

My cause for concern

The thing I'm concerned about at the moment is the influence that video games may have on children.

Let me explain why. I've been reading lots of newspaper articles on the subject, and I also have a personal interest. You see, I have a younger brother, Craig, he's 13 years old, and I'm afraid he's becoming a video game addict. Just a few years ago, Craig had many interests; he played football, he was learning judo, he went out on his bike with his friends. He was a happy, fun-loving boy. Now he spends hours every day in front of a screen, in a virtual world, playing virtual games, usually violent ones, and he becomes really angry if our parents tell him to stop.

Research shows that children between the ages of two and five regularly play video games, and that by the age of eight, they spend an average of 25 minutes on them. It's much easier to find ways to play video games than it used to be, because of tablets and smartphones. This is not a problem for most children. However, by their early teens, a small minority have become addicts, playing for at least 30 hours a week. Dr Mark Griffiths of Nottingham Trent University, an expert in video game addiction, finds this figure worrying. He says that children may become so addicted that they stop doing homework, start playing truant, and even steal money in order to buy the games. It's likely that this addiction will only get worse with the coming of virtual reality headsets, which make the experience of getting completely lost in a virtual world even more powerful.



I have two more concerns. Firstly, I worry that the violence in the games could cause children to become more violent. My brother isn't violent, but he is certainly bad-tempered if he is stopped from playing. Secondly, I worry that sitting without exercise for so long is bad for your health. Craig often plays five hours a day, and some days his thumbs are really painful and he can't sleep because he is over-excited. His schoolwork is going from bad to worse.

Finally, Dr Griffiths says that more research is needed, but I don't need to read more research to conclude that video games cause problems. He should come and meet my brother. That's all the evidence he needs.