

The Truth About Gaming Disorder...

The classification of "excessive gaming" as a disorder has caused an uproar in the gaming community but there is a major problem with the discussion...

News broke late December last year that the World Health Organisation (WHO) added "Gaming disorder" and "Hazardous gaming" to their ICD-11 draft. It has been months since then, and there are still plenty of outcries over the decision. How can gaming be considered hazardous?

But as someone currently pursuing my Bachelors in Psychology, I have to be honest; I do not agree with the outcry from gamers.

Now, before you skip this article in annoyance, hear me out. I am an avid gamer, I have hours upon hours of game time logged-in (not including the hours I have to play at work) but in no way am I addicted. But that's exactly the problem here...

The truth about addictions

There are so many people jumping the gun on this decision and deciding that it's an "attack on the video game industry" and parents freaking out over the "dangers of video games" to children. I'm going to tell you outright that it is not. It isn't an attack on the industry and video games are not the problem here. Whether we like to admit it or not, almost all of us are addicted to something. A lot of the time it's not something we're consciously aware of and it could be to the most innocent thing.

For example; I, myself, am addicted to coffee. If I stop, I get noticeably cranky. We also know that there are people who are addicted to social media and get distraught when they're not "connected" after a period of time. I would boil it down to just plain ol' human nature.

People can get addicted to even more mundane things than gaming. There are people addicted to water, one notable "aquaholic" being Nigella Lawson, the famous TV chef; even though excessive consumption of H₂O can lead to water-poisoning. It's true, look it up. The fact is, there are people out there who have died from excessive gaming and that is cause in itself to classify this as a problem. There is a serious problem here and there are tens if not hundreds of people who need help.

The entry of "gaming disorder" and "hazardous gaming" is necessary so that the people who actually do have these issues can get the appropriate specialised help, rather than treating it like any mental disorder when it is actually an addiction that needs to be

quelled and the person rehabilitated back into being able to function like a normal human without taking video games out of

the picture, just to a more healthy level. Games aren't a substance like drugs or alcohol, so going 'cold turkey' is quite unnecessary.

Rather than get upset at this, we should try to actually understand the situation. It seems to me that a lot of people either aren't bothering to read up, or they don't understand what the definitions actually mean and jump to conclusions anyway.

So let's break it down into understandable chunks, shall we?

What you need to know about 'Gaming disorder'...

According to WHO: "Gaming disorder is a pattern of gaming behaviour characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences."

In a nutshell, if you've sat on your butt playing video games all day

instead of going to school or to work, it's a problem. When you're refusing to eat food, it's a problem. When you're refusing to leave an Internet cafe after three days, it's a problem and a deadly one. The WHO states that in order for the disorder to be diagnosed, one's behaviour must be so severe that it impairs areas of functioning for at least 12 months.

Let's be clear; the problem isn't video games, it's us humans and the way some of our psyches work, the way some of our brains are wired.

I know, and this is the argument of most gamers, that it's only a small percentage of gamers who actually become so severely addicted that they neglect all other life responsibilities. But the percentages are small for other

addictions as well. Not everyone who drinks alcohol are alcoholics, not everyone who goes to the casino is a gambling addict and not everyone who is on social media is addicted. As ridiculous as that on addiction to social media sounds, a study at the University of Maryland showed that 4 out of 5 students had experienced negative side-effects when "disconnecting" for a day.

Classic sign of addiction. These are all real addictions, so it's really not surprising (to me at least) that there would be a classification for gaming too.

The WHO isn't calling gaming itself a disease, neither are they calling video games addictive, it's calling the disorder that comes with excessive gaming a disease. It's not a problem if

you clock in 4-8 hours of gameplay on the weekends or even daily. There are those who go beyond that timing, such as E-sportsmen, and they are not addicted either. It's their livelihood just like any other athlete. Dear worried parents, please take note.

If gaming stops a human being from functioning normally, like sleeping or eating or going to work/school, that's when it should raise concern. If they know that it's a problem but continue to do it anyway? Definitely is an issue, and it is then when gaming becomes just like any other addiction.

So I will say this again: the addiction itself is the problem, not the video game. And if defining the problem helps those addicted get help, then I'm all for it. ■

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