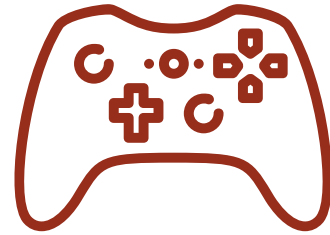


FACTSHEET: ONLINE GAMING



What motivates gamers to play?

Gaming can fulfill several emotional needs. It can provide:

- A temporary escape from difficult emotions or situations,
- Social connection,
- Observable progress and growth,
- A sense of purpose or identity.

Despite the stereotypes associated with gaming, it's actually designed to be a social activity - giving players the ability to compete, collaborate, skill build and identify their place in both the real world and virtual gaming world. Gaming is a community and a culture – meaning these are meaningful relationships being developed online and for some the only place they feel like they belong. It can be a safe space for people to learn and fail – whereas failure in real life can be permanent or have lasting effects.

These games can be a powerful tool and they are not automatically bad or problematic. There's nothing wrong with wanting to immerse yourself in the online world and enjoying the benefits that come with it. However, we do need to be mindful that these games are also designed to keep players engaged and they utilize a variety of methods to ensure this occurs. Games are purposely designed to be immersive and overstimulating; increasing the amount of dopamine that gets released each time we play. This can result in numbing our pleasure responses and reducing the dopamine we receive from other activities. In addition, excessive gaming can also cause hyper-reactivity and affect our ability to reduce the amount of time spent gaming.

It's important to discuss both the positive and negative aspects of gaming and the signs to look for in order to effectively balance our use. This factsheet will provide information on the signs of excessive gaming and some tips and tricks for regaining control.

What are the signs of excessive gaming?

- Preoccupation with gaming
- Withdrawal symptoms (boredom, anxiety, irritability, mood swings, cravings and urges, troubles with sleep, etc.)
- Tolerance: needing to spend more time or money online to have the same experience
- Unsuccessful attempts to control or reduce gaming
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities (hobbies, sports, music, etc.)
- Withdrawing socially from family and friends
- Lying or hiding gaming
- Avoiding responsibilities or commitments / Difficulties completing other tasks or responsibilities
- Difficulties adhering to time limits
- Using games to escape or cope with difficult emotions/situations
- Negative impacts in other areas of life (relationships, work, home, school)
- Physical symptoms (decline in hygiene, eye strain, neck/back problems, headaches, lack of energy, etc.)

If you identify with some of these signs it doesn't necessarily indicate an addiction, but it is a good sign to modify your use and put some more limits in place.

If you have concerns or questions, you can always seek additional support!

Tips and Tricks for Regaining Control



- Monitor your habits:
 - When do you game most?
 - How are you feeling while you game?
 - Do you use it most when you're feeling lonely/sad/bored/stressed?
 - How do you feel after you game?
 - Is it having any impacts in other areas of your life?
 - How long are you spending online? How much money is being spent online?
- Set goals and limits
 - How many hours per day would you like to limit your use to?
 - What's a reasonable goal to work towards?
 - Are there hours/days where use is permitted or not permitted?
 - Only gaming when other responsibilities are completed
- Establish new routines and habits. Add daily structure with an agenda, consider using a whiteboard. Keep gaming from being the first priority of the day - try to find alternatives for after work/school.
- Explore new interests and hobbies. It may require multiple activities or hobbies to fill the needs that are met through gaming. Match the activities to those needs and to your interests. What type of games do you like to play? What do you like about them? Use these questions to guide your new activities. Game Quitters has an excellent hobby tool for this: <https://gamequitters.com/hobby-ideas/>
- Fill the void left by gaming by introducing these 3 types of activities:
 - 1) Activities that are mentally engaging – something that requires learning or skill building
 - 2) Activities for resting – things to do at home when you're feeling tired and bored
 - 3) Activities that are social – opportunities to gain new friends or connections, group activities, sports, etc.

Tips and Tricks for Regaining Control

- Develop strategies to manage withdrawal symptoms. Consider mindfulness, exercise, spending time outside, increase face-to-face interactions
- Explore new coping skills, find something that brings you joy or releases stress outside of technology. Maybe that looks like taking your dog for a walk, connecting with friends/family, reading, exercising, art, journaling, music, meditation, etc. Eating healthier, drinking water and exercising are proven to help with cravings and help reduce brain fog.
- Remove gaming devices from the bedroom, put them in a central area. We recommend turning off all technology at least 1 hour before bed.
- Consider shifting to other types of games: single player, games that can be paused or ended. Alternatively, you can start with more exciting games and finish your gaming session with something more relaxed and slower paced.
- Consider committing to a break from video gaming. Try reducing your time online and not using every day
- Be aware of bingeing cycles – holidays, weekends, time off. It's difficult to go from having structure to having a lot of free time. Structure your free time and keep your limits in place.

Don't try to take on all these suggestions at once!
Start with 1 or 2 and gradually introduce more as you achieve your goals. Remember, new habits take time and effort to develop! The more you practice, the more natural these habits will become.

Available Supports

New Video Gamer Support. Is Gaming Taking Over Your Life?

RESPAWN VIRTUAL GAMER PROGRAM

A PROVEN STEP-BY-STEP VIRTUAL PROGRAM ON HOW TO
QUIT GAMING AND GET YOUR LIFE BACK ON TRACK.

Contact:
P: 613-340-2714
E: ggap@metisnation.org



 GAME QUITTERS

Métis Nation
of Ontario 

Is Gaming Taking over your life? New Video Gamer Support.

RECLAIM VIRTUAL FAMILY PROGRAM

FOR FAMILIES WITH GAMERS OF ALL AGES.
DEVELOPED BY WORLD-RENOWNED GAMING EXPERTS,
THERAPISTS AND PARENTS.

Contact:
P: 613-340-2714
E: ggap@metisnation.org



 GAME QUITTERS

Métis Nation
of Ontario 

New Video Gamer Support.
Is Gaming Taking Over Your Life?

ONE TO ONE COACHING

Every family and situation is unique and requires a
personal touch. Our coach helps you learn techniques and
strategies to improve communication, reduce conflict and
feel more confident as a parent and/or gamer.

Contact:
E: ggap@metisnation.org
P: 613-340-2714



 GAME QUITTERS

Métis Nation
of Ontario 

Gaming and Gambling Awareness Program (G-GAP)

The Métis Nation of Ontario's G-GAP is designed to raise awareness and assist with the prevention of problem gambling and gaming. The G-GAP provides education on problem gaming/gambling risks and works to reduce the stigma associated with these topics. Our specialized staff host culture-based workshops, trainings and are able to provide assessments and referrals.

What does the program offer?

- Awareness and Prevention Workshops and Presentations
- Connects with broader community supports and services
- Access to information about gaming/gambling
- Online tools and resources
- Staff and community engagement
- Brief counselling for technology use/gambling
- Treatment referrals for problem gaming/gambling
- Networking and partnership development opportunities

For more information or to access confidential support, please contact our Gaming and Gambling Health Promotion Specialist at ggap@metisnation.org, 613-340-2714, or through our website metisgaming.org

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