



What effect do video games have on our children?



RESILIENCE

Article by
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*I describe today's kids, in my book **Raising Real People**, as the "click and go" generation - the baby boomlets, who were born with a mouse in their hand and who have grown up with the expectation of immediate gratification, instant outcome and continual entertainment.*

Video and computer games have a significant influence on their lives – both positive and negative. On the positive side they build hand-eye co-ordination and develop problem-solving skills. They can also be a form of social connection. Boys, in particular, use video games in a social way through organizing LAN's (local area networks) or simply by watching and discussing strategies. In many cases, boys read books full of "cheats" that guide them in ways to succeed at the game. The use of video and computer games is not completely passive.

These games also give a sense of great mastery, challenge and involvement. Children can become adventurous heroes winning battles, building cities and conquering challenges all in the safety of their homes.

Video games are popular and link into three of the

most desired states of childhood:

- the ability to have adult-like adventures with minimal adult involvement
- the ability to test yourself and out and,
- the sense of being in a club of other young people who collect these games.

Too much playing of these games can have a negative effect. These games can be so compelling that they become addictive. I have seen some children and young people in therapy for whom the withdrawal of the computer resulted in a grief reaction comparable to the loss of a family member!

The skills learned on these games do not appear to readily transfer into other arenas of life. Computer games are so successful at setting challenges and providing rewards that they seem to interfere with young people's ability to do this themselves. Very few of the games require creative problem solving or an opportunity to be an active participant in determining a story line. The illusion can be quite strong.

Recently, I asked a ten-year-old boy in a counselling session what sport he played. He answered,



"Quidditch!" When I asked him how he played this sport, he looked at me pityingly and informed me, "On the computer, of course."

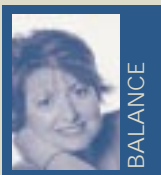
Children with low self-esteem or psychological vulnerabilities may seek solace in computer games. If you are neglected, anxious or depressed, a place where you can build cities, win wars and score points to become the world champion is a pretty compelling thing to do.

If you are experiencing powerlessness and get even a hint of power through violent video games you are likely to over-value the usefulness of violence as a way of solving problems. If a child continues to play violent games with very few social interactions that give him a sense of mastery, he faces a toxic mix that may lead him or her to some level of violent actions.

Parents need to parent their children and that requires them to involve their children in a variety of activities, the use of the computer may be one but certainly not the main one.

'Andrew's books and resources can be found on www.inyahead.com.au

Who's taking care of you?



BALANCE

Article by
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Who me? Yes, you! I know you're busy taking care of everyone and everything else in your life but if you don't stop and take care of yourself, then who will? It's time to put YOU back on top of your priority list!

In order to handle the demands of parenting everyone needs fully powered physical and emotional batteries. By recharging these batteries regularly you'll have more energy and be able to manage children more effectively. Here are a few tips to take care of you.

YES – Say yes to something you love to do everyday! When was the last time you took some

time out of your day for enjoyment? When did you do something minor like sitting outdoors to read. When you start giving yourself some regular rewarding treats you'll start feeling more cherished and happier!

ONE – Do one thing different every day! This helps break the rut you might be in. Taking baby steps is the key here. Small changes can lead to unexpected results.

Some suggestions:

- take an alternative route to work
- get off 2 stops before your regular bus/train/tram stop and walk
- take yourself out to lunch

- listen to/read something amusing on the way home from work

UNDERSTAND your needs. Unless you honestly understand what your needs are then you can't fully take care of yourself. Take a little time to make a list of what you need to help you feel more balanced. Keep that list handy on your desk, fridge or bathroom mirror, then go back to the first point and start saying "Yes" to one of those on a regular basis.

Just imagine for a moment what it would be like to have someone taking care of you for a change? Pampering ... nurturing ... being kind to you. Then go ahead and step into that role yourself. When you take the time to care for your needs not only will YOU benefit but those around you will be sure to notice the new you ... so, if you won't do it for you ... then do it for them!

Want to know how well you're doing now? I'll send you a 20-question Quiz when you email me at info@timeforyou.com.au with "Lifestyle Quiz" in subject line.