of the criteria that are met.

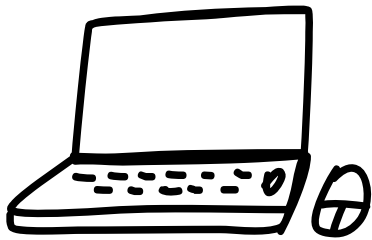
If 4 or more of these criteria are met within a 1 year period, you can conclude that gaming is having a considerable negative impact on your life. We strongly recommend you seek professional help immediately.

Please don't consider this questionnaire a mental health diagnosis. A diagnosis can only be made by a qualified Health Professional.

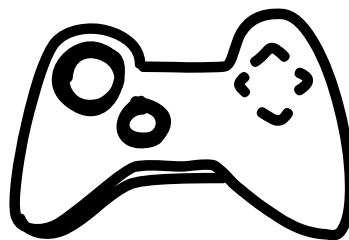
If you're not sure about these criteria or how to identify these criteria but feel your child is showing signs of an ongoing gaming issue, please seek professional help.

2.4 CLASSIC PROFILES OF GAMERS

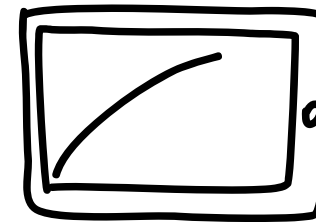
Most gamers that present with gaming disorder fall within one of the following profiles:



ROLE PLAYING GAMER



ACTION GAMER



CASUAL GAMER

You are correct in saying that most gamers will play many different types of game. It's very likely that your child plays Role Playing Games, Action Games AND Casual Games.

However usually they gravitate to one specific genre, because this genre gives the player a specific satisfaction they're not finding in real life. When you're dealing with a gaming disorder it is even more likely that your child is obsessed with one game only.

Identifying the profile of your child can be really helpful in detecting the underlying causes of the excessive gaming behaviours.

Try and identify which one is most accurate for your child.

The Role Playing Gamer

Games: World of Warcraft,

Age: 15 - 23

Hobbies: reading, computers, engineering, not sports or physical activities

Social: Finds it difficult to connect to people, has few friends, might be bullied at school. Often withdrawn from the real world. Retreats to bedroom.

Psychology: Experiments with self within the game, Identifies with character and makes an idealised character. Usually not happy with real life self

Gaming gives: An alternative world to live in. A sense of self-worth, increased self-esteem and confidence. A place to socialise. A community to be a part of.

Disorder links to: depression, social anxiety, aspergers, autism, shyness, and social difficulties

Needs: Mental health support and social support to assist with real life confidence and self-esteem, social interactions and connections.

The Action Games Player

Games: Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty, Battlefield, CounterStrike

Age: 10 – 17

Hobbies: Sports, physical activity, having fun with friends. Has or had hobbies but gaming gets in the way.
Interested in E-sports or competitive gaming

Social: Socially competent to hold friendships but often gaming reduces their number of friends.

Psychology: Competitive, obsessive, looks for rewards, things to do and goals to achieve, looks for risks to take, and connects with feelings of survival

Gaming gives: Rewards, competition, excitement where real life is boring.

Disorder links to: Reward deficiency, addictive nature, aspergers, autism, gambling, and other addictions

Needs: Purpose, goals to work towards, risks, feelings of survival, immediate rewards and feedback

The Casual Gamer

Games: Candy Crush, Clash of Clans, Mobile games

Age: older

Hobbies: Few hobbies, bored, disappointed in life

Social: Few strong social connections, able to maintain friendships but 'life' gets in the way

Psychology: Often stressed, dealing with real life problems

Gaming gives: temporary relief without needing engagement or effort, relaxation, a place to forget worries and to zone out

Disorder links to: Gambling, behaviour based addiction, stress

Needs: Counselling with real life problems, alternatives to games for having fun, de-stressing, and relaxation. This could include relaxation therapy.


PROGRESS SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS

Fill out your next box in the Second box of the Progress Summary. All that is needed is identifying the profile.

If your child does not clearly fit one of these profile, which is very possible, make sure you make a note of that.

2.5 GAME TRACKER

The Game Tracker 'tracks' your child's gaming over a one week period and gives you clear information about:



How long your
child plays
video games,

Recurring
patterns in
gameplay,

Specific days,
times or events
that trigger
excessive
gameplay.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Monitor your child and document the start and finish of the game-playing and which games s/he plays.

2. At the end of the day, calculate the total time spent gaming.

3. At the end of the week, calculate the total time spent gaming


4. Look for patterns and note them down on the Progress Summary document.

2.6 BALANCE THE POSITIVES AND THE NEGATIVES OF GAMING

Gaming isn't just all good or all bad. There is a balance.

We need to find this balance for your personal situation. If we want to change your child's behaviour we will need to show him or her that we fully understand the impact of gaming and not look at it one-sided.

Considering the positives is essential because:



Extremist thinking
is counter-
productive. Things
aren't just all
good or all bad

To show the
gamer that we
support and
encourage the
positives of
gaming.

To clearly
articulate the
impact gaming is
having on your
family

Positives can be:

1. Gaming practices problem solving skills.
2. Gaming relaxes me after a busy day of work.
3. Gaming makes me forget my issues for a little while. It gives me a break.
4. Gaming makes me happy. Being happy is positive!
5. Gaming teaches me about things like history or science.
6. Gaming is creative. I can build things within games or become actively involved in modding games or level design.
7. Gaming gets me to connect with my real life friends. It facilitates social contact.
8. Gaming teaches me teamwork skills.
9. Gaming practices strategic development skills or other thinking skills.

These positives are real and your child will surely benefit from some of these.

It is important you acknowledge the positives to create a stronger bond with your child. Gaining their trust is essential if we want to move to a more balanced life by changing their behaviour.

Negatives can be:

1. Gaming makes me angry, annoyed.
2. Gaming lets me avoid or ignore some of my other responsibilities.
3. Gaming allows me to escape from my real life issues.
4. Gaming makes me sad.
5. Gaming makes me tired because I don't sleep well.
6. Gaming is mind numbing. It just occupies my brain so I don't get bored.
7. Gaming prevents me from connecting with my real friends.
8. Gaming makes me stressed because I want to perform better.
9. Gaming makes me miss school or work.
10. Gaming leads to conflict in the house.
11. Gaming leads to bad relationships with my family.
12. Gaming leads to a lack of exercise.
13. Gaming leads to a bad diet.

