Video Games: Can Too Much of a Fun Thing Be Bad?

Effective 2018, the World Health Organization will recognize excessive playing of video games as a mental health disorder.

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For some folks, playing video games is a leisurely activity; for others, the pastime can become an addictive behavior. As a result, in 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) will recognize video game addiction, or gaming disorder, as a mental health condition, reports U.S. News & World Report.

According to WHO's beta draft of its upcoming 11th update of International Classification of Diseases (the ICD-11), "Gaming disorder is characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behaviour ('digital gaming' or 'video-gaming'), which may be online (i.e., over the internet) or offline manifested by: 1) impaired control over gaming (e.g., onset, frequency, intensity, duration, termination, context); 2) increasing priority given to gaming to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other life interests and daily activities; and 3) continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences."

The addition of gaming disorder to the ICD-11 will allow providers to diagnose an individual with the condition, which can result in impairments to proper functioning in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other areas of an individual's life.

"The gaming behaviour and other features [of the problem] are normally evident over a period of at least 12 months in order for a diagnosis to be assigned, although the required duration may be shortened if all diagnostic requirements are met and symptoms are severe," according to WHO.

Quoted in Forbes, Daphne Bavelier, a professor at the University of Geneva, stressed that video games can be a safe way to improve hand-eye coordination, enhance problem-solving skills, relieve stress, connect people and live out fantasies. But this depends on the type of game and how long and often its played.

Click here to learn how video games may help treat depression.

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