



A Resource to Help Raise Awareness of Healthy and Harmful Video Gaming

Facilitators' Manual

Kathryn Weiser, MHS (Health Promotion)

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PROJECT LEAD: Kathryn Weiser, Research Analyst, PGIO, CAMH

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Colleen Tessier, Senior Project Consultant, PGIO, CAMH

Dena Thomas, MPH Placement Student, PGIO, CAMH

Matt Donnelly, Website Administrator, PGIO, CAMH

Sylvia Hagopian, Manager of Communications and Online Services, PGIO, CAMH

Lisa Pont, Trainer/Therapist, PGIO, CAMH

Brenda Teasell, Trainer/Therapist, PGIO, CAMH

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PLEASE DIRECT ANY INQUIRIES OR COMMENTS TO:

Colleen.Tessier@camh.ca or Sylvia.Hagopian@camh.ca

Introduction

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH (CAMH)

CAMH is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, as well as one of the world's leading research centres in the area of addiction and mental health. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues. Visit: www.camh.ca

ABOUT THE PROBLEM GAMBLING INSTITUTE OF ONTARIO (PGIO)

PGIO Mission: Sharing Solutions. Changing Lives.

The PGIO at CAMH brings treatment professionals and leading researchers together with experts in communicating and sharing knowledge. Our focus is on collaboratively developing, modelling and sharing evidence-based solutions to gambling-related problems within Ontario and around the world.

Visit: www.ProblemGambling.ca.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AWARENESS PILOT INITIATIVE (CAPI)

CAPI was launched by the PGIO to identify resource needs among Ontario's problem gambling treatment providers and the community. Findings from needs assessments and system consultations pointed to a concern about the increasing number of youth/young adults engaged in excessive video gaming. Findings identified the need for an interactive tool for treatment providers who facilitate community awareness workshops for youth/young adults around video gaming. This pilot initiative resulted in the CAPI Planning Group, which consists of problem gambling treatment providers concerned about video gaming and interested in working collaboratively toward the development of *Soul Crush Story* and a facilitators' manual.

ABOUT SOUL CRUSH STORY AND THE FACILITATORS' MANUAL

Soul Crush Story was designed to be an engaging way to deliver health promotion messages related to video gaming. When the player tries to make a move in the game, an exaggerated "consequence" of the move takes place. The name *Soul Crush Story* is deliberately dramatic to draw attention to potential negative effects of video gaming. The game uses standard "hooks" that make people want to continue playing. The goals are to build the player's awareness of some of the ways that games manipulate behaviour, while encouraging open conversation about video gaming and the associated risks.

INTRODUCTION

Soul Crush Story presents the player with a series of in-game challenges. As with many video games, the challenges have been designed such that casual players can never achieve the highest goals. In *Soul Crush Story*, the player is presented with a number of “real life responsibilities.” If the player chooses to behave responsibly, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to “win the game.” In order to “win” the game and achieve the ultimate prize, players are advised to ignore any real life responsibility that comes up in the game that would distract them from accomplishing in-game goals.

The facilitators’ manual will help guide anyone interested in facilitating a workshop about video gaming with youth/young adults. In the manual you will find discussion questions, content and suggestions for activities, as well as additional information in the appendices to increase your understanding of healthy and harmful video gaming. This resource is designed to be flexible, whether you have 30 minutes, 60 minutes or half a day, select the content you’d like to use in whatever time you have available.

At the beginning of a workshop, a volunteer from the audience should be instructed to play the entire game, with no breaks, while others watch. The game will take approximately 10 minutes. We recommend you play *Soul Crush Story* on your own to become familiar with the features. The game is intended for those 18–25 but is suitable for all ages.

Preparing for an Awareness Workshop

RESOURCES FOR AWARENESS WORKSHOP

For *Soul Crush Story*:

- Computer
- LCD projector
- Screen/wall
- Internet access
- Link to game: <http://camh.agfh.ca>

For the awareness workshop:

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Prizes (e.g., chocolates)
- Pens
- Paper
- Container/basket
- Video Gaming Scenarios
- Handouts:
 - Gaming Overuse: Finding Help
 - Participant evaluation form



PREPARING FOR AN AWARENESS WORKSHOP

GROUP GUIDELINES

Facilitating a workshop with youth/young adults can be fun. Here are some guidelines to help create a positive and healthy learning environment for both the facilitator and participant:

- Dress casually.
- Be non-judgmental.
- Be somewhat informed about youth culture (e.g., music, sports, etc.).
- Be curious, open and interested in learning about your audience, such as their strengths, hobbies and interests.
- Create a safe environment by explaining the need to keep the conversation confidential and to be respectful and accepting of others in the group so everyone can feel comfortable.
- You may sense that for some participants excessive video gaming and/or gambling is a serious problem. Ensure that you provide your name and contact information to anyone who wants more support.
- Talk less and listen more, especially with youth/young adults.

Implementing the Awareness Workshop

INTRODUCTIONS

- Ask participants to set their phones on vibrate or lower the volume and ask them not to look at their devices during the workshop.
- Introduce yourself.
- Depending on the size or nature of the group, ask participants to introduce themselves.
- State workshop purpose: To raise awareness of healthy and harmful video gaming.
- Emphasize that ALL questions are welcome and no question is silly or stupid.
- Emphasize the importance of respecting differences.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Provide an overview of what you will be covering during the workshop.
- Introduce the key messages:
 - There are benefits and risks to video gaming.
 - Video gaming may be used to escape, cope with boredom and/or procrastinate.
 - Just like online gambling, video games can be difficult to walk away from.
 - Balancing responsibilities with video gaming is important for overall health.



IMPLEMENTING THE AWARENESS WORKSHOP

INTRODUCE *SOUL CRUSH STORY*

- *Soul Crush Story* was designed to be an engaging way to deliver health promotion messages related to video gaming.
- Let the audience know that when you try to make a move in the game there is an exaggerated “consequence” and that the design of the game is meant to be comedic.
- Remind the player and the audience to read pop-up text throughout the game.

PLAY *SOUL CRUSH STORY*

Option A:

- Select a volunteer from the audience to play the game.
- Ask the volunteer to play the game from start to finish without any breaks.
- Once the game is over begin the section titled “*Soul Crush Story* Debrief.”

Option B (suitable if you have more time):

- Split the audience into two teams.
- Ask for a volunteer from one team to play the game from start to finish without any breaks and then repeat with a volunteer from the second team.
- Ask team members to help make decisions throughout the game.
- Once the game is over begin the section titled “*Soul Crush Story* Debrief.”
- This option allows the two teams to compare their game experiences.

Soul Crush Story Debrief

OBJECTIVES

During this section, participants will learn about and discuss:

- the various reactions and experiences that resulted from playing and observing *Soul Crush Story*.

ESTIMATED SECTION TIME

- 10 minutes

FACILITATOR INFORMATION

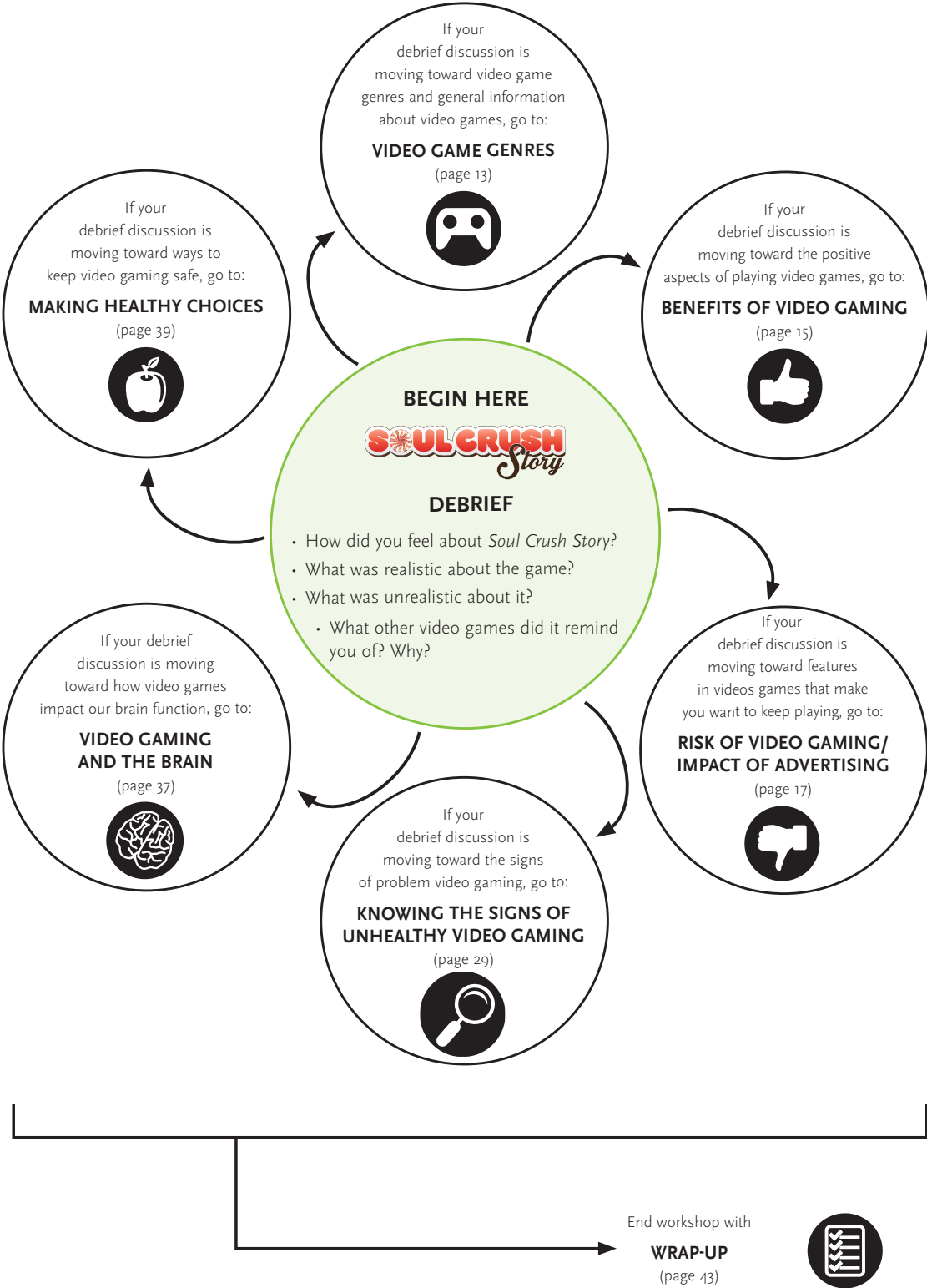
Everyone will have different reactions to *Soul Crush Story*. It is important to address the participant's experiences right after the game is finished. The game ends with a summary screen identifying what was addressed and neglected. You may choose to proceed through this manual in the order sections are presented or you may choose to determine the order of the sections based on where the debrief conversation naturally unfolds. Feedback from the game debrief will help you to determine which sections make sense to address next.