Gaming is likely not going to be the root cause of these issues, but it will be a contributing factor and as such it needs to be dealt with. If we want to address and change some of these behaviours we will have to be mindful of other wellbeing issues and take those into account as well. Gaming is very rarely the issue in isolation.

2.7 DEFINE THE SHORT AND LONG TERM IMPACTS

We have suitably assessed your child's gaming and how it's impacting their life. It's time to clearly define the impacts now.

Define the current, short-term impacts of gaming.

What is happening right now? How does the gaming affect your child's life today? This can relate to education, friendships, relationships, family, mood, wellbeing, and more.

Remember!

- ! Only write down the impact gaming is having. There may be other things happening in your child's life that are impacting their wellbeing!
- And don't ignore the positive impacts!

SHORT TERM IMPACTS:

1.

2.

3.

Define the long-term impacts of the gaming.

How will the amount of gaming impact your child's life in the long-term? How will it affect their career? How is it affecting their abilities socially and technically?

It's likely you'll believe that the negative impacts outweigh the positive ones, but nevertheless you should attempt to objectively look at gaming and establish a balance.

LONG TERM IMPACTS:

1.

2.

3.

4.

PROGRESS SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS

You've completed the assessments and have collected a lot of information about your child, their strengths and interests, their weaknesses and concerns, their quality of gaming and maybe you've even been able to compare him or her to the classic gaming profiles.

Let's put all this information together to create an overview. This will help us to identify strategies to achieve a better balance for our child.

STEP 3

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

3.1	Step 3 – Communication and Support	61
3.2	Break the cycle of conflict	63
3.3	Learn about gaming and its culture	64
3.4	Understand gaming concepts	65
3.5	Express your interest in gaming & discuss the positives	71
3.6	Express your interest in your child’s gaming & praise their achievements	72
3.7	Discuss careers in gaming/technology and gaming networks	73
	Progress Summary Instructions	74

STEP 3 COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Healthy communication between parent and child is essential if we want our children to make life-changing decisions. This chapter is about turning an environment of conflict into one that is supportive and positive.

If we want to support our child to make these changes we'll need to be

PREPARED

So we understand how someone can get trapped in a game keeping them hooked and wanting more.

SUPPORTIVE

So we can gain the trust of the gamer, connect with them and help them where needed.

PATIENT

So we can identify triggers and patterns that are unhelpful. But also because there is no quick fix.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO TAKE?

1. Break the cycle of conflict
2. Learn about gaming and its culture
3. Understand gaming concepts
4. Express your interest in gaming
5. Express your interest in your child's gaming
6. Discuss the positives
7. Praise their achievements in games
8. Discuss careers in gaming/technology
9. Introduce gaming networks

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS

We want your child to feel supported and loved in their process from excessive gaming to moderate gaming. This means they will have to feel an integral part of this process. For this to be successful they need to feel like they own this. Not like they're being told what to do.

As a parent we will need to avoid the conflict and encourage conversation. We need to show a genuine interest in your child's life and hobbies and develop a better understanding about gaming.

3.2 BREAK THE CYCLE OF CONFLICT

If your relationship with your child is full of fights, tension, conflicts and negativity, we need to break that cycle. The fighting is not healthy for either of you and the longer it goes on, the deeper you get entrenched in this pattern.

Breaking this cycle will need conscious and deliberate effort and we want to convey our intentions clearly to our child.

Find a good, conflict free moment and tell your child that:

- ✓ You are taking a break from the conflicts
- ✓ This doesn't mean you agree to him or her having unlimited access to the device
- ✓ It is time to re-evaluate what is going on.
- ✓ You will get further advice on how you can achieve a better relationship and family environment
- ✓ You don't like the conflicts and want them to end.
- ✓ You encourage your child to help look for ways to make the relationship better and that you will genuinely consider his ideas.

After this chat, give each other a hug and avoid all gaming related conflict. Even if it means your child plays more then you want them to play.

3.3 LEARN ABOUT GAMING AND ITS CULTURE

If you want to change your child's behaviour, you'll have to firstly understand the behaviour. This means we need you to do a bit of homework yourself.

Remember: You don't have to like the gaming, but you do need to know (and understand) what your child is doing!

A good place to start is with the Parent's Guide to Gaming which I wrote for YMCA. It clearly explains:

- The benefits and opportunities of gaming.
- The risks and concerns of gaming.
- How to use parental controls.
- The different genres and their most popular games.
- The history of gaming.

The guide is available for free at www.videogames.org.au

Don't stop with the Parent's guide. There are many more resources out there that go in more detail about video games. The better you understand this medium the more successful you'll be in managing the gaming behaviour of your children.

I suggest you jump on YouTube and search for the games your child is playing. Add terms like gameplay or walkthrough to your search to get films that give an overview of the game.

Watching these short films will also give you an insight into the culture of gaming, the humour, their specific gaming terms and that may be really helpful in understanding your child's social behaviours.

3.4 UNDERSTAND GAMING CONCEPTS

Playing games is a behaviour that can be addictive, quite similar to gambling, eating chocolate, internet or sex. These addictions are often referred to as 'Behaviour Based Addictions' and are all characterised by a compulsion to engage in a specific behaviour to the point that it has a clear negative impact on your life.

To better understand why gaming can be addictive you need to grasp the following concepts. They all play a part in why a player can get hooked on the game.

On the next few pages we explain the following concepts:

- ✓ Immersion or spatial presence
- ✓ Dopamine
- ✓ Survival
- ✓ Avatar attachment
- ✓ Invariable reward schedules

Immersion or spatial presence

Immersion is that feeling that you're 'in' the game. Feeling you've become a part of the game and have a presence within it. You've zoned out of the 'real world' and become a part of the virtual world. Immersion happens subconsciously. It's not a decision made by the player to leave the real world and become a part of the game.

Many of us have experienced immersion in some form of media, or perhaps in work, but games have a specific ability to induce immersion. This is mainly because of the richness of the context. Games give you an abundance of sensory information that is high quality (lifelike). It's also cognitively demanding and it provides us with a narrative or story to lose yourself in.

The game keeps you in this zone by providing seamless experiences. That's why loading screens or buffering is the enemy to any game experience. It takes you out of the zone!

