

MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Digital dependence can become addiction when someone develops a compulsive need to use a digital device to the extent that it interferes with life and stops them from doing things that need to be done. There are three types of digital addiction: phone addiction, internet addiction and social media addiction.

The secret to ensuring that your children have a healthy relationship with gaming and digital devices is being sure that you manage where, when and what your children play and to teach them balance with other activities.

Video games have been compared to “kiddie crack” and obsessive gaming often opens the door to problem gambling issues developing in children. (*Hugh McBride*)

FACTS:

- Many toddlers are able to use smartphone apps before they even learn how to speak
- In Canada, children often begin gambling in grade school as young as 9 or 10 years old
- Children often start gambling with family members—playing games for money or getting scratch tickets as presents
- As they get older, teens usually gamble more with their friends and classmates (*Caring for Kids*)
- 63% to 82% of teenagers (12 to 17 years of age) gamble
- 10% to 15% are at risk for either developing or returning to a serious gambling problem (*Source: Drevensky & Gupta, 2004*)

WARNING SIGNS

- Lies or is secretive about gaming activities.
- Borrows or takes money from others to gamble or advance online game status
- Money or possessions go missing from the house
- Unexplained absences from school
- Sudden drop in grades.
- Gambles with money intended for a different use (lunch, bus fare, etc.)
- Purchases and sells gaming skins
- Appears to be ‘sucked in’ to the game

- Is frequently hard to arouse when playing
- Gets angry when it is time to put the game away

GAMING & DIGITAL ADDICTION PREVENTION

Here are a few helpful hints to keeping children and youth safe and prevent gaming, social media and online addiction concerns:

- Get your children involved in other activities other than gaming
- Do not give scratch or lottery tickets to kids under 18 as gifts
- Turn off all digital devices one hour before bedtime
- Ensure all digital devices and computers are not kept in bedrooms
- and are charged in a separate room
- Lay out gaming rules at the youngest age possible
- Do not let your toddler play on your smartphone
- Set consistent rules, consequences for internet use, and be sure to enforce those rules if broken
- Set a rule that approved games can only be played after homework, chores or other responsibilities are done
- Video games should be played no more than one or two hours per day - especially during the school year
- Use Content-filtering software and block sites that require your children to pay to play
- Never give your credit card information or bank details to your children to pay for gaming website fees or to pay for video game console purchases
- Spend time together, including having regular family dinners, discussing gaming rules or concerns
- Help your children develop healthy coping strategies for the stresses of adolescence

GETTING HELP:

Our Gaming-Gambling Awareness Program is offered in community offices across the province. If you are concerned that gaming, social media, smartphone or online use may be getting out of hand or is starting to cause problems workshops, information and confidential assistance is available: ggap@metisnation.org

Gaming-Gambling Awareness Program (G-GAP)
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