DEBRIEF MODEL INSTRUCTIONS

- See the Debrief Model on the next page.
- Begin by asking the questions in the middle circle.
- Depending on the direction of the conversation, move to the relevant circle on the outside, which represents a section of the manual.
- You may also move around the circle, clockwise, starting at the top, which is the order they appear in the manual.
- End your workshop with the Wrap-Up section.



DEBRIEF MODEL



Video Game Genres



OBJECTIVES

During this section, participants will learn about and discuss:

- video games participants play
- appealing video game features.

ESTIMATED SECTION TIME

- 10 minutes

FACILITATOR INFORMATION

This table highlights video game genres and provides examples of some popular games that participants may mention during this, and other, sections. Knowing the differences between video game genres will be helpful when facilitating this awareness workshop. *See Appendix A: Description of Common Video Gaming Genres.*

Common Video Game Genres	Examples
Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG or MMO)	<i>World of Warcraft (WoW), Guild Wars 2, Diablo 3, Dungeon Defender, Everquest, Final Fantasy XV, Neverwinter, Runescape</i>
First Person Shooter (FPS) Games	<i>Call of Duty, Halo, Team Fortress, Killzone, Half-life 2, Left 4 Dead, TitanFall, Rust</i>
Casual Video Games	<i>Candy Crush, Bejeweled, Peggle, World of Goo, Flappy Bird, Farmville, Angry Birds, Flow Free, Temple Run</i>
Action Games	<i>Grand Theft Auto, Devil May Cry, Metal Gear Solid, Uncharted, Fallout, Assassin's Greed, Max Payne 3, Hotline Miami, Bioshock, Dark Souls, Splinter Cell, Arkham Origins</i>
Real Time Strategy (RTS) Games	<i>Company of Heroes, Age of Empires, Command & Conquer, Starcraft 2, Civilization</i>
Sports	<i>NHL 2014, Madden, NFL 25 & 2014, FIFA World Cup Brazil</i>



VIDEO GAME GENRES

RESOURCES:

- Flip chart
- Markers

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

- Create three headings on flip chart paper
 - a. Game Genres
 - b. Video Games
 - c. Cool Factor.
- Ask participants to find a partner.
- Ask participants to introduce each other and to identify their favourite game genre, their favourite video game and one reason why they feel their favourite video game is cool.
- Ask for volunteer pairs to take turns introducing their partner and share their partner's answers with the group.
- Write down the participant responses to show the range of video game genres and video games played and the reasons why favourite games are cool.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What video game genre is *Soul Crush Story*?
 - Casual video game—match 3
2. What video game features in *Soul Crush Story* are in the video games you play (you may find it helpful to refer to the list of video game genres and video games on the flip chart)?
 - Some of the features in *Soul Crush Story* that are common to other video games include:
 - mimicking of activities featured on online gambling sites like slots
 - use of virtual currency
 - connection to Facebook
 - availability of expansion packs
 - gambling ads and product ads.

Benefits of Video Gaming



OBJECTIVES

During this section, participants will learn about and discuss:

- the benefits of video gaming.

ESTIMATED SECTION TIME

- 10 minutes

FACILITATOR INFORMATION

In order to remain neutral about video gaming, it is important to acknowledge that video games have positive benefits, as well as risks. Remember that this is an awareness session. Although you see clients impacted by problem video gaming, the goal of this workshop isn't clinical; it is to raise awareness of both healthy and unhealthy video gaming and to provide information on how to keep video gaming at safe levels.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

- Write the heading Benefits on flip chart paper.
- Ask participants to find a partner.
- In pairs, ask participants to identify two benefits of video gaming.
- Ask for volunteer pairs to share their answers with the group.
- Write down the participant responses to show the range of benefits derived from video gaming.

RESOURCES:

- Flip chart
- Markers

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some other benefits associated with video gaming?
 - It is pleasurable, entertaining and is a “way of relaxation, stepping out of the daily routine and enjoying something distinct from everyday life” (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).
 - It can help you develop skills in math, reading, memory, concentration and problem solving.
 - It increases self-confidence and self-esteem when you master you the game (Griffiths, 2010a).



BENEFITS OF VIDEO GAMING

- Games can be a source of positive emotions, including empowerment, mastery, immersion, control, recognition, reward, excitement, challenge (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).
- They can provide temporary relief and assist with coping through/with undesired emotions, including stress, fear, boredom, real-life failure and trauma.
- They can aid identity development.
- They can connect you with members of communities (e.g., LGBTQ).
- They can allow you to develop new online friendships (Griffiths, 2010a).
- Games that include characters caring for each other and helping each other in non-violent ways (e.g., prosocial games) have the potential to increase empathy, co-operation, helping and emotional awareness (Gentile et al., 2009).

Risks of Video Gaming and the Impact of Advertising



OBJECTIVES

During this section, participants will learn about and discuss:

- the risks of video gaming, including potentially problematic video gaming features
- the similarities between video games and online gambling
- the potential impacts of advertising.

ESTIMATED SECTION TIME

- 20 minutes

FACILITATOR INFORMATION

Any time you discuss potential risks associated with video gaming, it is appropriate to suggest strategies to balance video gaming with life responsibilities. We also provide a section on tips to lead a balanced life.

This section covers the reasons video games can be potentially problematic for some people. (See *Appendix B: Why Are Video Games Addictive?*) It is important to note that mental health issues, including ADD, ADHD, depression, generalized anxiety disorder and social phobia, can be a risk factor for problem video gaming as well as being an accompanying condition (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012; Gentile et al., 2011; Király et al., 2014).

If you would like to know about video game ratings see *Appendix C: Entertainment Software Ratings Board Symbols*.

LEARNING ELEMENT FEATURES

The following *Soul Crush Story* screenshots illustrate examples of features in the game, and other games, that can lead to unhealthy levels of gaming. See Appendix B for more information on why video games can be addictive.





RISKS OF VIDEO GAMING AND THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

<p>Social connections</p>	
<p>In-game currency</p>	
<p>Limited time offers</p>	
<p>Gathering and hoarding</p>	



<p>Simulated gambling</p>	
<p>Characters class</p>	
<p>Personal profile</p>	
<p>Micro-transactions</p>	



RISKS OF VIDEO GAMING AND THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

In-game advertising	
Game energy	
In-game challenges	

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

RESOURCES:

- Paper
- Pens
- Prizes (such as chocolate)

- Break into teams of two or three.
- Ask teams to identify two features in *Soul Crush Story* that could be problematic for some players and why.
- Ask one team member to raise their hand when they are finished.
- First team to identify two potentially problematic *Soul Crush Story* features wins a prize.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

There are features in video games that can be problematic for some players. Being aware of these features is important for video gaming in a healthy way.