Games are also interactive which lets you actively engage with the story, which again keeps the player engaged in the game. This active involvement is greater in Role Playing Games where the player identifies with the game character.

Dopamine and Gaming

Research tells us that playing video games releases dopamine in the brain. This is not surprising though. Food, sex, exercise, and many other pleasurable activities do exactly the same thing.

Dopamine is a chemical that is associated with rewards and pleasure. It's the thing that makes us feel good. And it's the anticipation of receiving a reward that induces the dopamine in the brain.

Dopamine plays an important part in addictions, including drug addictions. Most illegal drugs induce a very high level of dopamine in a short burst. Gaming releases dopamine too, but not in the same quantities of drugs.

Suggesting that a release of dopamine automatically leads to addiction would be very foolish, but it's important to realise that gaming does have this effect on the player. It's particularly important for young players. They haven't mastered the skill of moderation yet. So asking a child to self-moderate their gaming is like giving them a bowl of lollies and asking them to only eat lollies until they've had enough.



Survival

The need for survival is inborn in every human being. It stems from the time where humans weren't the top predator and had to fight every day to survive in this world. This basic but primal need is still ingrained in all of us and motivates us to compete and work hard.

In this day and age and more importantly in the Western world, survival seems pretty easy in comparison to prehistoric times. A fifteen-year-old would accompany his father on a hunt for food. These days your food is in the cupboard and water is on tap. Not much challenge in turning on a tap, is there?

Gaming however can feed us with the feeling of surviving in a challenging, dangerous environment. Particularly shooters and war-games are pretty much based on survival. Playing these games fulfils this basic need.

For some it even gives them a sense of purpose, a reason for being. And that's pretty powerful.

Avatar attachment

An avatar is the online or virtual character that represents the player in the game. Some players strongly identify with their avatar, particularly if they experience a high level of immersion. As such these players become attached to their avatar and experience feelings towards them. These can include love, sadness, anger, frustration and more.

In adolescence we develop an identity, a sense of self. We work out who we are, what we want, how we feel, how we want to represent ourselves. This is a challenging part of life as I'm sure you can remember.

Avatars let us experiment with this sense of self. You can be someone completely different online than you are in real life. Or you can model your avatar on yourself.

If our idealised self (the person we would like to be) is very different to our perceived self (the person we think we are) then we're more likely to gain a stronger attachment to a virtual character. When this is the case we can live out some of the social interactions that are impossible in real life.

Strong attachment to an avatar normally leads to an increased difficulty to reduce playing games. When gamers quit, they often feel sadness and grief for the loss of their avatar. These feelings may seem surreal and bizarre to you, but they are real and important to the person who's experiencing them.

Invariable Rewards Schedules

Games are a learning environment. A player constantly learns how new actions lead to progress in the game. Performing the right actions or behaviour is rewarded frequently and immediately.

Receiving these rewards induces dopamine into the brain that will lead to feelings of pleasure. We love these feelings, so we will be drawn to continue to play the game in order to receive more rewards/dopamine hits.

Games use Invariable Rewards Schedules. This means that rewards are given after an unpredictable amount of actions. This means that not every action gets rewarded and it's impossible to predict when the reward will come. E.g. after reaching a high score you get a reward, but you don't know what the reward will be. It could be something that is highly valuable or something that has very little value in the game.

This rewards schedule leaves you hanging and fills you with anticipation and excitement. It's proven to work extremely well in keeping people 'hooked' to the game.

Gambling and betting is based on invariable rewards schedule. You pull the trigger, throw the dice or spin a wheel and you don't know if you'll win the reward. Sometimes you win big, sometimes you win nothing...

3.5 EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST IN GAMING & DISCUSS THE POSITIVES

You've read about gaming and have a good understanding about the positives and the opportunities gaming brings to the world. It's time to let your child know about this.

The purpose of discussing the benefits of gaming is to create common ground. Don't get into a conflict!

Discussing the positives of gaming will not strengthen the argument that your child should play more. (Which is probably the argument your child is using!) You're not necessarily changing your position or opinion. All you're doing is discussing, conversing and connecting to your child.

So keep the conversation nice and neutral. Stay positive. Avoid digressing into what you think your child should be doing. E.g. "I also want you to be healthy and do your homework." Changing the unhealthy behaviour will come later.

Have these conversations often. You'll need at least 2 positive conversations to balance out one conversation in which you discuss the negative impacts. (But again, these will come later!) At this point in time you're just priming the situation.

So a practical scenario could be:

"Hey, so I've been reading up about gaming. Did you know that gaming can really develop your decision making skills?"

"Yeah, that's what I've been saying all along."

"How does it work in the games you're playing? Tell me more, I'm really interested."

3.6 EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST IN YOUR CHILD'S GAMING & PRAISE THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

Ask your child how their game works.

You have expressed a genuine interest in gaming. You've shown that you've done some reading and understand how gaming can benefit young people. Now you'd like to see this in action.

The purpose of understanding what your child is doing is to create an openness about the game they're playing, the environment they choose to spend all their time in.

If they are defensive about their avatar, don't dismiss this. An avatar is an expression of their own personality. And they may only be able to use this avatar because of its anonymity. Showing their parent is a very different thing.

If this is the case, ask your child to set up a new avatar. Or even show the gameplay with videos.

Slowly you'll become a part of their world. Making the online world a part of the real world is a huge step!

Discuss and praise your child's achievements in the game. It's likely this will again create a genuine openness and connection between you two. And as you remember this is the very thing we're trying to achieve here.

3.7 INTRODUCE CAREERS IN GAMING/TECHNOLOGY & GAMING NETWORKS

Making the game world a part of the real world is very beneficial. You're opening this online, virtual world and turning it into a shareable, social environment.

Playing games is one thing, but being isolated and escaping the real world is another!

So another way of reducing the gap between the real and online world is gaming development. Transform your child's passion from playing games to creating games. By doing so your child will learn very useable skills like coding, design, programming, and so on.

Also introduce your child to some gaming networks that may be operating close to your home. Establishing positive social contacts in the real world will lead to feelings of reward and achievement in this real world.

Doing so will level up the real world! It will make the real world a bit more attractive to hang around in.

PROGRESS SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS

Ticking the boxes on the progress summary is easy. But how do you know when to tick them? Let's look at what we're trying to achieve:

- ✓ A supportive, positive environment
- ✓ A genuine connection between carer and child
- ✓ Ongoing communication without conflict

Throughout this process you'll need to establish these three components and maintain it. In the following chapters we'll challenge your child's thinking and behaviour which may jeopardise this.

