



## Video Game Addiction Masterclass 101

# What Will You Learn?

- What video game addiction is, and why it happens
- How to identify at-risk gamers (including warning signs)
- How to communicate effectively about gaming
- Practical solutions to treatment and recovery
- Three recent trends in video games that can present a risk for problem gambling

# Who is Cam Adair?

- Addicted to video games for 10 years
- Became an escape from intense bullying, anxiety, and depression
- Dropped out of high school, pretended to have jobs, wrote a suicide note
- Founded [GameQuitters.com](http://GameQuitters.com) to help others, now serving 75,000 members each month in 95 countries
- Named one of Canada's Leaders in Mental Health by CAMH
- Published in Psychiatry Research with Dr. Daniel King

# Video Game Addiction is Real

- Official recognition in ICD-11 by World Health Organization
- ‘Gaming Disorder’ is characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behaviour characterized by **impaired control over gaming**, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that **gaming takes precedence over other interests** and daily activities, and **continuation or escalation** of gaming despite the **occurrence of negative consequences**.
- For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behaviour pattern must be of **sufficient severity** to result in **significant impairment** in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other **important areas of functioning** and would normally have been **evident for at least 12 months**.

# Gaming Addiction

## Myths

- **It's not common.** Truth: 2 billion people game worldwide. WHO estimates 3-4% of gamers are addicted.
- **It's a mental health problem.** Truth: Depression and anxiety are co-factors, but gaming is a clinical entity on its own.
- **Gaming is healthy.** Truth: It can be, and many find a passion in gaming, but some do struggle with addiction.
- **It's a moral panic!** Truth: No empirical evidence of this.

# Screening Tool

- The Internet Gaming Disorder Scale (Lemmens & Gentile, 2015)
- Psychological assessment, empirically supported
- Published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA)
- Normal gamers: 0-2 criteria. Risky gamers: 2-4 criteria. Disordered gamers: 5 or more - **in the last twelve months**
- Online quiz for gamers or loved ones: [gamequitters.com](http://gamequitters.com)

# Warning Signs

- Pre-occupation
- **Withdrawal symptoms**
- Tolerance (King, 2017)
- **Unsuccessful attempt to control**
- **Loss of interest in previous hobbies**
- **Continued use despite negative impact**
- Deception
- Use of games to escape/relief negative mood
- Jeopardized or lost a lost significant relationship, job, education

# The Negative Impact

- School grades, school refusal, absenteeism, dropout
- Loss of face-to-face friendships and social isolation
- Mood changes (irritability, anger, boredom)
- Increased anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and attempts
- Poor sleep schedule, insomnia, staying up all night
- Loss of money, time





# Demographics

- Life revolves around gaming - user shifts priorities and takes shortcuts to maximize gaming
- Gaming is no longer a beneficial activity - they play because they cannot stop or control their behavior
- Gaming 30 hrs/week is a red flag, but 70 hrs/week or more is likely a problem
- Male adolescents are most at risk, young adults tend to begin experiencing negative impact

# Risk Factors

- Trait impulsivity
- Anxiety, Social Anxiety, Depression, ADHD, Autism
- Low self-esteem
- Excessive porn and internet use
- More chaotic or insecure family environments
- Single-parent households
- Less structured routines and schedules

# Why Gamers Play:

- Video games fulfill specific emotional needs: Temporary Escape, Social Connection, Constant Measurable Growth (Advancement), and Purpose
- Games are intentionally designed to keep you hooked using state of the art behavioral psychology
- Games are fully immersive, and provide hyper-stimulation (dopamine)
- Overexposure causes structural brain changes: numbed pleasure response, hyper-reactivity, and willpower erosion - take up to 90 days to reverse
- Gaming is a safe place to fail - real world failure can be permanent

# Generation Gap

- Quality of life is much higher than previous generations
- No need to get a job to 'survive'
- Instead we only want a job if it's our passion
- Gaming provides purpose and 'realizing ones potential'
- Warped sense of value, effort, and reward

# Peer Pressure

- Gaming is a community and a culture - these are meaningful relationships and may be their only relationships
- Gamers spend as much time playing games as they do watching other people play on websites like YouTube and Twitch
- Online world becomes a more reliable means of gaining social feedback and acceptance
- Gamers can feel guilty if they leave their game early because it lets their team down or they might fall behind in their skill level
- If they are not gaming they may be a social outcast at school

# Gamers Are Defensive

- Society has shamed gamers for being gamers (lazy, wasting their potential, those are not your 'real friends')
- This has created an Us. vs. Them mentality, which brings gamers closer together
- Shame and stigma are barriers for people to ask for help
- Don't tell them "you're addicted" as it hurts your relationship, instead focus on the behavior "you missed school today"

