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The Benefits of Playing Video Games

Playing video games should not be blamed for the rise in aggression in teens and young adults. Video games have grown dramatically in popularity since they were introduced in the 1980s. Modern video games are becoming more violent and bloody, which some argue is contributing to aggression and violent behaviors in society. Although, there are video gamers who are well-rounded teens and young adults that are employed and excel academically, the politician's blames video games for the increase in mass shootings and violence in today's society. However, it can be argued that video games offer cognitive benefits, reduce stress and anxiety, and provide social connection. Teens and young adults feel constant pressure at home, school, and work. Playing video games provides an outlet to reduce stress. In addition, playing video games is fun and relaxing. The politicians need to stop focusing on video games usage as the cause of increased violence. Video games do not pose a negative influence on teens and young adults, but instead offer numerous benefits such as improved critical thinking skills, increased attention span, and decreased stress/anxiety.

The pros and cons of playing video games continues to be a heated debate within society. According to a *Washingtonposts.com* article, the controversy is based on the belief that playing video games is increasing the exposure to violence, and therefore the incidence of aggression in teens and young adults (Waldman). However, the opposing view is that video games offer some

great benefits for skills and stress relief for teens and young adults. Researching this topic is interesting because playing video games offers great benefits such as critical thinking, problem solving, and hand-eye coordination. There are other influences that contribute to negative behavior other than video games such as poor parenting, addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, and negative influences from peers. Many teens and young adults need a way to release stress after a busy day of school and work. Thus, playing videos games should not be viewed as detrimental to adolescents' health and well-being. Yet some politicians and psychologists think that video games are a problem for modern society with legislation introduced to study the subject further (Kain). They argue that video games are causing mass shooting and aggression. According to a *CNN* article, all teens and young adults need to do, the politicians and psychologists argue, is to allow their parents to closely monitor their gaming time (Scutti). However, Scutti is wrong on several accounts.

Playing video games offers great benefits. The first benefit that video games offers is improving critical thinking. Playing video games such as *Minecraft* and *Mindlight* can increase a player's attention span. In addition, playing *Minecraft* can improve multiple skills that will encourage the player to think and learn. For instance, *Minecraft* can encourage players to learn to use different types of tools such as pickaxe and an axe. The player will be able to use the pickaxe as a way to collect much needed resources such as iron, coal, goal, and even diamonds. In addition, the pickaxe is a helpful tool to navigate inside a cave system and/or mining to find the resources. Another tool that is helpful for the players to learn is an axe, for instance, in order to collect wood to build a house. The player must understand how to use an axe to cut down the tree. As a result, tools such as pickaxe and axe can be used improperly, causing the player to get injured or die by falling into a pit of lava or falling off a tall tree. On the other hand, the player

will also be able to learn how to react when getting attacked by creepers and other monsters such as skeletons and zombies, and will need to think about the method of attack. The player can be aggressive and run up to the creature and kill the monsters with a sword or the player can play it safe and use a bow if the player has a bow. However, if the player does not have a weapon. The player can run away and hide. Even though *Minecraft* is great for learning skills. *Minecraft* can encourage students to excel academically in STEM majors. According to Nebel, *Minecraft* gameplay is outstanding for teens and young adults who are interested in science and technology majors. In fact, *Minecraft* teaches students to have a better understanding of advance topics within geology, biology, and geography courses (Nebal et al.). For instance, *Minecraft* has several different resources such as coal and red stones. These two resources are the most difficult in *Minecraft* because the player is learning on how to use these resources as building codes. Red stones are the most confusing resource as it requires knowledge to make red stone projects to work properly. Thus, teens and young adults should play *Minecraft* who are passionate in STEM majors because the gameplay will provide much needed skills.

Many studies have been done exploring the relationship between violent video games and aggression, but the results are inconclusive. According to an article the *Violent Video Games*, it is certain that while other countries games such as Netherlands and South Korea have a higher per capita spending on video, the United States has the greatest homicide rate (Kain). Yet another reason to argue that video games are not the cause of mass shooting and aggression is the number of violent adolescents in the United States decreased about fifty percent between the years of 1994 and 2010, at a time when violent video game sales increased steadily since 1996 (Kain). As a result, the higher sales of violent video games were found to decrease significant

crimes in a 2011 paper by an economist (Kain). Thus, the evidence suggests that video games are not a significant cause of mass shooting and aggression in teens and young adults.