Be mindful to consistently work on your relationship with your child and keep it positive and supportive.

STEP 4

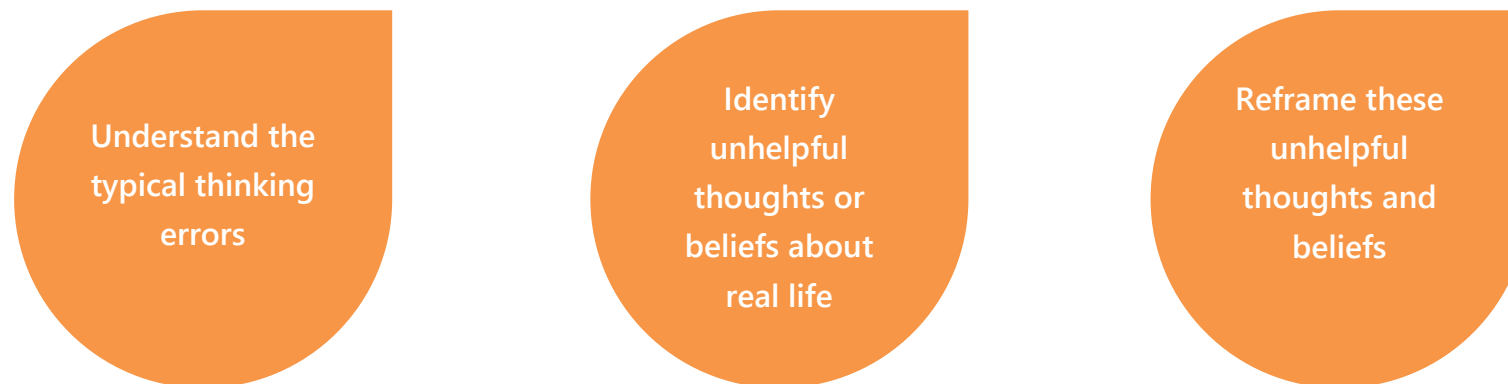
4.1	Step 4 – Identify underlying beliefs/thoughts	76
4.2	Typical Thinking Errors	78
4.3	Identify unhelpful thoughts about real life – The ABC model	81
4.4	Generate understanding with your child	83
	Progress Summary Instructions	85

STEP 4 – IDENTIFY UNDERLYING BELIEFS/THOUGHTS

Behaviours are fed by thoughts and beliefs. And unhealthy behaviours are often caused by *irrational* thoughts and beliefs.

If we can identify the thinking errors we can question the behaviour.

How do we do this?



WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

So far we have:

Step 1: Identified wellbeing issues and concerns.

Step 2: Identified gaming specific issues and patterns.

Step 3: Established a positive, supportive connection with your child.

Now we will detect the underlying thoughts and beliefs that underpin the issues identified in the first two steps. Often some traumatic events may have lead to your child adopting some thinking errors. These thinking errors then lead to specific behaviour that may be unhelpful.

For Example

Wellbeing issue identified in step 1 is consistently being called fat at school and therefore dropped out of school

Gaming issue identified in step 2 is playing Warcraft for more than 6 hours every day

Thinking error that relates to this could be: I will never have friends other than the friends I have online.

You see how the thinking errors can become a part of the problem? If we want to change the unhealthy behaviour we will need to identify the thinking errors and debunk these beliefs.

4.2 TYPICAL THINKING ERRORS

Our self-talk is largely influenced by our underlying assumptions and beliefs and sometimes, our conscious thoughts aren't necessarily accurate. Thinking errors are irrational patterns of thinking that can cause you to feel bad and sometimes act in self-defeating ways.

It is likely your child has some thinking errors that relate to gaming or to their motivation for playing games. Have a read through the following typical thinking errors and identify those that are present in your child's thinking.

All or Nothing Thinking or Black or White thinking.

The person doesn't see any nuances. But in real life something is rarely completely black or white. E.g. I don't look like a model so I must be ugly.

Try finding the shades of grey, the middle ground. Ask yourself if it is really that extreme?

Catastrophising

Exaggerating the situation and its outcomes. You imagine the outcome of your actions will be a disaster when it's likely not going to have such drastic consequences.

Ask if it will matter in 5 years' time, or what's the worst that can happen.

Personalisation

Thinking everything is about you, or that you're responsible for things that go wrong. E.g. You hear some people whispering in the distance and you believe that they may be whispering about you.

Work out what the evidence is for these thoughts. It's not just because you assume something that it's the truth.

Overgeneralisation

Overgeneralisation is when you think something is ALWAYS going to go wrong. Or EVERYBODY is bad. Or it's NEVER going to get better. When you overgeneralise, you exaggerate the frequency of something going wrong. E.g. when I go and chat to someone, they always make fun of me.

Try and work out what the evidence of that is. Look at actual behaviour, not just your thoughts.

Ignoring the positive or filtering

When we 'filter' we're being too focused on the negatives in life. We're not recognising the positives or even the rational evidence for something being the way it is.

False Conclusions

Jumping to conclusions based on no evidence. E.g. A friend doesn't return a phone call leading to the conclusion that this friend doesn't like you and never wants to meet up ever again.

Despite the limited or complete absence of any evidence we sometimes jump to negative conclusions.

Irrational Beliefs or the should trap

Believing that things SHOULD be a certain way and getting stuck on that. And there is a minimal amount of flexibility to deal with this.

Most likely what you believe 'should' happen is actually irrational or impossible to achieve.

These are just some of the Typical Thinking Errors. If you wish to learn more about this or how to identify them, please read more about Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. There are many self-help books out there that will assist you in learning more about this.