# Identity

- Gamers identify with being a 'gamer' and develop attachments
- They value their collection of games and achievements in the same way people value their real-world goods and relationships - How else can they fill this void?
- Their gaming history provides a record of progress, which is commonly a contrast to their lack of real-world progress
- Brain studies show addicts are more likely to identify with their online avatars to compensate for a poorer sense of self
- Tantrums/self-harm can be a form of anxious-attachment styles - similar to how it takes 90 days to get over a relationship ending



# Games Have Changed

- Games used to be simple: Atari, Pong, Pacman
- Today games offer unlimited experiences of winning and losing, complex narratives and characters
- Large open worlds to explore, opportunities to socialize
- They are accessible and ping you to spend money
- Games are constantly changing to keep you involved

# Fortnite Phenomenon

- The hottest game in the world: 200 million people play
- Free to play - yet has over \$2.4B in revenue (2018)
- Fortnite: World Cup has over \$100M in real prize money
- Parents are hiring coaches for their kids
- Battle Royale mode is a 100 player “last person standing”
- It’s cartoonish and retro (less gore and perceived violence)

# Fortnite Phenomenon

- It's free to play (low barrier, especially for kids)
- Level progression with a limited seasonal window (unique rewards)
- Live map events and map changes (maintains hype)
- Daily challenges (keeps you coming back)
- Limited, daily-refreshed shop (inclined to check daily)
- Available on all platforms

# Free-to-Play Games

- iPhone and App Store transformed gaming
- Gaming became much more accessible (over 83% of teens play games today)
- Business models changed from one-time purchase to being free with the opportunity to spend money within the game



RESTORE  
PURCHASE

# + SHOP



31



USD 1.99



USD 1.99



USD 3.99



USD 0.99



# ‘Educational’ Games

- Doctor Kids — kids play doctor/dentist
- Pop-up with an offer to purchase new mini games
- If child manages to press the X cancel, character on screen cries
- Game is marketed to kids as young as 6
- Structured so not spending money is wrong or shameful
- Study found 135 apps had manipulative advertising targeted to kids

# Gaming? Or Gambling?

- In-app purchases, micro transactions, loot boxes
- Loot boxes: contents are not revealed until after purchase
- Netherlands, Belgium: Loot boxes are gambling and now illegal
- EA SPORTS under criminal investigation in Belgium due to non-compliance
- Sixteen international gambling regulators, including Washington State have teamed up to address the risks of gaming and gambling

# Gateway to Gambling

- Video game loot boxes are psychologically akin to gambling even though they are rated as appropriate for adolescent players under the age of consent
- A large-scale study found evidence for a link between the amount gamers spent on loot boxes and the severity of their problem gambling
- 10% of 13-18 year olds (UK) admitted to gambling on unregulated casino, esports betting or mystery box games, despite age-verification procedures
- Game companies have patents to change the price of in-game offers based on your player data



# NBA2K19

- Rated E (Everyone)
- Common Sense Media recommends for Ages 10+
- Basketball game, what's the big deal?

**X TRIVIA**

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

WHEEL OF FORTUNE  
1,000,000



DAILY  
SPIN

2,5

500

1,500



S.O.A.T

S.O.A.T

770

pg. 4077


cardinal in the air

michael4852

DAILY  
SPIN





 Use ATM

# NBA2K19

- Rated E (Everyone)
- Common Sense Media recommends for Ages 10+
- Basketball game, what's the big deal?
- Ante-up (casino) to bet on basketball games with virtual currency
- Free Daily Spin (wait in line, can exit/re-enter 10x)
- ATM to use real \$ to buy VC

# Exposure to Kids

- Court documents revealed Facebook knowingly duped game-playing kids to spend money without parents permission
- Children did not always know they were spending money before a credit card bill came
- 15-year-old racked up \$6,500 in charges in two weeks. Facebook denied refund requests and referred to kids as 'whales' - a term used in the casino industry to describe big spenders
- Parents **MUST** be aware of credit cards attached to accounts



248.9K 18 6 %ER

## How I Got AirPods For \$4

RiceGum ✓ 10,793,831 subscribers 4M views • 2 months ago • 60%

Check Out Mystery Brand: <https://mysterybrand.net/en> Thanks Mystery Brand for partnering with me! PLEASE DO YOUR OWN ...