1. In *Soul Crush Story*, you can pay \$0.99 to buy energy. What other *Soul Crush Story* features could lead a player to extreme levels of play and emotional attachments?
 - in-game rewards based on a levelling system
 - in-game currency
 - rewards set on variable schedules
 - the appeal to natural human instincts of gathering and hoarding (e.g., the Collectables button)
 - the appeal of making social connections that could lead to anger and putting players down
2. What are some potential risks of playing video games in general?
 - Video gaming is often used to cope, avoid or escape from negative emotions (e.g., stress, fear, boredom or real life failure) (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).
 - It can lead to peer pressure and bullying from virtual friends.
 - It can expose players to violent content.
 - Players may experience inability to stop gaming, craving more and more game time, and irritability when not playing (Wong & Hodgins, 2013) and excessive gaming.
 - Gaming can lead to lying to employers and family about activities and problems with school/job (Wong & Hodgins, 2013).
 - It can lead to neglect of family and friends (Wong & Hodgins, 2013) and lack of real-life relationships (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).
 - It can cause loss of money.
 - It can lead to feeling empty and depressed (Wong & Hodgins, 2013) and to loneliness.



RISKS OF VIDEO GAMING AND THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

- It can cause some people to have physical problems, including carpal tunnel syndrome, dry eyes, headaches, backaches, eating irregularities, neglecting hygiene and sleep disturbances (Wong & Hodgins, 2013).
 - It can lead to aggressive behaviour and hostility (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).
 - It can lead to increased thoughts of committing suicide (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).
3. Compared with other video games, online role-playing games generate more varied and stronger emotions in players. What MMORPG features can lead to extreme levels of play and emotional attachments?
- There is no end to the game.
 - Games encourage play and collaboration with players worldwide.
 - Team play is required to advance.
 - The virtual world continues to evolve even if the player is not online.
 - There are regular releases of upgrades or expansion packs.
 - Top players or teams can earn real-world rewards (e.g., tournaments for cash prizes).
 - There is no reward for short and unscheduled periods of play.
 - MMORPGs offer a more fully realized virtual world than other video game genres.
 - MMORPGs and some other games typically require monthly fees.
 - MMORPGs often operate on an “avoidance schedule”—if a player is not gaming daily, his/her virtual world may deteriorate due to a lack of attention and resource management.
 - After players are invested in the game, major tasks and missions (“raids”) become much longer (sometimes requiring hours for a single mission) (Conrad, 2011).
 - There is a team obligation to play longer than desired (e.g., responsibility to other members).



4. What online slot machine features and characteristics are also present in video games that could be problematic for some people?
- Many features/characteristics found in online slot machines are in MMORPGs and social media games, blurring the lines between gaming and gambling. For example:
 - high resolution graphics, lights and sound bites
 - potential/perception of “near misses”
 - availability 24/7 and ability to play in the comfort and privacy of home
 - fixed and variable reinforcement schedule of in-game rewards, bonuses (virtual credits) and/or extended game play for correct/skillful play (Griffiths, 2013)
 - players can experience feelings of escape and immersion (King et al., 2010a)
 - losing money.



RISKS OF VIDEO GAMING AND THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

FACILITATOR INFORMATION

The next set of questions focus on the impact of advertising. Choose one or more of these Group Polls as an ice-breaker to begin discussion.

Group Poll: How many of you lined up to purchase a video game the night before or in the morning before it went on sale?

- If more than half raised their hands emphasize that we are all impacted by advertising!
- The video game sector is the fastest growing entertainment industry and second only to music in profitability!

Group Poll: How much money did *Grand Theft Auto V* make in the first 24 hours of being on sale?

- GTA V made over \$1 billion in sales, with \$800 million in sales in its first 24 hours (Kain, 2013). The second biggest video game sales came from *Call of Duty: Black Ops*. *Grand Theft Auto* sales surpassed the three biggest film launches of all time—*The Avengers*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*, and *Avatar*—by 16 days (Kain, 2013).

Group Poll: Has anyone here accepted a request from a friend to play a video game on Facebook or “liked” a store or brand page on Facebook?

- By “liking” a page, you have provided marketing with a lot of information about yourself.
- It is hard to avoid the impact of marketing and advertising in today’s wired world.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What features in *Soul Crush Story* and in other games make us want to buy and play video games?
 - The way the gaming industry advertises and markets video games plays a key role in our desire to buy and play games. Examples include:
 - use of animated graphics and popular celebrities, which can be attractive for some people (Derevensky et al., 2013)
 - setting up a profile, which allows game developers access to personal information (a feature of *Soul Crush Story*)
 - sending requests to friends to play games in social media sites (a feature of *Soul Crush Story*)
 - persistent pop-up banner ads (a feature of *Soul Crush Story*)
 - personalized game play incentives (i.e., based on your game performance).
2. Social media are increasingly being used to advertise gambling. In *Soul Crush Story*, we saw a gambling ad. How might this be a concern?
 - Gambling ads within social media can trigger those with gambling concerns who are at risk for gambling problems (Derevensky et al., 2010).
 - These ads portray gambling to be a common and harmless form of entertainment.
 - Gambling operators are capitalizing on the popularity of social media to promote their products and target potential customers (Derevensky et al., 2013).
3. Today's video games provide "realistic and sophisticated simulated gambling activities" (King et al., 2012). What are some potential concerns among youth, young adults and others who play simulated casino games on free sites using virtual currency?
 - There is increasing availability of online gambling and "gambling-like activities" (simulations of gambling activities that provide players



RISKS OF VIDEO GAMING AND THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

- with opportunities to practise or become more familiar with gambling activities without spending real money) on smartphones, social media sites and video gaming technology.
- Simulated casino games via Facebook are just one example where a player can participate on free practice sites of online casinos and access casino-type games with virtual bankrolls (Gupta & Derevensky, 2014; Derevensky et al., 2013; King et al., 2012).
 - Compared to paid online casino games, it is easier to win on free practice sites (King et al., 2010b), which may lead to unrealistic expectations about winning and can lead some people to want to gamble with real money.
 - Simulated casino games provide exposure to excitement and gambling wins, including bonuses and jackpots.
 - These free sites can lead to greater familiarity with gambling, positive impressions of gambling and acceptance of gambling as normal entertainment (Gupta & Derevensky, 2014).
 - Merging gambling and social media may increase the chances of youth developing an interest in gambling at a younger age (King et al., 2014).
 - This could lead to motivating participation and/or encourage transitioning to gambling for real money (Derevensky et al., 2013; Griffiths, 2013) and to the potential to develop gambling problems (Gainsbury & Derevensky, 2013).
4. Competitive gaming leagues have led some players to dream of becoming a professional player. What do you think of young people today dreaming of becoming a professional video game player or poker player, and the way the gaming industry glamorizes professional players and tournaments in the media?
- Endorsements, prizes and monetary rewards are highly motivating and encourage players to spend massive amounts of time honing their skills as a player in the world of “esport” akin to a professional athlete (Conrad, 2011).



- Through effective marketing and advertising, the gaming industry can make it look easy to become a professional player. How many hockey players actually make it to the NHL? The chances are just as low for professional video game players and poker players.

KEY MESSAGES

- There are benefits and risks to video gaming.
- Video gaming may be used to escape, cope with boredom and/or procrastinate.
- Just like online gambling, video games can be difficult to walk away from.
- Balancing responsibilities with video gaming is important for overall health.

Knowing the Signs of Unhealthy Video Gaming



OBJECTIVES

During this section, participants will learn about and discuss:

- psychological signs of unhealthy video gaming
- physical signs of unhealthy video gaming
- behavioural signs of unhealthy video gaming
- relationship signs of unhealthy video gaming.

ESTIMATED SECTION TIME

- 15 minutes (2 discussion questions)
- 30 minutes (4 discussion questions)

FACILITATOR INFORMATION

For the discussion questions on psychological, physical, behavioural and relationship signs, it is important to note that a person can have a problem without having all of these signs; displaying only one or two signs can still indicate a problem.

The discussion content on the signs of unhealthy video gaming was adapted with permission from *How to Help Children Addicted to Video Games—The Guide for Parents* (Conrad, 2011).

For additional information, see *Appendix D: What Is Video Gaming Addiction?* and *Appendix E: Signs of a Video Gaming Problem*.

PROBLEM VIDEO GAMING FACT

About 105,600 (10.3%) Ontario students in grades 7–12 have a video gaming problem. Of these, 88,400 are males and 17,200 are females (Boak et al., 2014). The number of students in Ontario with video gaming problems is equivalent to about **6** Air Canada Centres filled to capacity at a Toronto Maple Leafs hockey game.





KNOWING THE SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY VIDEO GAMING

LEARNING ELEMENT FEATURES

Soul Crush Story contains choices to illustrate signs of unhealthy video gaming. The choices fall under the five categories listed below. There are three possible choices for each category. For each game play, the player will be presented with one choice from each category. Below is an example of a choice from each category.

