GAMING HEALTH HERO

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GAMING HEALTH RISKS

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Foreword

With the continuous advancement of technology today, the gaming industry has hugely boosted that every player today will be able to find something that best suits his necessities and desires. However, while playing these games may be very entertaining, everyone must be aware that there is always the limitation for its use. So, if you are one of those gamers who are badly into the gaming world and you spend most of your time in front of the computer, you have to be guided by the possible health risks that this concept can draw to you.

By knowing these ideas, you should be able to make a well informed decision, whether to restrain yourself from overly participating into gaming or not. In this book, you can find some of the most useful yet surprising risks that too much gaming has on your health. This should help you realize what is more important between your health and gaming.

Gaming Health Hero
What You Need To Know About Gaming Health Risks

Chapter 1:

Gaming Health Risk Basics

A lot of kids today are enjoying the excitement and adventure that accompanies playing their most preferred video games. However, even though these video games may serve to be an enjoyable way for passing time, they also include being inactive for long time periods through which kids may either be outdoors practicing or playing with their peers. Inactivity is just one of the many health risks associated with excessive gaming. Know more about them in this chapter.

In Depth Understanding Of Various Gaming Health Risks

For the past years until now, parents have normally wondered about the adverse effects of excessive video gaming on the health of their children. Parents who are not aware about this electronic habit may be prone to the belief that playing these video games may result to:

- Vision loss

- Reduced Mental Capability

- Aggression

While these ideas may be true, the health risks drawn by excessive video gaming may not just end there. You may attribute video gaming addiction with the following adverse effects:

- *Sleep Deprivation*

With school and work consuming the major fraction of an individual's time, a lot of people will likely sacrifice their precious sleeping time to find time for playing their favorite games. Addiction to video game and extended episodes of sleep deprivation may result to insomnia, while taking the major toll on the health of a person.

- *Seclusion and Isolation*

Too much video gaming may lead people from secluding or isolating themselves from family and friends. The fact that they pay no attention to their personal hygiene is simply the beginning of their dislodgement from the actual world and dealing in the social setting. Communication in the video game may take priority over the interaction with anyone or anything else. Friends, family, work and school are neglected. With this, video game addiction may intensify as a person refuses spending their time doing nothing but video gaming.

- *Ignoring Personal Hygiene*

Once people become too much attached to video gaming for most times of their everyday life, they will normally overlook their personal hygiene. With low or zero physical communication with the real world, game enthusiasts may feel less motivated to deal with their personal hygiene. Ignoring of personal hygiene might result to dental diseases, acne and some other related illnesses.

- *Stress*

Stress acquired through video game addiction may be due to certain scenes. For instance, a person becomes overly obsessed with video gaming that pressure and their failures to obtain their goals in their games may lead to excessive stress. The once source of entertainment and fun has changed into means for misery, stress and anger. A gamer realizes that his life has been in confusion due to video games, which leads to too much stress. Sadly, the mere way those people may deal with such stress is to carry on with their video gaming, which has been the main source of problems.

- *Depression*

Even though a lot of video game enthusiasts may not understand it initially, depression might gradually penetrate while they see themselves being enslaved by addiction. Once they put an end to it and think of what their lives have become is the only time they come to a realization that there's something wrong. To make the situation worse, their mere way to find comfort is with the main thing that causes their depression. This then creates a nasty cycle which may only be wrecked once they take their lives' control back.

- *Carpal Tunnel Syndrome And Arthritis*

Too much playing of video games may result to some physical impairment such as arthritis and carpal tunnel syndrome. Studies have recommended that several years spent on playing video games may result to problems on the person's thumbs sooner or later. Particularly, that such body's part is likely to suffer from osteoarthritis. Carpal tunnel syndrome is characterized by the pressure on the wrist's nerve, which enables movement and feeling

in particular parts of the hand. The condition may develop in individuals who conduct repetitive movements in their wrists and hands, which make video gaming addicts highly vulnerable to this kind of condition.

