

On-line video gaming negatively affecting youth

Games, which are intended to be for fun, have taken over people's lives, becoming a full-fledged addiction

By Robyn Seymour
Holland College

Brandon Dawson is an 18-year-old engineering student at the College of the North Atlantic in Carbonear, N.L. and a recovering addict.

Dawson recently overcame his addiction to World of Warcraft, an on-line video game he played for about six months.

He would play for at least three hours a day, sometimes more, he said.

"When I would start playing I would get caught up so much in the game that I forgot about priorities that were more important to me in life than the game."

That included homework, rest and being with friends, he said.

Playing WoW for long periods of time also caused him to gain weight due to a change in his eating habits.

"You can't stay active because you're sat down playing. Instead of eating your supper at 5 p.m. you might eat your meal at 10 p.m. By that time your more hungry and you eat more than what you would regularly eat."

Dawson is not alone. A study prepared by the American Medical Association said the results from the November 2005 Active Gamer Study - a survey of 2,000 regular gamers, - suggest males 15 to 18 years old, are the majority of game players.

A national survey conducted by the Entertainment Software Association in 2005 said 35 per cent of gamers were under 18.

With about 9 per cent of people playing online multiplayer games,

such as WoW.

AMA researchers have attempted to categorize individuals most likely to become addicted.

They concluded the most likely people are those suffering from emotional loneliness and/or difficulty with real life social interactions.

Kyle Baadsvik said, "Every person in [the game] is another real person. For people who are shy it's like a whole medium of social interactions.

"That's not to say it's the game's fault. It's simply an escape, and some people don't manage it properly."

The 22-year-old Holland College Culinary Arts student has experienced the affects of video game addiction second hand. He almost lost friendships over on-line gaming.

"I never personally liked the game but I've known people who lost a hold."

Two of his friends from St. Stephens, N.B. had their computers set up next to one another and would play on-line together anywhere from 10 to 16 hours a day.

"We never fought or anything but I definitely saw less of them."

One of his friends had a tantrum because his character died in the game.

"Dying in the game resulted in penalties and dying could literally mean hours of work were gone in a moment.

"There would be swearing and screaming and more then one keyboard was thrown. It was amusing as hell to see the keys fly off like little missiles."

Baadsvik said his friends did eventually own up to the addiction and

"snapped out of it," much like Dawson.

Dawson knew he had to do something about the excessive game playing so when the WoW playing card ran out he chose not to buy another.

"The card ran out and I was like, I'm not paying \$35 to ruin my life. I told myself I'm going to college in September and if I don't give it up than I would definitely fail and all my time would go into the game, rather than my studies."

Dawson hopes to graduate from CONA and become a mechanical technologist.

"I'd rather stick to the real world rather than a silly game."

Robin Seymour is a journalism student at Holland College


What does Beth Trueman have in common with approximately 100 other Holland College students?

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