4.3 IDENTIFY UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS ABOUT REAL LIFE – THE ABC MODEL

Let's find out how your child thinks about real life, and identify the thinking errors that prevent them from engaging with this real world. To do this we can use the **ABC Model**:

Activating events, environments or circumstances

It is likely that certain events, environments or circumstances lead to your child wanting to retreat into games. These events could be:

- Losing a friend
- Being bullied at school
- Sickness

Beliefs and negative thoughts

These events may lead to negative thoughts and beliefs about themselves or about the world around them. These thoughts/beliefs could be:

- Everyone will always abandon me
- Nobody likes me
- I'm never going to be healthy

Consequences and feelings

The negative thoughts/beliefs have consequences. These may be

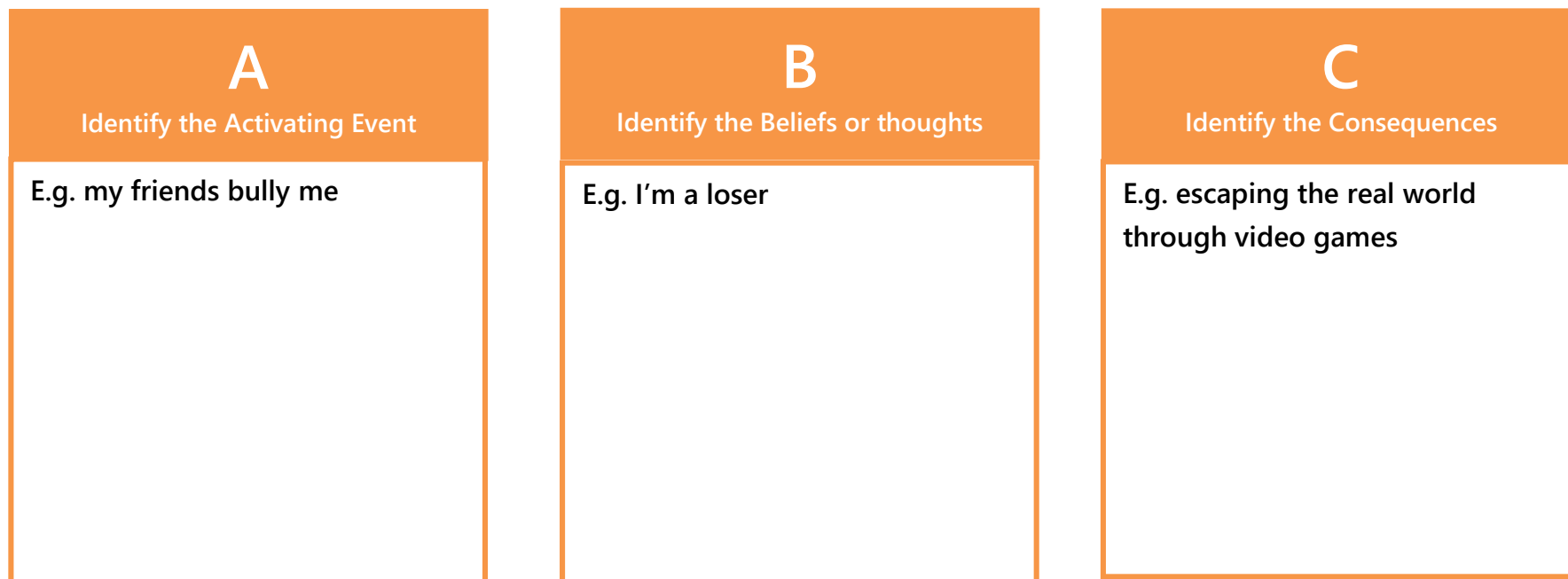
- Feelings of depression and anxiety
- Social isolation
- Physical inactivity

This is called the ABC model:

- A is the **Activating Event**
- B are the **Beliefs or thoughts**
- C are the **Consequences or feelings**

If we can identify which beliefs or thoughts your child has about the real life world around them, we can start to deal with the very thing that holds them back from engaging in the real world.

So let's try and put this into practice:



4.4 REFRAME THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS WITH YOUR CHILD

"My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which have never happened." - Mark Twain

Now that we've identified the unhealthy or irrational thoughts and beliefs, it's time to discuss these with your child. We want to reframe these beliefs with a more rational (healthy) way of thinking.

A prerequisite for this step is a supportive, positive relationship with your child.

If that is not present this step may fail and lead to more conflict.

How to reframe these thoughts and beliefs?

You can discuss the ABC model with your child. (If you feel your child will understand these concepts). This will particularly work if your child is cooperative and inquisitive about the process.

Gently question the validity of the thoughts and beliefs. Ask questions like:

- What are the facts? What do you actually know for sure?
- What evidence supports these thoughts/beliefs?
- What evidence disputes these thoughts/beliefs?
- How else can you look at this situation?
- Can you use milder words? Instead of "hating" something you can say "not liking"
- Are you using assumptions? What do you actually know and what do you assume?

Some Tips

There is really no quick way of working through this. And it's also not a one off conversation. Ideally you make this an ongoing practice where your child learns how to identify negative thoughts and automatically reframes them.

Your child may be resistant to talking about these sensitive topics. Make sure you avoid conflicts at this stage. It is very important that you're supportive and gentle! These thoughts and beliefs will not be reframed by force.

Make sure you target the beliefs, not the consequences. The consequences are how your child deals with these negative thoughts. So targeting these without dealing with the actual thoughts will result in resistance. If we reframe the beliefs, the consequences will change automatically.

Don't discuss any of the behaviour at this stage. This step is about creating clarity and understanding.

PROGRESS SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS

Complete the following steps:

1. Identify the Thinking Errors that are present with your child and fill them out on your progress summary document.
2. Work through the ABC model by identifying the Activating Event, the Beliefs and the Consequences. Fill out ABC's on the progress summary document.
3. Reframe thoughts and beliefs and document your attempts on the progress summary document.

Documenting your success and failures will help you prepare for the next time you try and discuss the beliefs or thinking errors with your child.