- *Unhealthy Diet*

When addicted players become too busy that taking a shower or getting sufficient sleeping hours is a luxury to them, they probably don't take some precautionary measures on their eating habits. To sustain their addiction, most video gamers will normally choose easy to prepare meals and fast food over those healthier meals. Energy drinks and sugary sodas are also common to sustain with their late-night playing and so, sleep deprivation. Such habits might lead to diabetes, obesity and other severe health conditions.

- *Idle Lifestyle*

Video game enthusiasts who are devoting their waking hours to gaming are certainly living within an idle lifestyle. Lying down or sitting all day while playing games, together with bad eating habits and sleep deprivation is a risky combination which may result to heart disease, hypertension and stroke.

- *Aggressive Behavior*

Even though a lot of people may argue that video gaming provide an acceptable passage to release aggressive feelings, they also have displayed to do exactly the opposite, particularly among the ones who turn to be addicted. The stress and frustration stemming from such addiction might

worsen with depression, and might lead the person to show rare patterns of hostile behavior to anyone who interrupts with their video gaming play.

- *Denial*

Lying and denial to conceal unusual behavior is among the initial signs that the video gaming problem of a person has become a full-blown type of addiction. Video game enthusiasts would normally turn up with certain reasons for their alteration in behavior as well as their unhealthful lifestyle. While the level of addiction increases, they will eventually start to lie to themselves with denial they have any issues at all.

Addiction to video gaming might be dangerous to the well being and health of a person. The things mentioned above are the basic signs to identify if a person is starting to become addicted to video games. Make sure to address the problem before it further worsens and becomes too late.

Chapter 2:

Addiction

Addiction may occur because of several reasons. It can be due to the use of some substances, such as alcohol and prohibited drugs, addiction to certain stuff, such as movies, food and the like. No matter what it may be, addiction always has some adverse effects to the person who is involved. The same thing goes with those people who are in the state of gaming addiction. Know more about gaming addiction in this chapter.

Gaming Becomes Addictive

Gaming addiction is characterized by a compulsive or excessive use of video games or computer games that interferes with the everyday life of a person. Online gaming addiction holds a negative picture while it became a public concern. Addiction might present a compulsive game playing, mood swings, social isolation, diminished imagination, mood swings and hyper focus on in-game achievements to the prohibition of other life events.

Anybody who goes through it is very aware that gaming addiction is real. Even though gaming addiction is not yet recognized officially as a diagnostic disorder by the American Medical Association, it is evident that there is an increasing number of people, particularly preteens and teens, who are facing extremely real and sometimes, serious consequences linked with compulsive utilization of computer and video games.

Video games become more and more detailed, complex, and attractive to the increasing number of global audience of gamers. With more realistic characters, better graphics, and more complex tactical challenges, it is no longer surprising as to why some teens will rather play their favorite video games instead of hanging out with their peers, playing outdoor sports, or even watching some TV programs.

Of course, not all gamers are addicts. A lot of teens may play video games for a couple of hours per week, while effectively balancing their grades, school activities, family obligations, and friends. On the other hand, for some, gaming can be an irrepressible compulsion. Some studies have the estimated 10% to 15% of players show symptoms that meet the criteria of World Health Organization for addiction. Similar to gambling and some other forms of compulsive behaviors, teenagers may become very enchanted within the fantasy gaming world that they even neglect their families, friends, school and work.

What Makes Gaming Addictive

Games are consequently designed to be simply difficult enough in order to become really challenging, while enabling players to attain small achievements that encourage them to keep playing. In this manner, video games design is the same to the gambling design of casinos that will enable players to obtain small "wins" which compel them from playing. In addition, there are a number of hooks that are established into the games with the intention of making them addictive. These hooks include the following:

- *High Score*

Whether you have tried out the latest edition of Temple Run or have not played an online game ever since PacMan, achieving a high score is one of the commonly identifiable hooks. With the attempt to beat a high score (though a player simply tries to beat his very own score) may keep a player motivated to play for hours.

- *Game Beating*

The hook is not utilized in role playing games online. However, it is observed to be found in just about every gaming program. The desire to beat a game is being fed as the player goes to a higher level, or locates the following hidden hint.