<p>Mental health</p>	<p>The screenshot shows the game interface with 105 coins and 5158 points. The choice is titled "Gaming Is Life" and includes the text: "All I look forward to in my life right now is playing Soul Crush." Below this are two buttons: "Maybe I should tell Andrew how sad I've been feeling lately." and "Playing the game is a good escape for me."</p>
<p>Physical health</p>	<p>The screenshot shows the game interface with 132 coins and 7015 points. The choice is titled "Trouble Sleeping" and includes the text: "It's so hard to fall asleep at night. My mind races thinking about the game and how I can play better tomorrow." Below this are two buttons: "I'm going to fall behind in the game, but I better get some sleep." and "No problem, I'll sleep during first period tomorrow."</p>
<p>Academic responsibilities</p>	<p>The screenshot shows the game interface with 120 coins and 6430 points. The choice is titled "I Should Be Asleep" and includes the text: "It's 3 a.m. and I've got an 8 a.m. class today." Below this are two buttons: "Bedtime for me. I'm never signing up for anything before noon again." and "I'll sleep through it and get the notes from someone. I'm so close to winning!"</p>



<p>Personal responsibilities</p>	
<p>Social responsibilities</p>	

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

Explain that video gaming problems occur along a continuum. These are not discrete categories but possible points along a range of involvement.



- Mark one end of the room as the green zone (No video gaming / Casual social video gaming), the middle of the room as the orange zone (Serious social video gaming) and the other end of the room as the red zone (Harmful/pathological video gaming).
 1. Photocopy, cut out and fold individual scenarios (you may have the same scenario twice or more). (See *Appendix F: Problem Video Gaming Continuum Scenarios*.)
 2. Place them in a container or basket.

RESOURCES:

- Coloured signs
- Container/ basket
- Case scenarios



KNOWING THE SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY VIDEO GAMING

3. Depending on the number of participants, ask individuals, pairs or small groups to pick one scenario.
4. Ask them to go the colour that best represents their scenario.
5. Ask one volunteer in each zone to read their scenario and state why they felt it was in the zone they selected.

PROBLEM VIDEO GAMING FACT

8.5% of American youth ages 8–18 have problems associated with video gaming, with higher rates among males (Gentile et al., 2011).



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

There are four questions addressing how problem video gaming impacts psychological health, physical health, behavioural health and relationship health. Depending on your timing, you may want to focus on one or two questions. Alternatively, you can go through all four questions but limit the content in (b) to just a few points.

1. An awareness of the mental health signs of problem video gaming can help us recognize when video gaming is becoming a problem.
 - a. What mental health signs of problem video gaming did you notice in *Soul Crush Story*?
 - having a hard time stopping game play
 - playing video games to cope with sadness and stress
 - b. What other mental health signs might you notice if a friend has a problem with video gaming? (Conrad, 2011)
 - decreased interest in school, homework and academic achievement
 - distorted perception of time
 - great difficulty abstaining from video games for an extended period of time
 - extreme sadness/depression
 - loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed



- anger when not allowed to play
 - depression or anxiety when access to the game is limited
 - thinking about the game when involved in other activities
 - arguing about the negative impact of excessive play and downplaying the seriousness of the problem
 - feeling excessive responsibility to a guild, clan or online team
 - feeling guilty or regretful after long sessions of gaming (more common among older teens)
 - thinking of committing suicide or attempting suicide
2. An awareness of some of the physical health signs of problem video gaming can help us recognize when video gaming is becoming a problem.
- a. What physical health signs of problem video gaming did you notice in *Soul Crush Story*?
- sleep difficulties or significant changes in sleep schedules
 - decreased attention to personal hygiene
 - backaches and headaches
- b. What other physical health signs might you notice if a friend has a problem with video gaming? (Conrad, 2011)
- poor or irregular eating habits
 - dry eyes, sore fingers, sore neck
 - decreased levels of physical health
3. An awareness of some of the behavioural signs of problem video gaming can help us recognize when video gaming is becoming a problem.
- a. What behavioural signs of problem video gaming did you notice in *Soul Crush Story*?
- less effort placed on homework and studying
 - decreased academic performance



KNOWING THE SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY VIDEO GAMING

- b. What other behavioural signs might you notice if a friend has a problem with video gaming? (Conrad, 2011)
 - neglecting other responsibilities (e.g., job, chores) in order to keep gaming
 - spending large amounts of allowance or income from a job on gaming accessories, expansion packs, micro transactions and computer upgrades
 - spending more and more time gaming
 - attempting to play at the first available opportunity
 - inability to quit despite wanting to
 - when not playing, spending time learning about the game, discussing the game with fellow players or writing about the game

PROBLEM VIDEO GAMING FACT

About 5.4% of Montreal college males and 0.9% of Montreal college females have problems with video games (Derevensky, 2014). It is likely that similar rates would be found among Ontario university/college students.



4. An awareness of some of the relationship signs of problem video gaming can help us recognize when video gaming is becoming a problem.
 - a. What relationship signs of problem video gaming did you notice in *Soul Crush Story*?
 - a greater desire to play video games than go out socially with friends
 - not spending time with girlfriend/boyfriend
 - people starting to express concern about the player's gaming
 - b. What other relationship signs might you notice if a friend has a problem with video gaming? (Conrad, 2011)

KNOWING THE SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY VIDEO GAMING



- time spent with parents or offline friends replaced by time with gaming and online friends
- when others you trust and respect begin to notice problems
- when confronted about habits, blaming others for excessive play
- problems with spouse and/or parents and friends and/or girlfriend/boyfriend

KEY MESSAGES

- There are benefits and risks to video gaming.
- Video gaming may be used to escape, cope with boredom and/or procrastinate.
- Just like online gambling, video games can be difficult to walk away from.
- Balancing responsibilities with video gaming is important for overall health.

Video Gaming and the Brain



OBJECTIVES

During this section, participants will learn about and discuss:

- the impact of video gaming on the brain.

ESTIMATED SECTION TIME

- 10 minutes

FACILITATOR INFORMATION

Similar to problem gambling and other behavioural addictions, problem video gaming is the consequence of many factors. One of these factors is neurobiological (Király et al., 2014). Even though brain imaging is the latest area of behavioural addictions research and, as such, is still in its infancy (Király et al., 2014), it is useful to educate your audience about how the brain can play a role in problem video gaming.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

- In pairs, discuss and write down two activities that may lead to the same feeling you get when you are playing video games.
- Ask pairs to share answers with the larger group.

RESOURCES:

- Pens
- Paper

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Video games can have both positive and negative impacts on our brains. They can improve memory, concentration and problem-solving skills, but they can also impact the brain in unhealthy ways.

1. How many of you start video gaming thinking that you are going to only play for an hour and end up spending more time playing than anticipated? Why is it hard to walk away from video gaming?
 - Certain features in today's games can make video gaming hard to walk away from. In *Soul Crush Story*, these features include achievements, rewards Friendface status, early big wins and freebies.
 - Similar to the adrenaline rush of skateboarding, downhill skiing and other higher-risk activities, video game players show an increased release of the mood-regulating chemicals dopamine and glutamate in the brain.



VIDEO GAMING AND THE BRAIN

- These chemicals are associated with highly rewarding, stimulating and motivating activity (Dename, 2013).
- Eventually, the release of brain chemicals reaches a threshold in the brain where a higher amount is required to experience the rewarding effects (Dename, 2013).
- The brain becomes desensitized and the individual may seek more of the addictive source or behaviour (Dename, 2013).
- “Internet gaming addicts’ brains react to video game signals the same way that substance abusers brains react to rewards associated with substance-related addictions” (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).

KEY MESSAGES

- There are benefits and risks to video gaming.
- Just like online gambling, video games can be difficult to walk away from.
- Balancing responsibilities with video gaming is important for overall health.



Making Healthy Choices: Life Balance

OBJECTIVES

During this section, participants will learn about and discuss:

- the definition and examples of harm reduction
- video gaming harm reduction strategies
- strategies to balance responsibilities with video gaming

LEARNING ELEMENT FEATURES

Soul Crush Story contains choices to illustrate life balance. There are three possible choices for this category. For each game play, the player will be presented with one choice. Below is an example of a choice from this category.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

- Tell participants that rather than stopping a harmful activity, harm reduction strategies provide a range of options that reduce the harms the activity may have, both for those involved in the activity and their family/friends and surrounding communities. Examples include HPV vaccine programs in high schools, providing information on how to reduce risk of harms associated with drug use, and wearing sunscreen.
- Ask the participants to find a partner.
- On a flip chart, write the heading “*Soul Crush Story* Harm Reduction Strategies.”
- Ask participants to write down one harm reduction strategy that they identified in *Soul Crush Story*.