As a matter of fact, the educational aspect of video games is significant for teens and young adults. According to an article in the *Journal of Educational Technology and Society*, *Minecraft* is just one of the important games for educational use. For example, *Minecraft* allows the player to use skills in creative design, critical thinking, and problem-solving to stay alive (Nebal et al.). Another video game that can be important for teens and young adults especially if they have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is *Mindlight*. According to the *BMC Psychiatry* journal, *Mindlight* is significantly important for educational aspects of video games for adolescents if they are dealing with autism spectrum disorder. For example, *Mindlight* delivers a variety of helpful benefits such as hand-eye coordination, patience, and a decrease in anxiety. *Mindlight* has significant graphics with visual appeal that enhances the experience by making the player feel like they are in the game. Another helpful benefit is learning patience. Thus, practice and patience will help the player successfully complete different levels of difficulty as they navigate through the game. Another benefit to playing *Mindlight* is a decrease in anxiety and other autistic behaviors. *Mindlight* can be scary at times and will teach players who have autism to learn to adapt to different environments that can be fun and scary (Wijnhoven). Different from *Minecraft*, *Mindlight* is slightly less violent and offers more challenges to players that have autism spectrum disorder. In summary, games like *Minecraft* and *Mindlight* can both be fun, scary, and offer helpful benefits such as critical thinking and educational skills.

Another benefit that video games offer is increasing attention span. According to an article in the *Plos ONE*, playing an action video game can increase some important skills such as attention and processing. As a matter of fact, gamers who play action genre games are more

efficient in tasks in real life. This research indicated that playing these games could be a method for skill training in the near future (Gorbet and Sergio). Thus, gamers who frequently play action video games are acquiring skills that will help them be well-rounded and marketable in the future. Different from action video games, casual video game play is enjoyed by people of all ages and offers many benefits. In fact, in a 2013 research study summarized in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, a comparison was done with approximately 10,300 adults ranging in age from eighteen to eighty years old. This study indicates that all ages of gamers exhibit increased attention span, improved cognitive skills, and increased memory. Additionally, the study revealed that people of all ages felt more connected socially and made new friends (Whitbourne, et al). The popularity of video games continues to soar as a recreational activity that can be enjoyed by everyone. For this reason, the politicians and psychologists should start to focus more on the positive, and less on the negative in regards to video game playing.

Another argument that playing video games can offer helpful benefits is that they can significantly increase socialization skills in teens and young adults. For instance, playing massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) can provide much needed social skills in games such as *World of Warcraft*. According to an article in the *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, playing *World of Warcraft* can increase much needed social skills as the player is communicating significant information to another player to complete a quest. In fact, players who play massively multiplayer online role-playing games will eventually form an alliance to complete quests and raids. For instance, the player is proving communication through text or voice chat. This method is helpful to communicate because each player in *World of Warcraft* has different avatars that have different skill trees. For example, one character is

mining as the other character defends the character who is mining to stay alive (O'Connor). Thus, playing massively multiplayer online role-playing games such as *World of Warcraft* are receiving socialization skills and can communicate better information to each other. For this reason, teens and young adults need to play more games like *World of Warcraft* because they will improve socialization and communication skills that will make them become better communicators in real life.

Yet another reason to argue that playing video games can offer helpful benefits is it decreases the amount of stress in teens and young adults. For instance, after a long day of learning and working, teens need some downtime and enjoyment. According to the study published in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, video games are enjoyable and exciting. In fact, more modern versions of Role-Playing Games (RPGs) may increase player's excitement as they are able to control their avatar by choosing weapons and modes of transportation (Wirth et al.). Role-Playing games are magnificent because they provide an exciting environment for the quests. Different from the action genre, Role-Playing games are slightly less violent but equally exciting.

Playing video games can offer great benefits such as critical thinking and increased attention span for teens and young adults; however, video games can become addictive. According to a *Chicago Sun Times* article, to prevent video game addiction, consider the following four steps. First, set a time-limit when playing a game. For example, play a game for two hours and take a break and find something else to do. The second step is to find a book that looks interesting. Reading a book will improve learning and will not strain the adolescent's eyes as much as video games. The third step to prevent addiction to video games is to go outside and hang out with friends. Hanging out with close friends can be fun and increase socialization. The

final and fourth step to prevent video game addiction is to play more educational games like *Minecraft* and *Mindlight* (Glazier and Ko). However, these games will teach teens and young adults' helpful skills that can be useful in their future. Therefore, these four steps will prevent getting addicted to video games.

Another negative effect of playing video games is it will cause sleep deprivation at all ages. According to an article in the *Military Medicine*, excessive usage of video games can decrease emotional states, socialization, and sleep. As a matter of fact, gamers who play a significant amount of video games are less efficient in tasks as the gamer is dealing with anxiety, anger, and fatigue since the gamer is craving for more time to play. This research study indicated that excessive usage of video games is not only a significant issue for teens and young adults, excessive usage of video games is a problem for all people including U.S. Marines (Eickhoff et al.). Thus, gamers who spend a significant amount of time on video games are losing out on developing effective skills that will help them be well-educated and intelligent in the future.

Obviously, video games continue to be a controversial hot topic with the politicians and psychologists. However, politicians and psychologists need to take a better look at the benefits of playing video games and the skills they provide. Not only do video games improve critical thinking and problem solving, they also reduce stress and anxiety. While there are some negative effects of video game such as addiction and sleep deprivation, together with family and friends, video games can provide social connections and educational benefits as well.

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