- *Role Playing*

Role playing games enable players from doing more than simple playing. With role playing games, they actually get to actually produce the characters within the game and go on board on the adventure that is fairly unique to such character. As a result, there is some emotional attachment a player produced towards the character, making him feel much more difficult to put an end to playing the game.

- *Relationships*

Once again, this is another main online "hook". Role playing games online enable people from building rapports with some other players. For a few children, the online community has been considered as a place in which they are mostly accepted that encourages them back over and over again.

- *Discovery*

The discovery or exploration strategy is most commonly utilized in role playing games. Among the most well known games as of now is the "World of Warcraft". A huge part of this game is basically spent for the exploration of the imaginary worlds. Such excitement of discovery (even with places nonexistent in reality) could be very compelling.

MMORPGs or Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games could be particularly addictive since there is no ending to this. Different from other standard games such as the well known Super Mario Brothers in which you will win once you save the princess, no princess is to be rescued on an MMORPG.

Another important consideration is that other people become more prone to any form of addiction as compared with others, whether it is in gaming or others. Children, who feel easily bored, hold poor rapports with their family, feel like an outcast at school, or tend to seek sensation, are more likely drawn into gaming addiction as it fills an empty and satisfies requirements that are not met anywhere else.

Aside from psychological addiction, it is now believed that there might also be some physiological element to the addictive game playing. Some researchers have conducted certain study about this concern. They have found that the levels of dopamine in the brains of players doubled as they play their games. Dopamine is the mood-regulating hormone that is linked with sense of pleasure. The study's findings show that gaming can really become chemically addictive.

Even though the debate continues on as to whether or not gaming addiction is a diagnosable condition, such behavior definitely exists. The mixture of purposeful programming of designers along with the predisposition a few teens have towards addictive behavior simply means that it is a real concern that parents, friends, and teachers must be well aware of and perform precautionary action to put an end to.
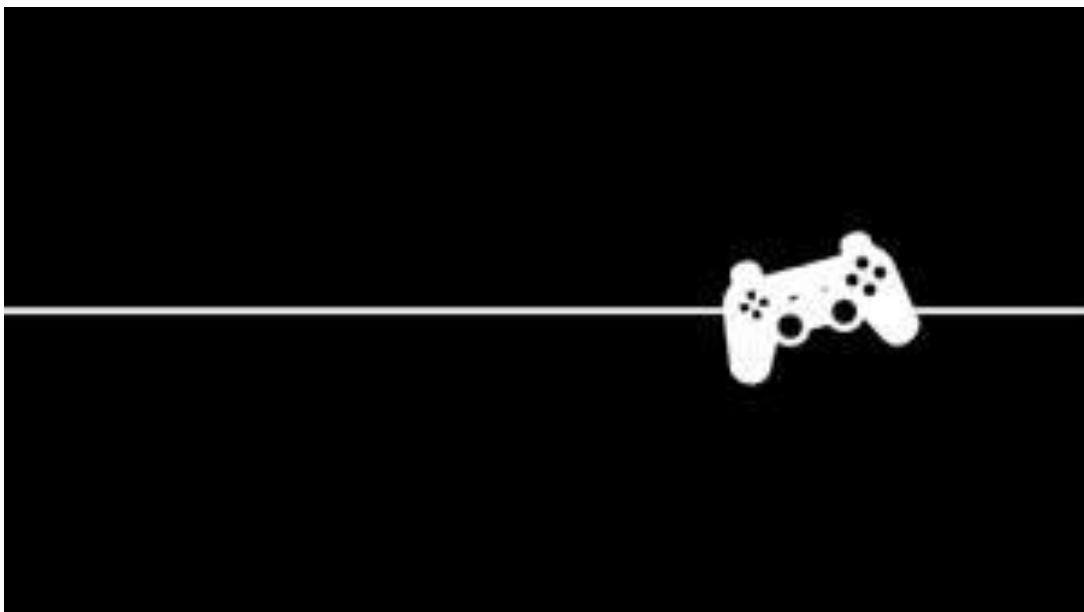
Chapter 3:

Aggression

Addiction to gaming may eventually lead to aggression. With continuous playing of fantasy games with aggressive situations and hostile character, a player may increase his aggression level, which is never healthy to one's emotional and cognitive health.

