

# VIDEO GAME ADDICTIONS

WARNING SIGNS & TREATMENT



# Table of Contents:

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Statistics on Teens Addicted to Video Games</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Why Are Video Games Addictive?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Modern Video Game Concept</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Factors that Lead to Teen Video Game Addiction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Addiction Warning Signs</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Warning Signs That a Teen May be Addicted to Video Games</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Treatment for Teen Video Game Addiction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Residential Treatment for Video Game Addiction in Teens</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Article Resources</b>	<b>6</b>

## Introduction

Many individuals associate addiction with [drugs](#) or [alcohol](#). When addiction is referenced it is oftentimes in reference to a substance. However, according to a WebMD psychiatrist, this is not always the case. In order to meet the criteria for an addiction, two components must be present:

- The person needs more of the substance, behavior, or activity in order to ‘keep them going.’
- The person becomes irritable and miserable if the substance, behavior or activity are out of reach.

Gaming meets both of these criteria, as extreme behaviors have been observed in response to withdrawal. For a teen video game addict, they may become [angry](#), [depressed](#), or even [violent](#) if they are removed from their game. When parents take away gaming privileges teen’s and children act out in defiance, or may cry, refuse to eat, sleep, or engage in normal activities.

## Statistics on Teens Addicted to Video Games

At this time, video game addiction is a new psychological disorder on the radar of modern psychologists. However, it has not ‘officially’ been deemed a mental health condition. Because of this, there are no universally adopted symptoms of the condition.

According to Tech Addiction, researchers using their own sets of criteria for study of teen video game addiction have come to varying conclusions about the prevalence of the disorder. Findings suggest that 2-12% of teenagers suffer from video game addiction in the United States. These statistics vary based on the population surveyed and the symptoms used to consider the behavior ‘addictive.’

## Why Are Video Games Addictive?

While there is no single factor within a video game that makes it addictive to teens, there are a variety of factors that could contribute to the addiction.

## The Modern Video Game Concept

Video games have been around since the 1980’s. These first games were largely single player games that were designed to engage the user in difficult challenges. These games focused on high levels of hand-eye coordination and goal reaching. While some young players did become obsessed with meeting these goals, the prevalence of teen video game addiction really began in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the introduction of online gaming.

The focus of these online games changed from single player challenges to multi-player role playing. Teenage gamers now enter into a highly detailed virtual world. This world is constantly evolving as the user makes decisions and oftentimes works together with other gamers.

Modern day gamers are fully in control. They can create their own characters. They can build friendships, networks, and alliances with other players online. Many can create their own game objectives, choosing sides and approaching society from their given role.

## Factors that Lead to Teen Video Game Addiction

Teens who engage in video games are taken from their ‘real world’ experiences and placed in a virtual created world. This world offers them opportunity to explore a place that is specifically designed to be visually engaging and stimulating. The play is enable to adopt a powerful identity, which may differ from their real life experience. The user can engage in adventures and tasks that are not possible in the real world. Team games also encourage constant play as users depend on one another to succeed in their world.

General factors that can lead to a teen’s video game addiction include:

- Unhappiness with their status in the real/physical world
- Desire to ‘level up’ and gain more power
- The perceived necessity for constant play from all online parties involved
- Sense of obligation to teammates
- Appeal of escaping reality for a self-generated fantasy
- Express thoughts and feelings comfortably
- No ‘Game Over’ in role playing games

## Addiction Warning Signs

Just because a teen is playing video games does not mean that they are addicted. WebMD suggests that 80% of the world can actually play video games safely. Tech Addictions states that approximately 99% of boys and 94% of girls engage in some form of video game activity. Males tend to be at an increased risk for computer and video game addiction. Teens and children playing video games who have a lower level of social competence and higher levels of social anxiety are more likely to become addicts.

## Warning Signs That a Teen May be Addicted to Video Games

**Playing games for increasing amounts of times.** While there is no exact amount of time given where gaming habit becomes an addiction, some sources recommend no more than 1-2 hours of playing time per day for teens and children.

**Obsession with video games.** A teen may become obsessed with the game they are playing, and reference the game even when they are not engaged in their virtual reality. Conversation may revolve around the game. They may think constantly about the game, strategy or plans for playing.

Concentration and attention may diminish as the teen daydreams about their virtual world. Focus will become elusive in school, homework, studying, etc. They may skip out on responsibilities, miss deadlines, or avoid offline friends and peers.

**Lying about virtual time.** Teens with video game addictions may lie to their parents about the amount of time spent online. This is especially common if the video game console is in the child's bedroom; outside of sight from the parent. Teens may tell their parents they are studying, doing homework, reading, etc. while they are actually playing video games. Some teens also wake up in the middle of the night in order to play while their parents are sleeping.

Other warning signs of teenage video game addiction include:

- Neglect or Loss of Interest in Other Activities
- Social Isolation
- Defensive Anger
- Irritability
- [Anxiety](#) or [Depression](#)
- Using Video Games as a Coping Mechanism
- Playing Despite Serious Consequences

## Treatment for Teen Video Game Addiction

Professionals suggest that treatment for video game addiction is similar to treatment for other addictions. This treatment includes a detox. However, unlike [drugs](#) or [alcohol](#), a teen needs to learn to live with ever present technology in their lives. They need to learn how to cope in a healthy ways and balance their real life with small doses of virtual reality. Video game detox is much like treating a food addiction. It's about learning to live with (or among) video games.

While teen's cannot possibly live in a contemporary society without computers, limiting their use to a set number of hours may not be effective either. In fact, WebMD suggests that "limiting game time to one hour a day is like an alcoholic saying he's only going to drink one beer." A teen gaming addict needs to learn real-life excitement and enjoyment.

## Residential Treatment for Video Game Addictions in Teens

Shepherds Hill Academy is a residential [therapeutic](#) boarding school with a [wilderness component](#) that is incredibly effective for teens suffering from [digital](#), [social media](#), or video game addictions.

Shepherds Hill Academy is like a detox from the digital world. Our 12-month program features a rustic living environment where teens are completely free from technology and modern conveniences. This wilderness component fully integrates the proven method of helping teens find joy, excitement, and value in a simpler version of life. These values are then able to transfer over into the teen's life when they graduate from the program.

In the center of campus, Shepherds Hill offers your teen rigorous curriculum in our [fully accredited academy](#). With a 5 to 1 student to staff ratio, your teen will get the individualized attention and mentorship required to succeed in their studies. In fact, 80% of our academy graduates go on to post-secondary education. Our teachers are trained to work with your student to meet their individual goals. Teens with video game and [digital addictions](#) often fall behind in school, obsessing over their virtual identity and world. At Shepherds Hill, our team works to bring academics and lifelong learning back to the forefront.

Is your teen suffering from a video game addiction? Find out if Shepherds Hill Academy is just what your teen needs to get back on track! Contact us today or [inquire online](#) now.

## Article Resources:

- Conrad, Brent, 2016, Child Video Game Addiction- Facts & Solutions, Retrieved from: <http://www.techaddiction.ca/child-video-game-addiction.html>