Again, this is not a quick fix and will require time and effort

STEP 5

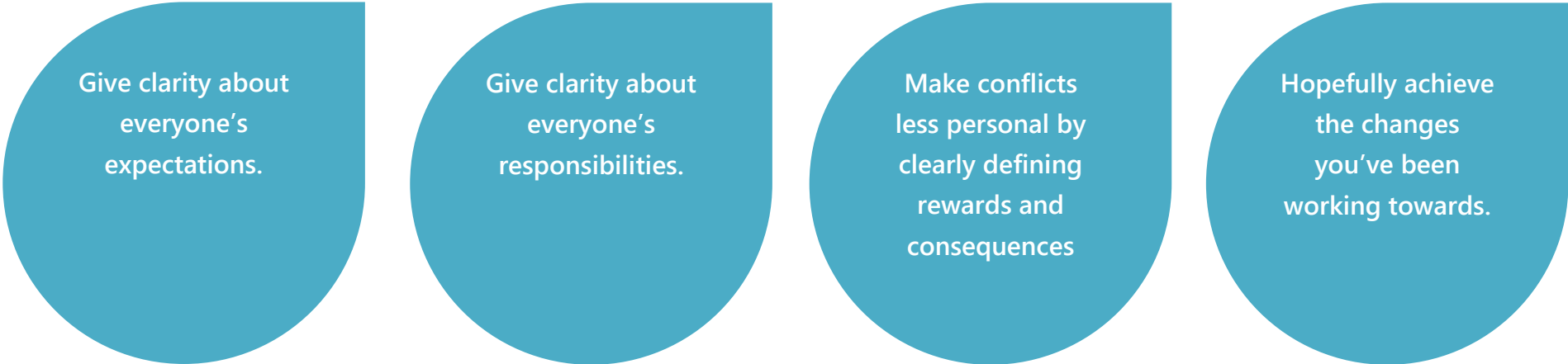
CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

5.1	Step 5 – Change Behaviour	87
5.2	Identify the behaviours that make up the problem	89
5.3	Understand the behaviours and its triggers	90
5.4	Define change in behaviour terms (intervene early in the process).	91
5.5	Set smart goals	92
5.6	Define your child’s role/responsibility	97
5.7	Define the parent’s responsibility	98
5.8	Define the role/responsibility of others	99
5.9	Define the changes to be made in your child’s environment.	100
5.10	Work out your reward system.	101
5.11	Work out your consequences.	104
5.12	Sign an overarching commitment statement or contract	105
5.13	Replace gaming with other activities	107
	Progress Summary Instructions	108

STEP 5 – CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

Gaming is a behaviour, a thing you do. If we want our child to play less, we need to change this behaviour. This chapter is about the **measures parents can put in place to help change gaming behaviour**. Changing behaviour to learn healthier habits will positively impact our mood and mental wellbeing.

Changing behaviour will:



Give clarity about everyone's expectations.

Give clarity about everyone's responsibilities.

Make conflicts less personal by clearly defining rewards and consequences

Hopefully achieve the changes you've been working towards.

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

1. Identify and understand the current behaviour.
2. Define the change you want to achieve.
3. Set SMART goals.
4. Define everyone's responsibilities and role in achieving the change.
5. Work out a reward system and appropriate consequences.
6. Get agreement and a commitment from all parties.

Behaviour change plans are often used for managing behaviours of toddlers and younger children. If your child is 15 or over you need to be mindful about that and adapt your language to suit your audience.

Before we start, [a few cautions](#):

- Stay positive
- Focus on the positives and strengths your child already has
- Stay in a collaborative relation. Try not to argue or fight
- Do not rush! Don't force it
- Seek help or at least discuss what you're doing with a friend

5.2 IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIOURS THAT MAKE UP THE PROBLEM

Behaviours are actions or mannerisms that can be observed. It's what your child is actually doing, not the thoughts, beliefs or motives. This means you should be able to clearly describe behaviours in terms of actions or movements.

The problem you're dealing with will consist of a number of separate behaviours. Let's unravel this problem and identify all the different behaviours that make up this problem. (or identify which behaviours are lacking!)

So, for example, your problem could be that your child is refusing to go to school or is aggressive. What are the behaviours in this case?

Now identify all the behaviours that form part of the problem you're dealing with.

PROBLEM	PROBLEM	PROBLEM
School refusal	Aggression	
BEHAVIOURS	BEHAVIOURS	BEHAVIOURS
Ignoring wake-up call Lack of sleep Playing late night games Not responding to parents	Screaming Smashing the door Calling names Threatening to hit Breaking objects in the room	

5.3 UNDERSTAND THE BEHAVIOURS AND ITS TRIGGERS

A good understanding of when, where, why and how the behaviours happen is essential for finding solutions.

The Game Tracker found in chapter 2 of this manual will give you invaluable information for answering these questions.

1. When does it happen?

Are there specific days this behaviour happens?

2. Why does it happen?

Understand the thoughts or beliefs that feed the behaviour. We've spoken about 'getting on the side of the gamer'. That section is important because it will allow you to ask questions about why certain behaviours are displayed.

3. Where does it happen?

Is there anything in the environment that feeds this behaviour?

4. How does it happen?

Try and identify if there are different patterns. You can do a tracker specifically on a separate behaviour in order to understand it better.

5.4 DEFINE CHANGE IN BEHAVIOURAL TERMS (INTERVENE EARLY IN THE PROCESS)

Now let's look at the behaviours you would like to see. What the change you'd like to see? What defines good behaviour?

In our school refusal example this would probably be: go to school every day and perform well.

This step seems quite obvious, but what we want you to do is assess whether this new behaviour is realistic and achievable. If your son is going to a high performing school where he is constantly bullied, then you need to revisit this goal. In that case it would look like: find a more suitable school, find support and attend consistently.

Which behaviours do I want to see?

Are these behaviours realistic and achievable for my child?

5.5 SET SMART GOALS

Time to define and set our goals. We will set a long-term goal which we'll break up in smaller short term goals. But before we do that we need to make sure that we know how to set SMART goals.

SMART goals are:

S: Specific

You're trying to fix a problem that consists of a bunch of behaviours. Your goals need to be specific to these behaviours. The better defined your goal is, the more likely it is you'll achieve it.

M: Measurable

What is success? 5 days of going to school in a row? Getting up in the morning? Make sure you can measure what success looks like.

A: Achievable

Is the goal realistic? Fixing the problem is going to take time and should consist of many different goals. If your child continually fails at reaching the goals they will not fix the problem...

R: Relevant

Make sure your goal will make a difference in working towards changing the behaviours

T: Time-bound

Define a timeline. When do you expect the goal to be reached?

For every goal you set you should be able to tick every box on this checklist:

- ☐ Does it define a timeline?
- ☐ Does it stipulate when the goal is achieved?
- ☐ Does it define clearly how it's achieved
- ☐ Does it consist of a set of behaviours?

Goals can be:



Ideally you set these goals in communication with your child.

DEFINE YOUR BIG, MEDIUM TERM GOAL

So, for example, if you want your child to go back to school your SMART goal is:

Achieve an 80% attendance rate at the local high school in term 3 of 2015. Attendance is a full day at school.