An Addict Becomes Aggressive

An increasing rate of aggression and violence among teenagers and children is among the most essential issues experienced by many parents these days. However, people hardly ever considered that entertainment media such as movies, TV and video games may be an essential contributing factors to the increasing development of violent behavior among these young people.

Perhaps, video games are the most considerable entertainment source for teenagers that have been introduced since 1970. From then on, it has infused the world of kid's entertainment and has become the subject of several researches and studies because of its alleged role in influencing child psychology and behavior.

The outcomes of several studies have highlighted that video gaming could have more intense negative effects on kids as compared with movies and television. As compared to TV, video games require player's active

participation and so, could have far reaching impacts on child psychology and behavior. While video games become more and more engaging naturally, children often actively join in those games and also determine themselves with an aggressor. Aside from this, video games normally reward such violent activities that further put kids in the risk edge for initiating aggressive behavior and thoughts. Furthermore, children play the games over and over again that, according to psychologists, they repeat the activities, while reward and repetition together with active involvement has the key to enhanced learning. That is why video games could be more efficient in instilling aggressive behavior among young children as compared with passive media such as movies and television.

Aggression and violence depicted among video games, when practiced within the real world, may lead to severe injuries and even death. Excessive playing of video game might lessen a child's empathy or his/her desire and willingness to help other people around them.

Aside from this, excessive video game playing may have a negative impact on the child's academic performance. As mentioned earlier, it may also lead to social isolation because children likely spend lesser time for hanging out and interacting with friends and family members. Another essential harmful effect of video gaming is that it could affect the perception of the child about different gender roles, since women as normally represented as the weaker character or victim in several forms of these games.

Therefore, parents have an essential role to play when it comes to making sure that the harmful or negative effects provided by video games don't actually outweigh the positive ones it can also provide. To be able to achieve

this, they may limit the length of time for playing. In addition, they may also choose to participate into the games and get to discuss the adverse effects of aggression and violence, their inefficiency or inappropriateness in solving problems within the real world. Aside from this, teenagers and children must be encouraged to take part in other activities and games so that they do not turn addicted to playing video games.

Chapter 4:

Social Problems

Socialization is a very important element in every individual's life. However, not all people get to realize its importance. With everyone's lifestyle becoming more and more busy, it can be quite a luxury to have an effective socialization with your friends. This is especially true to those people who are too addicted to video games. People who are gaming addicted should be aware that too much playing of these games results to some social problems. Identify them immediately to quickly address them accordingly.

Addictive Gaming Affects Your Social Health

Your mobile phone starts ringing and you quickly rush to check who the one calling is. It is your best buddy. He probably likes to do some outdoor activities and hang out with you. Anyway, it is Saturday. You consider picking up the phone, yet rather decide not to. Rather, you tell yourself "*I will call him the moment I end this level*". You promise to yourself that you will call him since even though you attend to similar school and go most of similar classes together, you have not really get together for quite some time. You simply have become too busy. Therefore, you make a promise to yourself that, *"the moment I finish…"*

People who become addicted to online gaming come across similar situations most of the time and there are instances in which they need to

choose if they will interact with their real world or carry on living inside the virtual one. Unfortunately, the real world hardly ever wins.

Social problems have become an extremely real portion of gaming addiction. Addicted gamers are spending a lot of time in playing their favorite games through which their personal relationships become neglected and sometimes, even disappear at once. Among all addicted married gamers, as much as 50% report the strain within their marriage because of their addiction.

A swift online information search regarding online gaming addiction will result to a number of stories about disturbing and possibly dangerous social decisions players have created as gaming becomes a priority above anything else. One of these stories was regarding a man who has installed the online gaming system into his laptop, allowing him to play even at work, although he is completely aware that being caught may mean being fired. However, another story was told by a wife who has a husband who starts playing literally "all the time" since he said that it helped him ease his mind from too much thinking of problems.

It is not simply neglect that put risks on the relationships of addicted gamers. Few of them have even talked a lot about their choice of games, to the extent of the elimination of everything else, allowing people not to want to be with them any longer. They won't or can't participate into the conversations in the real world or become a source of encouragement or support to family and friends. While their friends are talking about other things, they start to feel being left out that in return leads them to feel offended or irritated. It does not happen to them that they have chosen to

become left out as they choose to devote most of or rather all their time to playing their fantasy games.

