When Gaming Has Gone Too Far
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We all have succumbed to the lure of the screen; it's a necessity in business and academics and downright irresistible in social interaction. With it comes benefits and risk, with one of the biggest being compulsive video game addiction. "Gaming" by design is challenging, pushing the player into wanting more. Only recently being recognized, compulsive gaming shares many characteristics with other addictive behaviors:

- The need for increased amounts of gaming to keep a person satisfied
- If the person does not get to game they become miserable
- The person games for times longer than intended
- Gaming interferes with the pursuit of goals

This new form of addiction is growing quickly, leaving parents baffled as to know how much is too much. The majority of people can game without falling into an addictive pattern; however, there are vulnerable populations such as adolescent boys, especially those with social difficulties, depression or Attention Deficit Disorder. Children with gaming addiction tend to game 4-6 hours per day, leaving little time for interacting with their others, doing homework or sports, and often leads to sleep deprivation.

Possible signs that your child may have a gaming addiction include:

- spends most free time on the computer
- adamantly resists your attempts to curtail time spent gaming
- grades dropping
- lies about gaming
- less socially involved/stops activities
- neglects personal hygiene

Prevention is of course the best treatment by establishing early on rules about computer use, having an open line of communication with your child, and understanding the virtual world yourself. If, however, you find that your child is possibly at the point of a gaming addiction consider the following:

- increase their support network with family and friends
- discuss what might be the underlying issues that led to them gaming
- help improve their coping skills with involvement in extracurricular activities
- be a good role model and do not spend large amounts of time on the computer yourself
- set time limits on the computer
- get counseling if the situation warrants

http://olganon.org/
http://www.video-game-addiction.org/
http://www.netaddictionrecovery.com/
http://www.hiddenchoices.com/Content/Avoiding_Video_Game_Addiction.asp