Another example:

Play one specific game per day for a defined amount of time until the end of term

Remember positive goals are more fun. Going to a basketball club and practicing your basketball moves every day sounds a lot more fun than 'reduce the gaming'! It's likely that you want to achieve a reduction in gaming, but your goal should be about what you want your child to do instead of the gaming!!

Another example could be:

Re-join the basketball club and attend every training session until the end of the season.

Start with one goal, and make sure it's easy to achieve!! Remember this is a long-term journey.

Write your goal on the SMART GOAL Worksheet on the next few pages.

BREAK UP YOUR BIG GOAL INTO LITTLE GOALS (BEHAVIOUR BASED)

We're breaking up the big goal into smaller goals so your child can achieve more! Achieving goals is what he does constantly in the game. You want to recreate that experience in real life. More goals = more achievements = more rewards = more fun = more success!!

So if we take our big goal:

Re-join the basketball club and attend every training session until the end of the season.

Our little goals can be:

- Visit the basketball clubs website
- Get all contact information of the club
- Contact the coach
- Visit the basketball club and watch a match
- Re-enrol in the basketball club.
- Pick up your basketball friend on the way to training
- Attend the first training session
- Attend the second session
- Attend all sessions

It is important to work out how little your goals should be. You don't want it to be too easy, but you definitely don't want it to be too hard!! Setting of the goals really depends on your child's maturity.

Remember you want to be able to reward your child frequently and immediately.

Write your goal on the SMART GOAL Worksheet on the next page.

THE SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

MY BIG GOAL:

MY LITTLE GOALS:

Perform the checklist for every goal:

- ☐ Does it define a timeline?
- ☐ Does it stipulate when the goal is achieved?
- ☐ Does it define clearly how it's achieved
- ☐ Does it consist of a set of behaviours?

5.6 DEFINE YOUR CHILD'S ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY

Parents are usually very good at having an opinion on what their kids should be doing or how they should be behaving. Kids are usually very good at defying this.

This is why we point it out here. You'll need a bit of emotional distance here. If you've been having many arguments over your child's gaming this can be very challenging.

You need to clearly know what you'd like to see happen in relation to the goals you've set. This behaviour will need to be rewarded immediately and frequently. So having a clear understanding of what you're looking for is imperative.

Try and define what solely the responsibility of your child is. Over the next few pages we'll then identify what your and other people's responsibilities are in helping achieve these goals.

My child's responsibilities are:

5.7 DEFINE THE PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

What will you do ensure your child achieves their goals? You obviously have a responsibility here as well. Ask yourself:

- What can I do to help my child achieve the goals?
- What can I change in the house to make it easier for my child?
- Which of my behaviours make it harder for my child?
- Which of my beliefs are perhaps based on prejudice?
- What message should I send to my child?

Do you need/want to set some explicit goals for yourself? It would show to your child that you're as much invested in this as they are.

5.8 DEFINE THE ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY OF OTHERS

Think about who else will be playing a role in your child achieving their goals? In the case of school refusal the school will play an important role in your child's success.

So first define any other parties that could have an impact on the success of your child. This could be a grandparent, a teacher, a friend, even a pet!

Ask the same questions in step 8 and formulate recommendations for others. If you're clear on what you'd like to see from others, you can have an informed conversation and get support from them.

Who else plays a role or can assist in achieving our goals?

What can they do to help?

Which of their behaviours make it harder for my child?

What message should they be conveying to your child?

5.9 DEFINE THE CHANGES TO BE MADE IN YOUR CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT.

This is one of the easy things because no one has to modify any of their behaviours. Changing things in the environment could be:

- Open/remove the curtains
- Remove computer from the bedroom
- Buy that basketball
- Get some card games

Ask yourself:

What can I change around the house to make it easier for my child to achieve their goals?

5.10 WORK OUT YOUR REWARD SYSTEM.

Rewards teach your child the right behaviour and associate this behaviour with happy feelings! Be generous with rewards. It's what will keep this thing fun and successful.

The big rewards

Why would your child change their behaviour? What's in it for them?

If you're thinking that they should just do whatever you say, then this exercise is likely to fail. Instead make changing their behaviours a fun challenge and a rewarding one.

Remember we're trying to break a habit here. The first step is always going to be the hardest. Once we've started, things get easier.

But you need to motivate your child to take this first step. So this means you need an external reward.

The main/big rewards are:

-
-
-

The little rewards

Aside from this long-term reward you also need a reward system that is immediate and frequent. You want to strengthen good behaviour by letting your child know frequently that that is the right behaviour.

One essential reward is telling your child they did great. This 'little' reward costs nothing and is actually the biggest, most effective reward you can give your child.

Another interesting way of rewarding your child for good behaviour is by introducing gamification to the process. Gamifying an activity means that you're introducing game concepts to that activity. Gamification is used more and more by big business to 'guide' consumer behaviour and create new consumer 'habits'. There is no reason why you can't use the same principles to create new and healthier habits in your family.

Just like games, you would be adding points, badges, levels, character upgrades and achievements to the mix. Having this arsenal of rewards at your disposal is incredibly powerful.

Revisit your little goals and link a certain little goal to a certain little reward. Work out a realistic timeline to achieve this reward and put it all on a chart. Visualising the rewards and the progress made is rewarding in itself and likely to work well with your gamer. After all they've been building their confidence and self-esteem on points, skill levels and so on.

On the next page you'll find a chart template. You can use it or create one yourself decorated with your child's favourite characters. Making a chart together with your child would be even better.