Few of the physical problems brought by video gaming addiction might result to social issues as well. For example, an addicted gamer who get inadequate sleep due to too much playing simply does not have the needed energy to use to deal with relationships. Having lack of sleep might also let an active gamer feel irritable and hard to be around with.

Having insufficiency on social interaction which roots from excessive gaming might also have some long term social consequences. For instance, an addicted teen will not develop efficient social skills that will obstruct his capability to maintain and develop healthy rapports during his college years and onwards. Suddenly, he is 21 but has some social abilities of a 15 year old. He does not know how to make and deal with friends, conserve with opposite sex, or simply hang out and have fun with the company of other people. The social hindrances produced by the gaming addiction isolationism, sadly, feed continuously the addiction. A gaming addict would tend to go back to his virtual world in which relationships are simpler and are willingly waits for him.

Addiction to gaming can be very serious. Even though there are still several debates whether or not it is a diagnosable condition, there is apparently a part of the society for those people who consider gaming as more than a simple and casual pastime. Those people need family members and friends who truly care to interfere and attempt to help them put an end to the continuous gaming addictive cycle.

Chapter 5:

Physical Problems

Addiction to video gaming affects the health of a person to a high level. Usually, it is very hard to treat the symptoms that are caused by nonstop gaming. What's even worse is that excessive and incessant gaming may lead to some physical problems. Indeed, aside from social issues, too much gaming may result to certain physical problems.

Excessive Gaming Leads To Physical Problems

You have been looking for it all day. You have gone through and traveled a very long way, sometimes going over and over to ensure that you have not missed anything. A few areas are highly infested with aggressive creatures that you have been obstructed to continue on your journey not until those creatures have been destroyed. After going through all the challenges along the way, you have finally found the thing that you are looking for. It is the secret channel that brings you to the other place. You have moved up to another level. You get very excited that you never notice that you are feeling some backaches nor do you realize that you are on the edge of acquiring some migraine headache again.

This story might sound a bit strange, but it is all too familiar for those video gaming players who are commonly called gamers. Whether they are playing online or on Xbox, they get into the gaming world that is full of elves,

dragons, witches and a lot more, as they travel to such mysterious and most times secret locations. Gamers spend most of their time within this "other" world that they start to provide some physical damages to their bodies.

Physical consequences brought by gaming addiction may include migraines, carpal tunnel, backaches, sleep disturbances, poor personal hygiene, and eating irregularities.

Among the most common physical health concerns that are experienced by people addicted to video gaming, children and adults alike, is obesity. Normally, addicted gamers experience this concern as they likely sit in a single place for a very long period of time and so their body almost misses out any form of physical activity. Becoming overweight might boost the danger of initiating other illnesses in the end such as high cholesterol levels, hypertension, diabetes and a lot more.

Getting into video gaming for an extended period of time straight might also impede the sleeping pattern of an individual which in the long run will to the onset of insomnia. This might further lead to hypoactive immune system and drowsiness. Back pains may also be normally experienced by addicted gamers as they sit in a single place and stay in a single position for extended hours. Even though these may seem to be trivial ailments from the start, they might have much more profound implications while the addiction continues.

The Breakdown

- *Carpal Tunnel Syndrome*

Carpal tunnel syndrome has been linked with computer utilization to long. Therefore, it is no longer surprising if it will be included as a physical sign or effect of gaming addiction. The condition may trigger when the primary nerve between the hand and forearm is pressed or squeezed. This takes place if the carpal tunnel, which is the part of the wrist that covers the primary tendons and nerve, turns to be swollen or irritated. Excessive use of the computer mouse might cause this irritation and swelling just like the excessive utilization of the video gaming controller.

