

# VIDEO GAME VIOLENCE: HOW DOES IT AFFECT TEEN MINDS?



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Nowadays, gaming has become a big part of people's lives, with 97% of teenagers saying that they play video games of some sort. Many of these video games involve violent graphics and story lines, so, the question is bound to be asked – does this affect teenager's mental health in a positive or negative way? We did lots of research and interviewed teens and parents to try to find the answer to this pressing question.

On one hand, gaming has been shown to improve visuospatial skills, problem solving skills and can strengthen brain connections. The quick-paced games encourage the player to react quickly and effectively, and if they fail, they can learn from their mistakes; these skills can be used in all aspects of life. For example, in 2015 a study in 'The Journal of Neuroscience' took 69 participants and divided them into three groups. One third played Super Mario 3D World for two weeks, one third played Angry Birds for two weeks and one third played nothing. At the end, they all took a memory test – the participants who played Mario scored the highest which proves that gaming improves memory.

On the other hand, for boys in particular, those who play video games don't progress as quickly as those who don't which is mostly due to the addictive properties of them. The reward system of games encourages daily gaming which hinders social lives and academic responsibilities.

Although scientists haven't found a link between video games and violence in real life, it's obvious that some games show violence and bad behaviour (for example, 'Grand Theft Auto' and 'Call of Duty').

To gain some insight on the effect of video games for teenagers, we interviewed a Year 9 Student and parents of a teenager. He said, "I don't think they are that bad because I think



teenagers know the difference from the real world and the gaming world.", "Overall, I think it is to take your mind off the things outside in the real world." On the contrary, Nikki Hall (parent of a teenager) says, "Yes it does affect mental health in a bad way because if you are playing video games where you can kill people your mentality becomes that it is your way of life." Finally, Ben Powell (another parent of a teenager) says, "I think it depends on the teenager. If they are violent and aggressive, I don't think it will help them whereas if you have a nice teenager, I don't think it will affect them."

In conclusion, video games are a grey area in terms of their impact on teens. To a certain extent, violence in video games is not the only cause of violence in real life. Not all teenagers are impacted by virtual reality because we are smart and know the difference between right and wrong. However, video games can cause students to not do their homework or can cause to not do chores which deprives them of basic life skills that they will need later in life. As a final word of advice to parents, if you see changes in your child's mental state, be open to the fact that it might be due to video games. And, as a final word of advice to teenagers, remember to put reality before virtual reality.