

Gaming Addiction 101

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Few people realise just how addictive computer gaming can be. It can affect everyone from children right through to mature adults and the addiction can- and does - destroy lives. Come with Russ as he gives you a first peek into a world of darkness where fantasy replaces reality.

Computer games have come a long way from the days of Pong and Pacman. They have become more exciting, more dynamic, and essentially more addictive.

Since the popularity of the internet, there has been a huge jump in communication and accessibility. This has also been so in online games. Instead of dragging gamers away from their social lives, they are giving them new ones.

Two games in particular, Everquest and World of Warcraft, have been designed specifically to keep users playing for hours. This is done by having no ending, and giving gamers greater status and honour by playing for longer and interacting with others.

In the process of striving to get bigger, stronger characters, many people have become locked up in these online worlds.

Many of the people who do become addicted to these types of games have low self-esteem in the real world and find a place to fit in in their ‘guilds’ in the online game. Among the ogres and goblins they find people who are very much like themselves, and consequently feel at home, preferring to spend hours slaughtering beasts with their cyber friends than real life interactions.

There is even a case of a Chinese teenager throwing himself off a twenty-four story building in the hope of meeting some of his gaming friends in the afterlife .

The ability to become a hero amongst the evil of a failing world is also very appealing to youth who feel they are not given much of a say in today’s society. Why try to change the real world, when you can raise the dead and kill demons of evil in a fictional one?

Some people have tried to disprove the claims of gaming addiction by saying that in modern times we are relying more and more on computers anyway. This is true, but when people begin to die from a heart attack caused by starvation after playing Starcraft for 50 hours straight, it seems that this is indeed an addiction of a fatal kind .

Because the technology of computers has grown at such an extraordinary rate, many people still scoff at the claims of addiction to a game. Because of this there is little support for relations of addicted people, and only a small number of people who are qualified to help.

Families are often the ones who pay the most after an addiction takes hold, and gaming addictions are no different. The MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) of Everquest has destroyed more than one family and career opportunities.

Dennis Bennet is an example of a reformed gamer. After spending hours on his character he nearly lost his son, his wife, and his life. He speaks about it here .

People have also spent thousands of dollars buying characters off the internet. At this very moment there is a Level 70 Everquest character for sale for US\$400, and a World of Warcraft Warlord going for US\$1000!

Gaming addiction is costing people their social lives, their careers, their families, and in some cases, their lives. It is time to accept that this is a serious problem, and step up to save innocent people.