RESOURCES:

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Pens
- Paper



MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES: LIFE BALANCE

- Ask participants to share answers with the group.
- Generate a list on a flipchart.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some other harm reduction strategies that can help people keep gaming healthy and avoid extreme levels of play and emotional attachments?
 - Set priorities (e.g., homework before gaming).
 - Turn off the computer/smartphones at a certain time each night.
 - Lead a balanced life with limits around the use of video gaming (e.g., take part in “offline” activities such as sports and in-person get togethers with family and friends).
 - Limit the number of hours you play video games.
 - Keep tech devices in a “depot area” in your home and away from your bedroom at night.
 - Program your home wi-fi to only be on at certain hours.
 - Stand up, stretch and/or take breaks from tech every 30–60 minutes.
 - Don’t eat in front of your computer/device.
 - Have tech-free days—challenge yourself to a “media fast”.
 - Set an alarm to go off after a certain amounts of time online.
 - Play games that have less of an addictive quality, especially ones that have a definite end.
 - Pay attention to how much time you are spending online and what you are doing online.
 - Listen to others who may recognize the problem first and know when to ask for help.
 - Be aware of things that might trigger you (e.g., tell your friends not to discuss game play).
 - Maintain a log of daily video game play and take notes on thoughts and emotions while playing and not playing: note how much time you game without any satisfaction.



- Understand the role that irrational thoughts play in excessive game play. For example, overuse may lead a player to be preoccupied with global game ranking and thus believe that, despite the odds, they can beat all other players. This is the same as problem gamblers believing they are able to beat the casino, which is against all odds (King et al., 2010c).
2. How would you help a friend who you thought was gaming too much?
- Ask about it and express concern.
 - Ask them how they are doing and if they want to talk about it.
 - Ask if they are concerned about it or are having some problems (e.g., academic problems).
 - Encourage them to talk to someone they trust, like a teacher, school social worker, guidance counsellor or doctor, or tell them to call Kids Help Phone (depending on your audience).

KEY MESSAGES

- There are benefits and risks to video gaming.
- Video gaming may be used to escape, cope with boredom and/or procrastinate.
- Just like online gambling, video games can be difficult to walk away from.
- Balancing responsibilities with video gaming is important for overall health.



CONCLUDING STEPS

- Let the participants know that if they, or someone they know, have problems with video gaming and/or gambling, they can contact you (provide your contact information and any other local services that provide help for gaming and gambling).
- Stick around for a bit in case anyone wants to approach you with questions/concerns.
- Distribute “Gaming Overuse: Finding Help.”
- Distribute and collect the evaluation form.

REVIEW KEY MESSAGES

- There are benefits and risks to video gaming.
- Video gaming may be used to escape, cope with boredom and/or procrastinate.
- Just like online gambling, video games can be difficult to walk away from.
- Balancing responsibilities with video gaming is important for overall health.

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Appendix A: Description of Common Video Gaming Genres

Game Genre	Description
<p>Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG or MMO)</p>	<p>A web browser game involving multiple players who interact collaboratively and competitively with each other within a virtual environment. MMORPGs are mostly played on computers and gaming consoles including PS4, Xbox One and Wii. Players choose and customize characters (avatars). The customization process is limitless and credited as being a primary part of the addictive nature of this genre. Players invest money (or virtual credits) as well as time from game play to “level up” their character. The virtual gaming environment continues to evolve even if the player is offline/away from the game. MMORPGs can be free or subscription-based. They are accessible 24/7. Examples include <i>World of Warcraft</i>, <i>Guild Wars 2</i>, <i>Diablo</i>, <i>Dungeon Defender</i> and <i>EverQuest</i>.</p>
<p>First-person shooter (FPS) games</p>	<p>FPS games are similar to MMO games in that players can participate in kill-or-be-killed tournament-style game play with international competitors via online servers. Online versions of games can be free or subscription-based. FPS games are mostly played on computers and gaming consoles, including PS4, Xbox One and Wii. Players choose and customize characters (avatars). The customization process is limitless and credited as being a primary part of the addictive nature of this genre. Players will invest money (or virtual credits) as well as time from game play to “level up” their character. The levelling up process typically involves equipping an avatar with preferred weaponry. The genre is popular with young males. Players interact with the game from a first-person perspective, and typically only the character’s guns (or hands if weaponless) are visible. Examples include <i>Call of Duty</i>, <i>Halo</i>, <i>Team Fortress</i> and <i>Killzone</i>.</p>



APPENDIX A

Game Genre	Description
Casual video games	<p>Also referred to as social games, this genre is commonly found on social media platforms, including Facebook, although games do not require online access. Online versions of games can be free or subscription-based. Casual video games are mostly played on computers and portable media devices (i.e., handhelds, smartphones and tablets) but can also be accessed through gaming consoles, including PS4, Xbox One and Wii. Games within this genre require less of a time commitment from the player compared to FPS and MMO games although they can be equally compelling and addictive. Strategies for success in game play are obtained primarily through trial and error. Players can level up in a short period of time yet often continue playing beyond expected time frames because of the time already invested and near misses. Games of this genre are credited as being used to procrastinate (Conrad, 2011). Examples include <i>Candy Crush</i>, <i>Bejeweled</i>, <i>Peggle</i> and <i>World of Goo</i>.</p>
Action games	<p>Action games typically involve a single player assuming a predefined avatar and navigating within the virtual environment to achieve set objectives. The player interacts with the game from a third-person perspective. Levelling up often follows defeating a large boss/enemy using skill sets involving hand–eye coordination and reaction time learned through previous game play. Each successive level becomes increasingly more challenging. The genre includes diverse subgenres such as fighting games, shooter games and platform games, though some real-time strategy games are also considered to be action games. Action games can be accessed via computers, portable media devices (i.e., handhelds, smartphones and tablets) and consoles, including PS4, Xbox One and Wii. Although these games historically have been single-player games with predefined endings, new formats involve multiplayer online components and continuous game play with no predefined</p>

Game Genre	Description
Action games (cont.)	endings (Conrad, 2011). Examples include <i>Grand Theft Auto</i> , <i>Devil May Cry</i> , <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> , <i>Uncharted</i> , <i>Fallout</i> and <i>Assassin's Creed</i> .
Real-time strategy (RTS) games	RTS games involve gathering resources, building bases and manoeuvring units to defeat competitors and achieve in-game missions. RTS games can be accessed via computers, portable media devices (i.e., handhelds, smartphones and tablets) and gaming consoles, including PS4, Xbox One and Wii. They can be played offline but are often played on online platforms, which reportedly add “elements of unpredictability and emotion—which keep the player coming back for the unique experience” (Conrad, 2011). Examples include <i>Company of Heroes</i> , <i>Age of Empires</i> and <i>Command & Conquer</i> .
Sports	A popular genre among young adult males, sports games represent all major professional sports franchises. Players can customize individual team players, teams and in-game rules. General manager modes allow players to make trades, sign free agents and build the player’s reputation. Game play may involve single match, regular season, tournament and playoff scenarios. Customization of teams and playing in seasonal mode can be time consuming. Players may play on or offline through computers, tablets and gaming consoles, including PS4, Xbox One and Wii. Examples include <i>NHL 2010</i> , <i>Madden NFL</i> , <i>FIFA Soccer</i> and <i>Fight Night</i> .

Adapted with permission from Dr. Brent Conrad: Conrad, B. (2011). *How to Help Children Addicted to Video Games—The Guide for Parents*. Halifax, NS, www.TechAddiction.ca.

Appendix B:

Why Are Video Games Addictive?

In-game rewards are based on a levelling system. When starting an MMORPG, a player's character begins with basic qualities with regard to strength, powers, etc. Initially, it takes little play to reach the next level and gain new skills. This is immediately rewarding and reinforces continued play. However, each successive level takes more time, eventually taking weeks or months to level up. By this time, the player has gradually adjusted and accepted the greater effort required to reach the next level. If the first levels took a full month rather than several minutes, would you find this rewarding enough to continue?

No end to the game. Unlike other types of games, an MMORPG has no ultimate goal or point at which a player can say, "I'm finished. I have completed every quest. There is nothing new to discover." As such, there is never the experience of Game Over. Although some games with a levelling system have a maximum possible level, there may be elaborate endgames that are even more time consuming than the levelling section that preceded them. The games that are harder to walk away from have no end.

The appeal of making social connections. While many video games are solitary activities, MMORPGs encourage and require that players interact socially with each other, which feeds the universal human need for interpersonal connections. For some players, these connections can come at the cost of real-world relationships.

MMORPGs encourage play and collaboration with players worldwide. The fact that two users on opposite sides of the world can interact and join together in a common quest adds to the excitement of MMORPGs.

In-game currency. The same goals and emotions that motivate people to pursue wealth in real life are also present in video games such as MMORPGs. As a player accumulates more virtual wealth (by spending more time playing and completing tasks), the virtual wealth translates into, for example, greater power, control and status. These are very seductive pursuits.

MMORPGs almost always require team play to advance. A player starting a new game will initially be able accomplish goals alone. Significant

APPENDIX B

advancement in the game requires the player to join a group to accomplish goals together. The player will come to feel connected to the team and responsible for advancing their goals. Therefore, the player will want to advance his character even more so that he can make a greater contribution to the team. If the player does not keep up with the team, they may not be able to join in on certain quests or travel to parts of the world requiring a more advanced character. Finally, since many tasks can only be accomplished in a group, the player will want to be online whenever his teammates are playing (which translates into more total hours online).

