

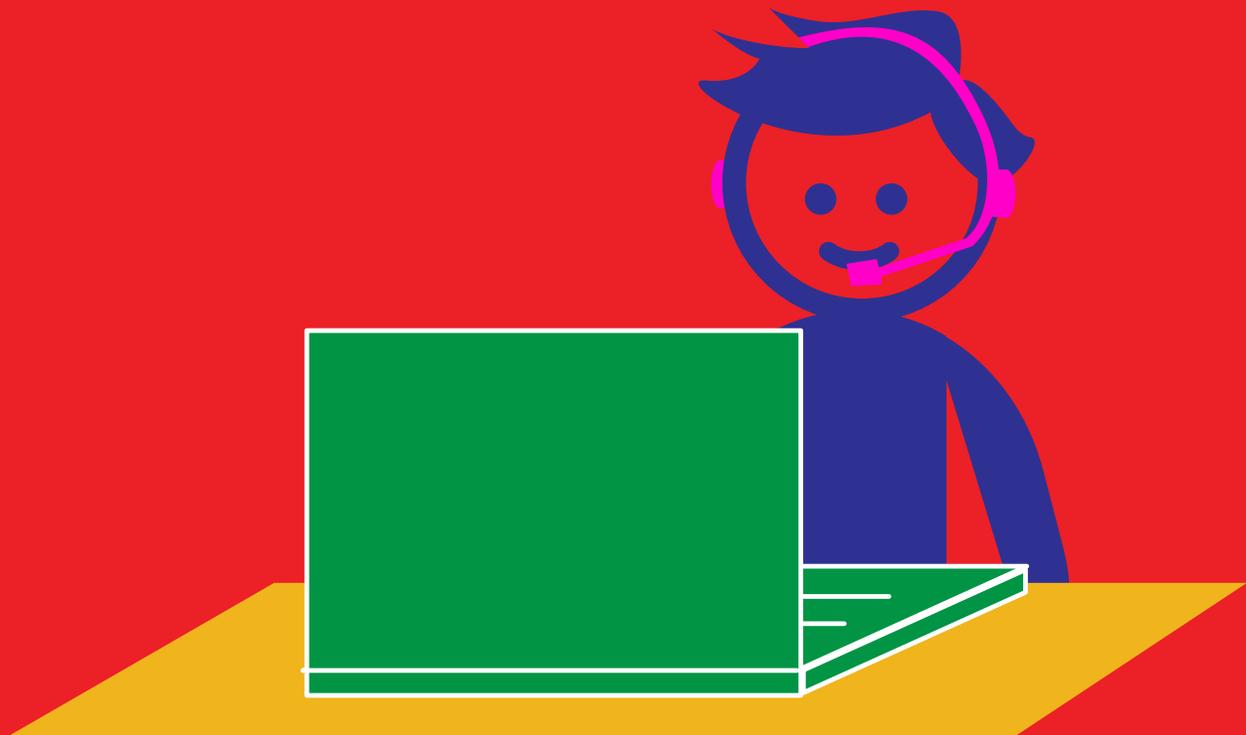


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Lesson:

Talking To Kids About

Gaming



BACKGROUND

Gaming is a major part of our media culture and families need to understand the pros and cons of becoming consumers of this media. Children will be exposed to various forms of gaming from peers, family members as well as mainstream media. Parents need to understand and identify how they will address the issue.

PREPARATION

- Evaluate if your child is mature enough to begin gaming. If you decide that your child is not ready, make sure you have an open conversation about your feelings and concerns.
- Outline the gaming guidelines you will have in your home including time limits, **game ratings**, gaming **console** location in the home, etc.
- Research some of the games your children are interested in. Discover for yourself the benefits and risks associated with these games.

OBJECTIVE

- Discuss pros and cons of gaming.
- Discuss family rules regarding gaming.
- Discuss the role **digital citizenship** plays with gaming.
- Discuss whether gaming will be a part of your family's recreational activities.

LESSON

Most Americans can easily identify many gaming characters like Mario, Pokemon, PacMan, and Donkey Kong. Since the creation of the Atari console, gaming has become part of our media culture, especially among children and teens. Video games attract many different types of individuals from young children to professionals.



DISCUSSION

Video games may have benefits such as creativity, problem solving, and cooperation in addition to negative effects such as addiction, hyperactivity, depression, and antisocial behaviors. Gaming can be a positive experience for families when everyone follows the rules that have been established.

