***Video Game Violence!***  *09/03/2020*

**Are console video games harming the next generations?**

Are video games making a bad impression on the youth? With 69% of people in the UK casually playing video games and 2261 active games companies in the UK alone, can we blame kids for being addicted to their screens? They are being constantly bombarded with bright colours and targeted adverts. How are they meant to stand a chance against the rampant and ever expanding games industry?

Girls from around 12-15 spend up to and over 9 hours a week gaming. However, boys spend 16 hours, closer to 17 hours a week. Why do teenagers engage with their screens for such long periods of time? Socialisation, personality exploration, escapism, challenging and rewarding experiences along with personal enjoyment. But is it healthy? If children are spending this long gaming on top of the fact, they spend most of their day at school that means they must be spending a good portion of their free time and time they should be asleep playing online. Should parents be limiting their childrens’ screen time? Is the problem rooted in the sad truth that parents are letting their children be too independent and need to look more closely at what their children are doing and playing?

Although there are some positives to gaming, there are also many negatives. Some of the most devastating gaming impacts on children can include exposure to aggressive behaviour, social disconnect and health problems. Should we allow children to play these violent video games if they have such intense repercussions? Are the age ratings to lenient and are parents giving their kids too much freedom?

Many studies push different conclusions. The two most commonly presented ideas are that video games are rotting childrens’ brains; or rather, they are vital in the development of children. Which is right? Well, both are.

12 out of the 20 most popular games have undesirable content, which makes it easy to understand why parents may be hesitant to let their be exposed to the entire gaming world. However, it is not all bad news and malicious intentions. Video games can enhance kids’ abilities in many diverse fields. Gaming can improve problem solving, logic and analysis, as well as helping to fine tune hand-eye coordination, fine motor and spatial skills. Planning, resource management and maths can be boosted with games involving a lot of strategy or survival aspects. Some parents speculate that these skills aren’t beneficial in childrens’ everyday lives. This is a fair point, but memory, multi-tasking and teamwork can be useful on a daily basis and can be advantageous in later life.

Now we must also consider the negatives. Gaming can expose children to wrong morals, with a significant popularity in First Person Shooting Games which involve violent scenes and gameplay. A great deal of information and fast-paced gameplay occurs in short periods of time, which can impact the concentration of children when performing ordinary tasks, especially when they are young and we train them to always need to be over-stimulated with this abuse of information their always combatting.

The hours children spend gaming decrease the length of time they spend socialising or interacting with real people, causing social disconnect. When children are not taught positive ways to express themselves, aggressive behaviour and violent tendencies can emerge. Aggressive behaviour has been normalized to some extent within the gaming community and is uncomfortably common for an intense gamer to slam down their controller and break things after losing games or losing game progress but to be fair the same can be said for sports icons which can be less than ideal role models.

Video game addiction is becoming a more and more pressing issue with more and more children gaming and the length of time they spend on their devices increasing to scary amounts. If children are cooped up inside all day, they are spending less time outside exercising, leading to medical problems like obesity. Obesity is already a worryingly high rate. In this new age of digital obsession, cyber bullying is a horrendous possibility, which can have devastating long-term effects on childrens’ mental wellbeing. Bullying online is not the only problem that can affect childrens mental health online. Harassment and threats are unfortunate realities of many young gamers who do not know how to get help or support in fear of being taken away from their frequently played games.

So what is the solution to this ongoing conundrum? How can we keep children safe? The answer is to teach children a balance of technology, educational and physical activities. In the end, it comes down to parents to decide what is an appropriate length of time for their children to spend gaming and what is the right age rating for their child to play.