Rewards are often set on variable schedules. Variable ratio (reinforced after an average number of attempts) or variable interval schedules (reinforced after an average time period has elapsed) produce a steady rate of responding and are quite difficult to extinguish (e.g., slot machines use variable ratio schedules to encourage maximum play time). In an MMORPG, a player may be rewarded on average for every five tasks completed. Sometimes it will take only one try while other times it may take 15. The player never really knows how long it will take before the big reward comes, but they know that if they play long enough it will come eventually. This type of reward schedule encourages longer periods of play even in the absence of rewards.

The virtual world continues to evolve even if the player is not online. When not playing and active in the developments of the online world, the player can potentially be left behind when rejoining. To avoid “missing” something the player must play as much as possible and be online at every opportunity.

Companies **regularly release upgrades or expansion packs.** Expansion packs can always add new areas for exploration, new abilities to try, new tasks to complete and new characters to develop.

Top players or teams can **earn real-world rewards** (e.g., tournaments for cash prizes). This can be extremely motivating and can encourage massive amounts of time to hone and develop skills (the equivalent of an athlete training for the Olympics). Some players also build up characters so that they can later be sold for profit. It takes little money to do this, but potentially hundreds of hours of game time.

MMORPGs do not reward short and unscheduled periods of play. The very structure of this type of video game is not “pick up and play.” These games require long-term commitments (months or years) of regular gaming sessions lasting at least an hour or more. They appeal to hard-core players who invest a significant portion of their free time in the experience. As a result of the great investment (e.g., months developing a character), it becomes very hard to “throw away” all the work and walk away from the game.

MMO games offer a more fully realized virtual world than other video game genres. Players can create their own characters with attributes they may wish they had in real life. They form relationships, develop careers and accomplish things that would be impossible (or require far more effort) in the real world. More than other games, MMORPGs offer an escape from the reality of the physical world and a retreat into a digital universe where players can assume any identity they desire.

MMORPGs and some other games typically require monthly fees. In order to play, players must pay \$15 to \$20 per month even after the game has been purchased. Of course, the fact that there is a regular monthly charge encourages users to play so that they get their money’s worth.

Compared to more traditional video games, **online role-playing games generate more varied and stronger emotions in players.** Because the world and the online experience is mostly user generated, players can experience wars, betrayal, friendship, romance, marriages, funerals, etc. The variety and intensity of emotions experienced online can be similar to emotions experienced in the real world, which is yet another very effective hook for excessive play. Online life can become a substitute for experiencing these emotions in the real world.

MMORPGs often operate on an avoidance schedule. For games that are not played online, or online games that are not part of an evolving game world, when the player is not gaming there are no negative in-game consequences when the player resumes. However, the online universe of an MMO continues to evolve 24 hours per day, regardless of whether a particular player is active. If the player is not gaming daily, their virtual world may deteriorate due to a lack of attention and resource management. For example, in *Ultima Online*, a player’s residence will

start to decay without regular visits. MMO gaming can be reinforced not only by rewards, but also by avoiding punishment.

MMOs are designed to appeal to natural human instincts of gathering and hoarding. Even if we do not have massive collections of items, most people can identify with just how hard it can be to throw things out and purge ourselves of household clutter. This is a natural human tendency and one that is exploited in MMOs through achievements (small rewards for relatively mindless and often very repetitive tasks) and grinding (an MMO term used to describe completing an easy but repetitive task, sometimes for hours at a time) to level up.

After players are invested in the game, major tasks and missions (raids) become much longer (sometimes requiring hours for a single mission). Additionally, if the player quits during these missions, all progress is typically lost. A similar technique is to place “save points” very far apart, thus requiring extended play sessions if a player doesn’t want to lose their progress. These techniques are designed to ensure that the motivation to continue playing once started is very strong.








Video games can (artificially) fill a void in an unfulfilling life. If someone lacks autonomy, complexity and rewards for effort in real life, they may turn to video games to fulfill these needs.

Adapted with permission from Dr. Brent Conrad: Conrad, B. (2011). How to Help Children Addicted to Video Games—The Guide for Parents. Halifax, NS, www.TechAddiction.ca.

Appendix C:

Entertainment Software Ratings Board Symbols

To take full advantage of the ESRB rating system, it is important to check both the rating symbol (on the front of the box) and the content descriptors (on the back). Visit www.esrb.org/index-js.jsp for further information.

	<p>EARLY CHILDHOOD</p> <p>Titles rated EC (Early Childhood) have content that may be suitable for ages 3 and older. Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.</p>
	<p>EVERYONE</p> <p>Titles rated E (Everyone) have content that may be suitable for ages 6 and older. Titles in this category may contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.</p>
	<p>EVERYONE 10+</p> <p>Titles rated E10+ (Everyone 10 and older) have content that may be suitable for ages 10 and older. Titles in this category may contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes.</p>
	<p>TEEN</p> <p>Titles rated T (Teen) have content that may be suitable for ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling and/or infrequent use of strong language.</p>
	<p>MATURE</p> <p>Titles rated M (Mature) have content that may be suitable for persons 17 and older. Titles in this category may contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language.</p>
	<p>ADULTS ONLY</p> <p>Titles rated AO (Adults Only) have content that should only be played by persons 18 years and older. Titles in this category may include prolonged scenes of intense violence and/or graphic sexual content and nudity.</p>
	<p>RATING PENDING</p> <p>Titles designated as RP (Rating Pending) have not yet been assigned a final ESRB rating. This icon appears only in advertising, marketing and promotional materials related to a game that is expected to carry an ESRB rating. The RP is replaced by a game's rating once it has been assigned.</p>

ESRB CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

Alcohol Reference: Reference to and/or images of alcoholic beverages.

Animated Blood: Discolored and/or unrealistic depictions of blood.

Blood: Depictions of blood.

Blood and Gore: Depictions of blood or the mutilation of body parts.

Cartoon Violence: Violent actions involving cartoon-like situations and characters. May include violence where a character is unharmed after the action has been inflicted.

Comic Mischief: Depictions or dialogue involving slapstick or suggestive humor.

Crude Humor: Depictions or dialogue involving vulgar antics, including “bathroom” humor.

Drug Reference: Reference to and/or images of illegal drugs.

Fantasy Violence: Violent actions of a fantasy nature, involving human or non-human characters in situations easily distinguishable from real life.

Intense Violence: Graphic and realistic-looking depictions of physical conflict. May involve extreme and/or realistic blood, gore, weapons and depictions of human injury and death.

Language: Mild to moderate use of profanity.

Lyrics: Mild references to profanity, sexuality, violence, alcohol or drug use in music.

Mature Humor: Depictions or dialogue involving “adult” humor, including sexual references.

Nudity: Graphic or prolonged depictions of nudity.

Partial Nudity: Brief and/or mild depictions of nudity.

Real Gambling: Player can gamble, including betting or wagering real cash or currency.

Sexual Content: Non-explicit depictions of sexual behaviour, possibly including partial nudity.

Sexual Themes: References to sex or sexuality.

Sexual Violence: Depictions of rape or other violent sexual acts.

Simulated Gambling: Player can gamble without betting or wagering real cash or currency.

Strong Language: Explicit and/or frequent use of profanity.

Strong Lyrics: Explicit and/or frequent references to profanity, sex, violence, alcohol or drug use in music.

Strong Sexual Content: Explicit and/or frequent depictions of sexual behaviour, possibly including nudity.

Suggestive Themes: Mild provocative references or materials.

Tobacco Reference: Reference to and/or images of tobacco products.

Use of Drugs: The consumption or use of illegal drugs.

Use of Alcohol: The consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Use of Tobacco: The consumption of tobacco products.

Violence: Scenes involving aggressive conflict. May contain bloodless dismemberment.

Violent References: References to violent acts.

(Entertainment Software Association of Canada, 2013)

Appendix D: What Is Video Gaming Addiction?

- Currently there is no commonly accepted definition of video gaming addiction (Griffiths et al., 2014).
- Excessive gaming does not necessarily mean that a person is addicted.
- Video gaming is a problem if it is negatively affecting other areas of the player's life (Griffiths, 2010b).
- Although most youth/young adults play video games in ways that enhance their lives, for some it can be a problem.
- In the current fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) is in section 3 where conditions that require further research are placed.
- To assist with further research, the description of IGD in section 3 of the DSM-5 includes nine impending criteria resulting from other reports (Petry & O'Brian, 2013).
- Griffiths (2010a; Griffiths et al., 2014) proposes that video game playing that fulfills six criteria (salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse) can be "operationally defined as an addiction."
- If you are interested in learning more about the inclusion of IGD in the DSM-5, please refer to the following resources:
 - [Internet Gaming Disorder in the DSM-5](#)
 - [Internet Gaming Disorder](#)

Gentile, M.D., King, D.L. & Demetrovics, Z. (2014). DSM-5 internet gaming disorder needs a unified approach to assessment. *Neuropsychiatry*, 4 (1), 1–4.