Remember, for little rewards to work they have to be given immediately and generously.

overarching goal:

TIMELINE

little goal 1

competency level

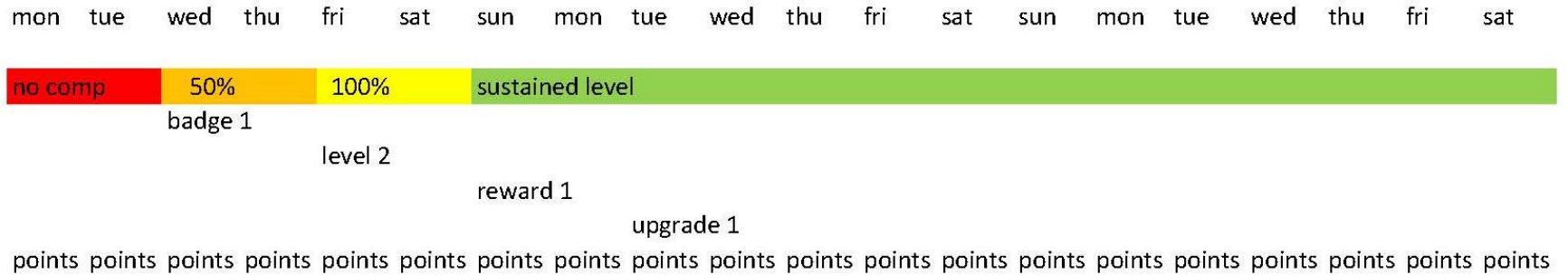
badges

levels

rewards

avatar upgrade

points



little goal 2

competency level

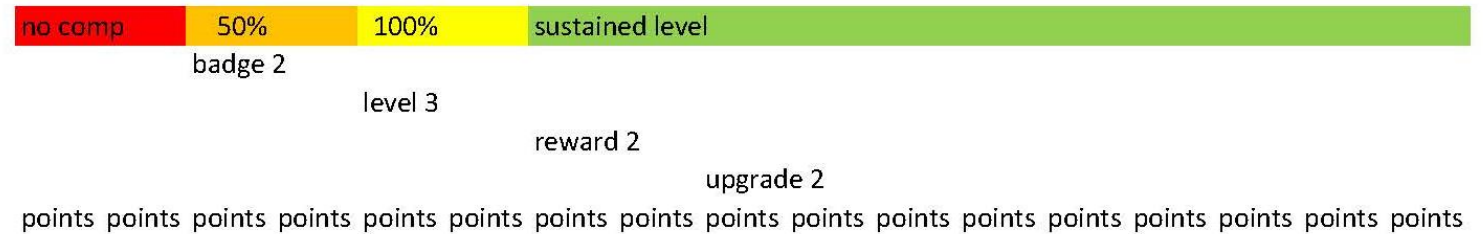
badges

levels

rewards

avatar upgrade

points



little goal 3

competency level

badges

levels

rewards

avatar upgrade

points



BOSS LEVEL

5.11 WORK OUT YOUR CONSEQUENCES.

Don't punish your child! They are attempting to change their behaviour, a difficult task. What they need is encouragement, not punishment. Failure to change behaviour instantly is to be expected, right?

So how do we deal with failure? Us as parents need to be a role model and show resilience and persistence. If our child fails, we need to show them how to acknowledge the failure but not let them get down about it. Yes there is a consequence to the failure, but that doesn't mean that everything is lost!

In gaming, when you fail, you die. And after you die, you just start over again and try again. After trying and sharpening your skills, you finally conquer the last obstacle and you move on to the next level.

Don't think of consequences as punishments, think of them as motivation!

So consequences can be:

- Losing points
- Not achieving a level
- Delay the reward

Do not take away access to the behaviour you want them to change. So the following are bad examples:

- Go to your room
- You can't go to the basketball session
- Not allowed to see friends

You can barter access to the video games if you feel it will be accepted by your child as a consequence. You want to avoid conflict around video games though. So this may be a bit tricky, and perhaps can be introduced later on in the process.

5.12 SIGN AN OVERARCHING COMMITMENT STATEMENT OR CONTRACT

Signing a contract is a symbolic step to express a genuine commitment to at least trying to achieve the goals.

This commitment statement clarifies the expectations and the intentions. Below is an example but again you can personalise your own.

Your child needs to voluntarily engage in this process. Forcing them would be counterproductive.

GAMING CONTRACT

Gaming is fun but unhealthy if it's done excessively. To find the right balance between gaming and real life I will try and achieve the following goals.

My goals

If I want to achieve these goals I will have to change some behaviours. These behaviours are:

Behaviours to change

This is not easy and I'll need help. My parent's responsibilities to help me achieve my goals are:

Parent's responsibilities

If I achieve my goals I know my rewards will be:

My rewards

Parents Signatures

My signature

5.13 REPLACE GAMING WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES

If your child is indeed reducing the time they spend on games, you'll need to assist them in finding other things to do. You'll need to discuss the alternatives with your child and encourage your child to take pro-active steps.

You may want to suggest things like:

- Educational course
- Sports club
- Social groups
- Book clubs
- Musical instruments

Try to reduce the barriers of engaging in something new as much as you can. This process will be scary for your child, so again a gentle and supportive approach is imperative.

Don't be dismissive when your child proposes something which you know will not work or last. Even if you're right, the practice of engaging in new activities will be very beneficial and reduce barriers for engaging in other activities. Remember your child needs support and encouragement, not thoughts of "this is not going to work"

PROGRESS SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS

Finally we fill out the progress summary again.

At this stage you'll complete the process and should see how every step relates to another.

- How the wellbeing issues influence the gaming issues.

- How the thoughts influence the behaviours

- How communication is key to supporting your child.

A FINAL WORD

You made it till the end of the book. I sincerely hope this book has helped you and given you new ideas and inspiration to help your child with the issues he or she is facing.

I want to encourage you to seek professional help, even if things are improving. A professional Counsellor is trained in all of these steps and can give you great perspective on what is happening in your family.

Also, if your child is dealing with excessive video gaming, you will be impacted by this as well. And it's important you take care of yourself. If you need support, a person to talk to, you need to call someone.

Best of luck! And feel free to get in touch with me.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Dupon is an expert in the impact of video games on young people and their families. He combines his youth engagement expertise with entrepreneurial talent to provide services, programs and resources to keep gaming a fun and safe activity.

Steven grew up in Belgium where he completed a degree in Psychology and a Diploma of Business. For the past 20 years Steven worked and volunteered for several youth development organisations where he focuses on empowering young people and engaging them into personal development programs. YMCA, Wesley Youth Services and St Vincent de Paul are some of the organisations Steven worked for.

Steven Dupon founded the Institute of Games where he provides game development courses for young people, workshops and counselling services for parents and training for professionals. Clients include schools, libraries, community and government organisations, both local and overseas.

Steven authored The Parent's Guide to Gaming, a resource freely available from www.videogames.org.au. On this website you'll also find other resources for schools, parents and professionals.

Steven's work for YMCA was awarded with the READYS award in 2014 for excellence and innovation in the delivery of youth services in Victoria.

Steven is passionate about sharing the expertise he built up over the past 20 years. He is an experienced speaker and consultant committed to providing you with the skills and resources you need to better engage and empower young people.

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