



FROM THE COLLEGE CHAPLAIN

Computer games are fun! And God wants me to enjoy life. So the more I play, the more fun I will have, right?

At least that is the thinking of some young people. The problem is you can have too much of a good thing.

You can see this if you apply the same logic to another situation. For example, chocolate tastes good and God made all things, but the more chocolate I eat the more unhealthy I become.

The key is self-control, as the wise King Solomon said;

Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control - Proverbs 25:28

Solomon should know because the book of Ecclesiastes records his journey to deny himself nothing in his search for meaning. In the end, he realised that the only thing that could satisfy him was his Creator.

He has created us with a great need to be satisfied, and research would agree with this. Simply put we have basic psychological needs for **competence** (a feeling of mastery and growth), **autonomy** (that sense that there are many interesting opportunities from which to choose), and **relationship** (a feeling that "I matter" to others, and they matter to me).

Games can seem to fulfill these needs, especially games like 'Fortnite' or 'PUBG', but not if we spend too much time playing them. In fact, the opposite is the case.

In their book, 'Glued to Games: How Video Games Draw Us In and Hold Us Spellbound', Scott Rigby and Richard Ryan, ask five helpful questions to ask people who may need to exercise self-control when it comes to gaming because they are 'over-involved' in gaming.

1) Do you have a big “satisfaction gap?” When you think about how needs are satisfied in your “real life” versus games, do games come out way ahead? Over-involvement in games goes hand-in-hand with feeling a lack of basic need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in other areas of life, such as school and social relationships. If our basic needs aren't being satisfied by life, there may be a tendency to be over-involved in games.

2) Are Games “crowding out” other commitments? Do you miss deadlines at school because of gaming? Do you often choose to game rather than spend time with friends or family?

3) Are you feeling personal pressure, guilt or shame around your gaming? It may sound like a funny thing to say that some gamers feel they “pressure” themselves into gaming, but it happens. There is a feeling that games are something you’re compelled to do, even if you don’t particularly enjoy or want to play at that moment. You may feel a sense of guilt or shame about firing up another game, but do so anyway. If this feels like a common experience for you, it is a sign that you are over-involved in gaming.

4) Are you playing four or more hours a day? A simple rule of thumb is how much time you spend on average every week playing video games. Research suggests that over 25 hours a week, there is a direct association with negative feelings or decreased well-being. So as one quick check: How much time on average are you spending gaming each week?

5) Is gaming isolating you from important people in your life? While you are running around virtual worlds, perhaps in the company of dozens of other online friends, slaying dragons and completing missions, it is sometimes hard to remember that you are leaving the 'real' world — and often the loved ones that are under your own roof — alone and isolated from you. If you are immersed in a fantasy world, you aren't in the real one.

The good news is that our God is in the real world, He knows us and He is the only one who can truly satisfy us and He gives us the resources we need to be self-controlled.

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