- *Sleep Disturbances*

The name "sleep disturbances" may cover a number of sleep-related conditions, such as sleep apnea, narcolepsy, nocturnal myoclonus (episodic arms or legs jerks at sleep), insomnia, and parasomnia (such as sleepwalking or talking, nightmares, and night terrors). In part, sleep disturbances may be caused by the brain's overstimulation. On the other hand, other people are simply unable to obtain a good night sleep merely because they are obsessively thinking about the game they played.

- *Migraines*

Typically, migraine headaches begin in a single area and gradually spread, becoming more and more painful while they progress. With serious cases, the pain might also turn very extreme that it may lead a sufferer to vomiting. Noise and light might lead to excruciating pain. A person who plays video games for a long period of time is more likely to suffer from migraines due to the strong concentration needed and the pain placed on one's eyes.

- *Eating Irregularities*

Eating irregularities may be caused by addiction to gaming only because the majority of addicted gamers do not like to spend enough time to eat rightly. Instead of eating balanced, healthy meals, they consume food that is usually unhealthy and quick to eat. In severe cases, a gamer might choose not completely eating.

- *Poor Personal Hygiene*

An addict gamer will hardly ever take proper time to take care of himself properly. Face-washing, brushing of teeth and hair, and taking showers might become a luxury to these gamers. They just become less of their priority, when they are a priority at all.

- *Backaches*

Backaches may also be a common physical consequence caused by gaming addiction since the majority of gamers remain seated in a similar position for extended periods on end. Movement deficiency may cause soreness and stiffness, but may get worse into constant back issues.

These physical issues will take place in different extents from a single gamer to the other. While the sternness of physical issues is usually tied to the addiction's severity, this is not the case all the time. A gamer that is already in poor physical state would become more at risk to such effects early on.

Chapter 6:

The Dangers of Not Paying Attention to the Risks

A lot of people who are into video gaming know that there are risks associated to it but they simply prefer to ignore them. Ignoring these risks if they are minor is just fine. However, if the risks get more and more worse, it is something that should be addressed immediately.

Ignore the Risks and See Where You Find Yourself Into

As you may identify the risks you could have for putting yourself into too much gaming addiction, you must react to it accordingly. On the other hand, if you have become too dependent to gaming that you hardly ever notice the risks or you notice but rather choose to ignore them, this is something you must work on.

Ignoring the risks of gaming even though you already know just how severe it can be is a different story. As the level of addiction continues to increase, you must be aware that the number of risks and their severity may also increase and so, ignoring them might only make the situation worse. All the risks mentioned above will become much worse as you see them.

Gamers will find their world revolving only for their favorite games and will no longer get to identify what's real from not and the right from wrong. Ignoring all the risks of gaming addiction may greatly affect the person's capability to think and his ability to improve and develop his life for better.

While physical, emotional and psychological factors become affected with gaming addiction, the overall health and status of a person might be placed at risk. So, the right precautionary measures should be used when gaming risks start to worsen.

Treat It While You Can

Treatment for gaming addiction is just the same with other forms of addictions. Behavior modification and counseling are the main approaches to treat addicted gamers. Altogether, individual and family counseling can be a potent tool to use. A few treatment facilities add in medication within their programs.

On the other hand, unlike alcohol or drugs, video games are linked to computers that are an essential part of life for many individuals. In this case, such addiction becomes comparable to food addiction. Because of this, other treatment centers are discovering controlled application instead of abstinence.

No complete treatment for gaming addiction is found. Similar with drug addiction and alcoholism, the main key is to access treatment and to become aware of the motivators while continuously participating in some recovery groups.

Some therapies may also be used to treat gaming addiction. There is an ongoing research about the treatment for video gaming addiction. But, a few clinical studies have been performed in conjunction with the problem. Professionals agree that similar treatments applied for sufferers of some other forms of addictions seem to function for gaming addicts.

Consequently, they primarily suggest psychotherapy and counseling, 12-step medication and programs, cognitive behavioral therapy, either individually or along with other curative techniques.

Individual and family counseling are similarly efficient when it comes to treating a video game addict. Psychotherapists try to guide the sufferer from understanding just how gaming relates to their job or school, moods and emotions, and life objectives and rewards.

However, the needs of players may vary from one another. Therefore, depending on the individual requirements of a gaming addiction sufferer, it is important to choose the right treatment for him/her.