

Tips for Parents- to help keep gaming in balance



Tips:

- Be interested and curious about the games your young person plays. It is important to engage with the world they live in- real and virtual.
- Understand how the games your young person plays work and have conversations with your young person about this. There is psychology that goes into game design primarily with goals to get people playing for longer and spending money. Anyone who games is exposed to this and whilst this certainly doesn't mean everyone will get 'hooked' it's important gamers understand these things.
- Know if the games your young person plays has micro-transactions (most do) and negotiate limits around spending money for virtual items before this question comes up (because it will). Also, if on mobile devices or tablets, be aware of settings to ensure a password is needed before any payments can be made in the game.
- Notice how your young person is during and after gaming. This may mean thinking about where they are gaming. In their room with the door shut is different to in the lounge or family room.
- Encourage face to face activities and social connections outside of gaming. Remember, gaming can be currency for social connection but face to face connection is important for wellbeing. Even gaming with others in the same room is different to gaming alone online. Anything that promotes connection as opposed to disconnection is important.
- Negotiate limits to their gaming. Some parents will find it important to make gaming conditional on other behaviours or responsibilities being done or demonstrated. For some, there may need to be consequences if limits are exceeded. It is important your young person know what these consequences will be and vital you follow through if you set them.

- As well as agreeing limits to game time be mindful of agreeing regular breaks during gaming sessions, especially if playing for longer than two hours, in weekends for example, even if with friends. Build in breaks for healthy snacks, a stretch and even getting outside to connect with nature, something proven to be good for our wellbeing.
- If you are finding it hard to set and enforce appropriate limits around gaming, or are having trouble with your child's behaviours when you try and limit their gaming, consider seeing a family therapist as they are specifically trained to assist you in these areas.
- Encourage other ways to cope with difficult thoughts or feelings so that they don't rely solely on escaping into games.
- Notice if your young person's gaming is impacting on things like sleep, school attendance, face to face relationships and other commitments or activities. If it does and also does not respond to things you try to help them maintain balance, then seek help.
- If your young person's gaming is out of balance, remember that this is often a symptom of other things, with the gaming behaviours the tip of the iceberg and what is seen. Often what sits unseen is the issues they are using games to escape from.
- Finally, if you are a gamer and a parent, be mindful of your own gaming habits and screen time generally, and what you role model to your kids about balance. Connecting with your kids around gaming can be wonderful and playing appropriate games together can be a great way to connect. Connection and not disconnection is key!