Petry, N.M. & O'Brian, C.P. (2013). Internet gaming disorder and the DSM-5. *Addiction*, 108, 1186–1187.

Petry, N.M., Rehbein, F., Gentile, D.A., Lemmens, J.S., Rumpf, H.J., Mößle, T., ... O'Brien, C.P. (2014). An international consensus for assessing internet gaming disorder using the new DSM-5 approach. *Addiction*, 109 (9), 1399–1406.

Appendix E:

Signs of a Video Gaming Problem

PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS

Decreased interest in school, homework and academic achievement. This may take the form of homework neglect, decreased study time and deterioration in grades. Often, children who are becoming addicted to video games will claim that they have no homework or have completed it in school.

Becoming visibly angry when not allowed to play or when asked to stop. In extreme cases this may result in violence toward the parent and is a clear indication that major changes must be made in the household.

Becoming depressed or anxious when access to the game is limited. Associated behaviours will include claims that “nothing else is fun,” restlessness and possibly excessive sleep. Parents may have noticed this in more extreme forms if they have ever gone “cold turkey” and attempted to eliminate all games from their home. Alternatively, these signs may be present in a milder form when the computer is unavailable for a day or two.

Thinking about the game when involved in other activities. Although this symptom (daydreaming about the game) will, for obvious reasons, be less apparent than some of the more overt signs, in a child this may occasionally be seen in drawings or writings. Teachers may notice that the child is less “present” in class and is often unaware of the question being asked when called on.

Dreaming about the game. This one is even less obvious, as the only way to know if this is happening is to ask the child.

Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed. Although interest in schoolwork is often the first to decrease, other perhaps more enjoyable activities, such as sports, music, hobbies and spending time with friends, are often sacrificed in favour of gaming.

Arguing about the negative impact of excessive play and downplaying how serious the problem is. Younger children may compare themselves with a friend who “plays even more than I do.” In a teen, this will often take the form of, “Well, at least I’m not out on the street or using drugs.” Occasionally, parents will also fall into this particular trap.

Distorted perception of time. Individuals experiencing problems will often experience the sensation of a very slow passage of time. That is, what feels like an hour may actually be three hours. When asked to estimate just how long they have been playing, children and teens (especially those who are heavily addicted) may vastly underestimate their gaming time.

Feelings of excessive responsibility to a guild, clan or online team. If the parents are not already familiar with these terms, they refer to a group that a player joins in MMOs such as *World of Warcraft* or *EverQuest*. This is a central feature of these particular games and one of the main factors that contribute to the higher levels of addictiveness in MMOs. Although these games can be played solo, to advance far in the game a player must align with others. If they only play solo, some sections and worlds will be inaccessible, as will certain abilities and upgrades. Essentially, there is very little incentive to continue playing MMOs unless one joins an online team of players. As a member of one of these teams, the player is expected to participate in ongoing quests. Often these quests must take place when all members of the team are online, which can frequently lead to unusual meeting times as members will often be in different time zones. Players are expected to be part of all quests because missing quests impedes the progress of the entire team. Also, to contribute to the team, it is expected that individual players continue to develop their characters by making them stronger, more powerful and with more abilities. As one can imagine, these expectations create a very powerful sense of responsibility to the team and intense feelings of guilt if the player is not able (or permitted) to play.

Great difficulty abstaining from video games for an extended period of time. A child who is addicted to a video game may be able to avoid playing for a day with some discomfort (especially if the child knows that play will be possible tomorrow), will find it quite challenging to abstain for several days and will find it extremely difficult to give up the game for an entire week. In some cases, the child will even show signs of withdrawal. Older teens who are more aware of the negative consequences of excessive gaming may experience feelings of guilt or regret after long sessions of gaming. This is a good sign as it indicates that the person is aware of the problem and may be motivated to change their behaviour with the right kind of support and assistance.

PHYSICAL SIGNS

Sleep difficulties or dramatic changes in sleep schedules. The most obvious changes in sleep habits will be a tendency to stay awake longer at night so that gaming can continue, and consequently greater difficulty rising in the morning. If children have a computer or console in their room, do not assume that they are asleep just because the lights are out. Addicted players will intentionally wake up to play in the middle of the night when other family members are asleep. While having the game in their own room makes this very easy to do, removing the system will not necessarily stop the behaviour as an addicted player may risk playing in a “common room” late at night if no one else is awake.

Decreased attention to personal hygiene. For many children and teens, hygiene can be a low priority even at the best of times. However, when someone is addicted to video games, personal care often takes a backseat to continued play. Showers decrease in frequency—often several days apart. Brushing teeth, cleaning up before bed/school, and general facial care and hair care are all neglected. In extreme cases children may wait too long before using the washroom, with unfortunate but not unexpected results.

Poor or irregular eating habits. For a child who is addicted to video games, regular meal times and healthy eating will not be priorities. Convenience, rather than nutrition, will be most important when it comes to eating. The child may start to request that meals be allowed while playing the game (please do not allow this!), that they be allowed to eat apart from the family and/or may skip meals entirely. Obvious weight gain or loss may be apparent.

Headaches, dry eyes and sore fingers. While sore fingers are relatively rare (gaming controllers are generally quite comfortable), headaches and dry eyes are much more common after extended gaming sessions.

Decreased levels of physical health. As physical activities, sports and other forms of recreation are sacrificed in favour of gaming, overall physical health will generally deteriorate. This will be most apparent in a child or teen who is involved in structured physical activities or sports (e.g., coaches or trainers may notice decreased performance and intensity). Unfortunately, this often leads to children concluding that they no longer want to be

involved in the activity, as they can no longer compete at the level they were used to. Of course, this also allows them to spend even more time gaming, which leads to even worse physical health—the system is now in place for gaming to completely replace healthier activities.

BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS

Decreased academic performance. As a rule, A and B students do not go from consistently achieving good grades to failing classes in the course of one semester. More likely is a gradual decrease in achievement over the course of a full academic year. Strong students especially will be able to “coast” on past learning for a while even as gaming becomes more of a priority in their lives. They may be able to convince their parents that the slight deterioration in grades was just one bad semester because of a poor teacher or some other aberration. However, as the year progresses an addicted player will start losing ground and fail to integrate new educational material. Now in the second semester, it becomes clear to parents that this “aberration” is more of a downward trend. It is not until these poor grades spill over into a second year that many parents become convinced that something is clearly wrong and that intervention is necessary. Looking back, when did children start to show signs of gaming addiction? Parents should not be too hard on themselves if it took some time to realize the extent of the problem—this is very normal.

Going hand-in-hand with the previous point is a tendency to put **less effort into homework and studying**. Parents of young children may notice that they rush through their homework as quickly as possible with little attention to detail and with less pride in their work compared to the period before the game entered their lives. Parents of teens may be informed by their child that homework was completed at school, completed before the parents arrived home or that “my teachers this year do not assign much homework.” If the parents have any doubts about what they are being told by their children regarding homework, they should not hesitate to contact the teacher.

Children who are addicted to video games will start **neglecting other important responsibilities in order to keep gaming**. Household responsibilities and chores will be completed much later than requested by parents, only after multiple requests (even more so than usual), or

not completed at all. Even if other rewards such as allowances are tied to completion of household chores, an addicted player may sacrifice these rewards as long as he can continue playing.

An obvious sign of someone who is addicted to video games is that they spend **more and more time playing the game**. Although there is no set threshold to be considered addicted to video games, obviously the more time a player spends on the game the more it will interfere with other aspects of life. A child who is addicted to video games can easily put in 20, 30 or 40+ hours per week. Again, a child will not immediately go from playing one or two hours per week to 40 hours. Rather, parents should look for a gradual increase week over week, month over month as the child progresses in the game. Much of this increased time commitment has to do with the “levelling” systems in the most addictive MMORPGs.

A child who is addicted to video games will **attempt to play at the first available opportunity**. Common times include on waking in the morning, immediately after arriving home from school, immediately after dinner in the evening and immediately after rushing through homework.

A very good sign of video game addiction (but one that parents are unlikely to see) is an **inability to quit despite a desire to do so**. True, parents have probably observed the inability to quit, but probably not the desire to quit. The symptom is generally reserved for adults and older teens who have gained insight into the problem and who have recognized the destructive nature of their addiction. Having children want to quit is a desirable but certainly not necessary condition for recovery. Parents of a minor child still have the power and control necessary to remove this temptation from the child’s life. Of course, this is not true for the parent of an adult child, as the player must get to a point where he wants to quit before recovery will begin.

Individuals addicted to video games who are not actively playing will frequently busy themselves with **reading about the game, discussing the game with fellow players in online forums or writing about the game**. Just because children are not currently playing the game, if they are on the computer they may still be engaged in activities that are feeding the addiction.

