

# Why do people game?

Gaming has become part of everyday life. Many young people participate in it on a daily basis. At this particular age young people go through a transitioning period; where they once could amuse themselves, through play, Lego, craft etc suddenly they seem incapable of amusing themselves in anything aside from online play. This can be very frustrating for parents, but the good news is it will not last forever!

During their years at school there is a huge amount of pressure on young people, the pressure to do well in their exams, to decide their future all whilst dealing with changes in both their physical and mental development. After spending hours feeling this pressure at school, when they arrive home they do not wish to think, they want to be able to switch off for a bit, just like adults do after work. However, whereas adults may choose an offline activity, or prioritise tasks to complete, the teenage brain is still not fully developed in decision making and so even deciding what to have to drink can be a complicated choice for them to make.

Online play provides them with an outlet. Whether it is play on a game or app young people can engross themselves in the virtual world where all they need to think about is what step to take next. It doesn't not involve too much thought and they can leave their worries for a while whilst they play.

There are other reasons why online play is an appealing option for young people. After listening to the voices of young people lets explore some of these reasons;

## Social aspect

Research has shown young people perceive gaming as a social tool. Almost like a virtual playdate. Multiplayer games are particularly appealing as it lets several players engage at once, although young people will happily use their phone to talk whilst playing.

**The power of online play allows young people to speak to anyone, so if they have friends who do not live nearby they are still able to engage with them.**

## Escape from reality

Not only are young people dealing with challenging emotions, they may have life situations going on which can be hard to deal with. Bereavement, parent separation or divorce, starting college and finding new friends, bullying, issues at home...the list can go on. These are tough times and often young people look for something to do to take some time out from the actual world and escape into something that feels safe, something they can be in control of, or to take their mind off of what's happening in the 'real world'.

## Need for achievement

Some people are wired this way and may game to seek rewards, but others choose to game because it is something they are good at. If they are not very academic or have something which they excel at but are good at gaming, then they may want to spend their time playing as this makes them feel better about themselves.

## **Need for excitement and challenge**

Some like the competitiveness of gaming or play. Who can be the best, win the race or game, or they enjoy trying to figure out how the game works. As they play there is a release of dopamine which feels good and so they continue playing as they like the feeling. For some the excitement comes from:

**‘beating the game’ thinking about the logistics and how they can beat the system, think of an online interactive puzzle book.**

## **Need for power**

Linked in with their feelings or lack of confidence, some people like to master the game to gain status amongst their peers. If they can excel and build a reputation as being one of the best in the online world this can generate positive feelings. Young people who may struggle socially but are masters in the game and gain status in the online world will find online play particularly appealing.

## **What does this mean for my child?**

Understanding the reasons for your child’s interest in online play can help you to understand why they choose to engage in online play. Some young people can dip in and out of play, seeing it as something to do but partake in other activities as well. Others choose online play as their main form of entertainment as it satisfies a need.

Ask your child why they like gaming, what they get from it to help understand. Use this as a way of setting boundaries and providing healthy alternatives to match the need of your child.

**For more information visit the following pages –**

**[Secondary – support – setting boundaries/healthy alternatives/responding to emotions/](#)**