- Discuss why we need to be careful with gaming.
- Discuss the rules you are establishing regarding gaming. Make sure to discuss:
 - How the gaming console and games will be purchased (i.e. parents purchase, presents, allowance, etc.)
 - Time allowed for gaming
 - Rules regarding play time (i.e. only after homework completed, earned for chores, only on weekends, etc.)
 - Location of console
 - Game ratings allowed in your home
 - Types of games allowed in your home
 - Whether online play will be allowed
 - Consequences for not abiding by rules
- Discuss digital citizenship regarding online game play (A great resource for digital citizenship is our read-aloud picture book, [Noah's New Phone.](#))



ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION FOR OLDER KIDS

- Negative consequences involved with overuse of gaming (i.e. addiction, false reality, antisocial behaviors)
- Being authentic but careful with personal information even in the gaming world
- Appropriate and inappropriate **fan culture** in association with the games they like
- In online gaming, others may use games as an escape where they act and speak negatively, and may not uphold your family standards or ideals: **DO NOT ENGAGE** with these individuals

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

1. What games and gaming consoles are you interested in purchasing and why?
2. What are your responsibilities as a digital citizen while gaming?
3. What are other activities that you could participate in instead of or in addition to gaming?
4. How can we make gaming more of a family activity?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR OLDER CHILDREN

1. What are some of the risks when you spend too much time gaming?
2. How can you deal with others who try to engage you in their negative online behaviors?
3. How much of the fan culture do you want to engage in and why?

ACTIVITES

1. Discuss this scenario:

Jesse, your best friend, just purchased a game that you have wanted to play since it came out. It is against your family standards, but Jesse says it isn't that bad and you can come over after school to play it. You know that your parents would be against it because it has been rated MA for language and violence, but it seems that all your friends are already playing it.

Questions:

- A. What would you say to Jesse?
 - B. How can you keep the family standards you agreed to live even when your friends don't?
 - C. What should your consequence be if you choose to go to Jesse's and play the game?
2. Show your family that games can provide family fun. For families that already have a console, find a family multiplayer game and spend time together playing the game. You can also use PC- or Mac-based family games if you have not yet purchased a console.

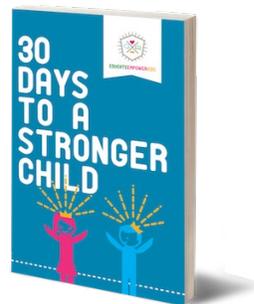
FOLLOW UP FOR PARENTS

- Parents should research their gaming system **prior** to their console purchase. Most gaming systems have additional charges for online play, digital games, additional controllers, interactive cameras, etc. Parents need to determine which is right for their children and their budget.
- Children may become excited, enthusiastic, or agitated during this discussion, especially if their opinion is different than yours. You should engage in open conversations and allow children to share their feelings and opinions so they feel heard regardless of the outcome.
- Parents should research gaming ratings to understand what ages and maturity levels are appropriate for their family members. Although some games may be rated “E10+” your child may or may not be ready at the ages the **ESRB** suggests.

RELATED DISCUSSIONS

All of the following lessons can be found in [30 Days to a Stronger Child](#) on [Amazon](#):

Accountability
Boundaries
Creativity
Research
Honesty
Play



RELATED ARTICLES, LESSONS, AND BOOKS

[My child wants THAT video game?! 7 Secrets to Help Answer the Big Question](#)

[My Child Is Hooked On THAT Video Game?! 5 Questions to Consider When Developing Your Action Plan](#)

[My Child Is Obsessed With THAT Video Game: Navigating Media and Fan Culture](#)

[10 Ways Kids Can Use Technology For Good](#)

[Creating a Media Guideline for Your Family](#)

[Noah's New Phone: A Story About Using Technology for Good](#)



GLOSSARY

Gaming: Using a console or computer to play interactive video games.

Console: Various companies' products marketed to play a variety of video games.

ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board): A nonprofit organization that rates games.

Game Rating: A designation given by the ESRB based on content within games.

Digital Citizenship: Appropriate and responsible behavior with regards to technology use; respecting others while protecting yourself while online.

Fan Culture: The fans and the merchandise marketed to them based on a specific gaming franchise.