A child or teen who is addicted to video games may **spend large portions of their allowance or income from a job on gaming accessories, expansion**

packs, computer upgrades and micro-transactions. A micro-transaction is a small online purchase (typically only a dollar or two) for largely superficial game upgrades (e.g., a new costume, a single weapon or small ability). Is the child permitted to spend money on video games and accessories? Although fostering a sense of financial responsibility is important for a child to learn, if they are addicted to games, parents may want to reconsider this decision.

A very good sign that video game addiction is a reality for children is **frequent (or even occasional) gaming “binges.”** This may take the form of seven or more hours of non-stop gaming (possibly with very short breaks). Although there is no single behaviour that signifies a gaming addiction, frequent gaming binges (e.g., weekly) interspersed with regular play between binges is a very good indication that children are addicted to video games and that this needs to be addressed.

RELATIONAL SIGNS

A child who is addicted to video games and is aware that their parents disapprove **may resort to lying when it becomes apparent that the game may be disallowed or restricted.** Interestingly, parents may encounter lying in the middle stages of gaming addiction and confrontation, but if the addiction strengthens its grip and the child is fully aware that he or she can no longer hide gaming habits, the child may become very upfront with you and make no attempt to hide how much he or she plays. It is at this point that many parents believe that all hope is lost—it isn't; parents still have options.

Video game addiction may be present when, on most occasions, the child **would rather play video games than play (child) or go out socially (teen) with their friends.** Keep in mind that children may claim that they are socializing with their friends when they play. This is true to some extent, so don't bother getting into an argument about semantics and the definition of “friends.” However, these friendships are still built around an artificial experience that does not require or encourage the development of critical social and interpersonal skills that are absolutely required for anyone to function, succeed and contribute to society as a healthy adult. Childhood to late adolescence is a complex and extremely important period of psychosocial development in which the player ideally builds self-

worth, begins to develop an identity and learns how to make meaningful interpersonal connections with others. This cannot happen if the virtual world replaces the real world.

As children become adolescents, it is quite normal to spend less time with family and more time with friends. Although the total amount of interpersonal contact remains essentially the same, the balance of time shifts from family to friends. So, it really is healthy for a teen to spend less time with parents and more time with friends (assuming that the friends are positive influences) as they progress through adolescence. What isn't healthy is when this **decrease in parental time is primarily replaced with gaming and online-only friends**.

Parents or primary caregivers will almost certainly be the first to become worried about a child who is addicted to video games. As the problem continues to develop, other individuals, such as relatives, family friends and teachers of the child may also start to express concern. When **others you trust and respect begin to notice problems**, this is again a very good sign that a child is addicted to video games. Also, if parents feel the need to downplay or hide just how much their child plays, this suggests that their child may be losing control of gaming habits.

Video game addicts, when confronted about their habits, may **blame others (especially parents) for their excessive play**. This is mainly observed in adolescents, not young children. For example, a parent may hear “I wouldn't play so much if you didn't nag all the time.” Keep in mind that parents should not automatically dismiss criticism from their children (we all have areas for personal development). But it is important to distinguish potentially helpful feedback (“How can you tell me that I am addicted when you get drunk every weekend?”) from the defensive/deflecting voice of the addiction.

Adapted with permission from Dr. Brent Conrad: Conrad, B. (2011). How to Help Children Addicted to Video Games—The Guide for Parents. Halifax, NS, www.TechAddiction.ca.

Appendix F: Problem Video Gaming Continuum Scenarios

CASE 1

GREEN ZONE: NORMAL VIDEO GAMING



Derek plays online video games after school on days he is not playing sports. He usually plays for a couple of hours until his parents get home from work for dinner. On occasion he plays too late and is tired the next morning at school, but he consistently hands his homework in on time and receives good grades.



Stacy loves playing games on her phone and finds gaming entertaining and fun. She makes several small in-game purchases per week. She has a part-time job and she's saving money for college. She also manages to pay her credit card off every month.



CASE 2

ORANGE ZONE: AT RISK VIDEO GAMING



Lisa plays a game on a popular social media site, which requires that she play regularly to advance, even if only for a short time. A coworker was recently disciplined for playing video games at work, but Lisa plays them on her phone during slow times, thinking she won't get caught.



APPENDIX F: PROBLEM VIDEO GAMING CONTINUUM SCENARIOS

CASE 2

ORANGE ZONE: AT RISK VIDEO GAMING (CONT.)



Mike plays WoW every day. He enjoys the social aspect since he is kind of shy and gets nervous easily in real-life social situations. When playing WoW he can be social and not have to worry about embarrassing himself. Over the past month he is choosing to play WoW instead of hanging out with friends.



CASE 3

RED ZONE: PROBLEMATIC VIDEO GAMING



Amy enjoys playing online video games. She has noticed that there is a market for selling in-game items and gold “farming.” Amy spends up to eight hours per day farming for virtual items for sale in addition to her seven hours of personal game play. She considers the farming activities to be work and separate from her online gaming practice. Amy finds that video gaming helps her cope with feelings of loneliness and sadness.



James enjoys playing simulation-type games. He has created a virtual world with an avatar who has a girlfriend. James spends a great deal of time enhancing his virtual environment and interacting with his virtual girlfriend at the expense of his real-life girlfriend. James does not see any problem with the time he spends online but his girlfriend is complaining and wants him to stop gaming so much. He gets angry with her when she tells him not to play. With only two to three hours of sleep every night, he is feeling quite irritable.



Feel free to create your own scenarios!

Gaming Overuse: Finding Help

PROBLEM VIDEO GAMING

Video and Online Game Addiction Test

<http://netaddiction.com/are-you-an-obsessive-online-player/>

Internet Addiction Test

<http://netaddiction.com/internet-addiction-test/>

Net Addiction: The Center for Internet Addiction

<http://netaddiction.com>

Tech Addiction

www.techaddiction.ca

On-Line Gamers Anonymous

www.olganon.org

CAMH Mental Health and Addiction Tutorial 101

[Youth and Technology 101](#)

PROBLEM GAMBLING

Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario, CAMH

www.ProblemGambling.ca

Access CAMH 416 535-8501 ext. 2

Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline: 1 888 230-3505

www.problemgamblinghelpline.ca

Youth Gambling Awareness Program

<http://ymcagta.org/en/who-we-work-with/educators/gambling/index.html>

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

www.camh.ca

Youth and Interactive Media, Games and Social Networks, PGIO, CAMH

http://knowledgex.camh.net/amhspecialists/resources_families/Documents/Youth_Interactive_Media.ENG.pdf

Kids Help Phone: 1 800 668-6868

www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/Home.aspx

GAMING OVERUSE: FINDING HELP

Children's Mental Health Ontario

www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

To set controls for PlayStation, Xbox, Windows PC, Nintendo, etc. to limit use, visit www.esrb.org/about/settingcontrols.jsp

Mobile Tools: free apps to look up a game or app's rating

www.esrb.org/mobile

AWARENESS WORKSHOP FACILITATOR EVALUATION FORM

The facilitator manual will continue to improve based on your feedback. Please take a few minutes to complete this form and email it to Colleen.Tessier@camh.ca or fax Colleen Tessier at 416 260-4158.

Date and location of workshop: _____

How many participants attended your workshop? _____

Participants in your workshop were:

Junior high school students Campers High school students Other: _____

What sections and activities did you cover in your workshop?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Played <i>Soul Crush Story</i> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Soul Crush Story</i> Debrief | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video Game Genres | <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefits of Video Gaming | <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risks of Video Gaming and the Impact of Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing the Signs of Unhealthy Video Gaming | <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video Gaming and the Brain | <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making Healthy Choices: Life Balance | <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Activity |

What sections worked well? Why?

Were there any sections in the facilitator manual that were confusing? If so, which ones and why?

What sections elicited the most active discussion? Why?

What activities worked well? Why? Do you have any suggestions to improve the activities?

Please suggest how we can improve the facilitator manual.

THANK YOU

AWARENESS WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT EVALUATION FORM

Your feedback is important to us! Please take a few minutes to complete this evaluation form.

Workshop date: _____

Workshop location: _____

What is your year of birth? _____

What gender do you identify with? Male Female Other Choose not to answer

On average, how many hours a **day** do you play video games? < 1 hour 1–3 hours 3–6 hours > 6 hours

Overall, I would rate <i>Soul Crush Story</i> as:	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 GOOD	4 VERY GOOD	5 EXCELLENT
What did you like about the game?					
What did you dislike about the game?					

The workshop facilitator:	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONG DISAGREE
was knowledgeable about the content					
led the discussion in an interesting way					
answered questions					
provided a safe place to talk					

Overall, I would rate the facilitator as:	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 GOOD	4 VERY GOOD	5 EXCELLENT
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The information from the workshop helped me be:	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONG DISAGREE
more aware of the signs of harmful video gaming					
more aware of my video gaming habits					
more aware of the impact of video gaming advertising					
more aware of ways to keep my video gaming safe					
more aware of the features in video games and in online gambling that can be harmful					
more aware of where to find help					

Overall, I would rate the workshop as:	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 GOOD	4 VERY GOOD	5 EXCELLENT
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Please suggest how we can improve this workshop.

THANK YOU