160.1K 27 6 %ER

## I Spent \$5,000 ON MYSTERY BOXES & You WONT Believe WHAT I GOT... (insane)

Jake Paul ✓ 18,266,027 subscribers 2.4M views • 2 months ago • 50%

OPEN YOU'RE FIRST BOX NOW!! <https://mysterybrand.net/> This video is sponsored by MysteryBrand #Ad PLEASE BE ADVISED: ...

# 6.2 Million Views Audience of Tweens





NMD

\$ 74.99



LV X Supreme High chances

\$ 1,299.99



Bape High chances

\$ 249.99



Supreme High chances

\$ 249.99



Bape X Supreme

\$ 99.99



Supreme x LV

~~\$ 59.99~~

\$ 49.99



Suppa Yeezy

\$ 74.99



Summer Hats

\$ 24.99

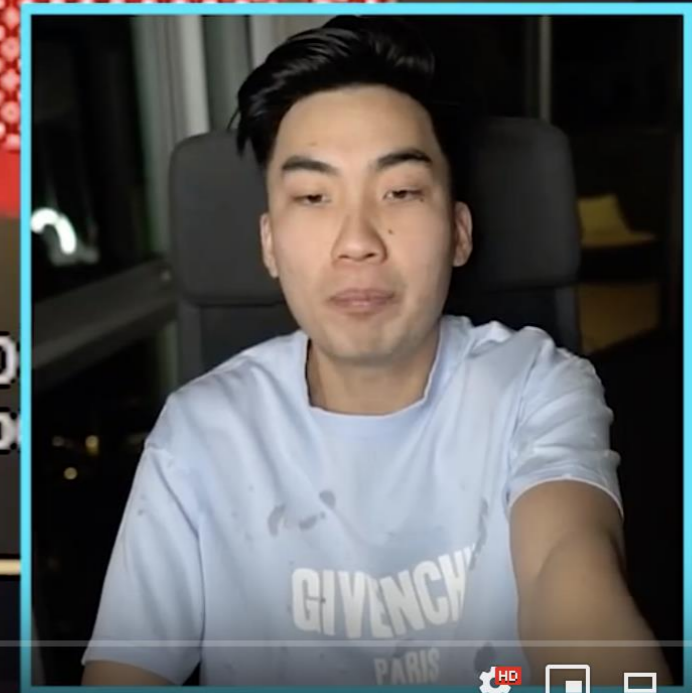
# IN THE \$250 BOX:



LOUIS VUITTON x SUPREME  
LEATHER JACKET



LOUIS VUITTON  
Hood



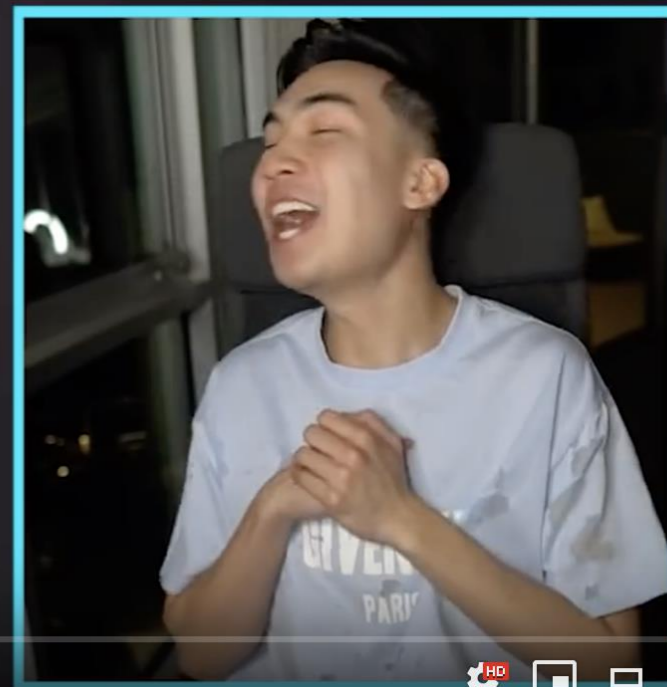


Gildan Hooded

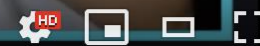
**\$7.67** Cashback for sale

TRY AGAIN

 SALE FOR \$13.95



▶ ⏪ 🔊 4:20 / 11:49





adidas Human Race NMD Pharrrell x Chanel

\$ 24,826.91



OPEN FOR \$247.65



Pink Fidget Spinner



## Pink Fidget Spinner

TRY AGAIN



SALE FOR \$2.56

The item will be sold automatically after 24 hours.



## Chanel Handbag

IN

SALE FOR \$10,994.5

will be sold automatically after 24 hours.



Chanel Handbag



LINK IN BIO!



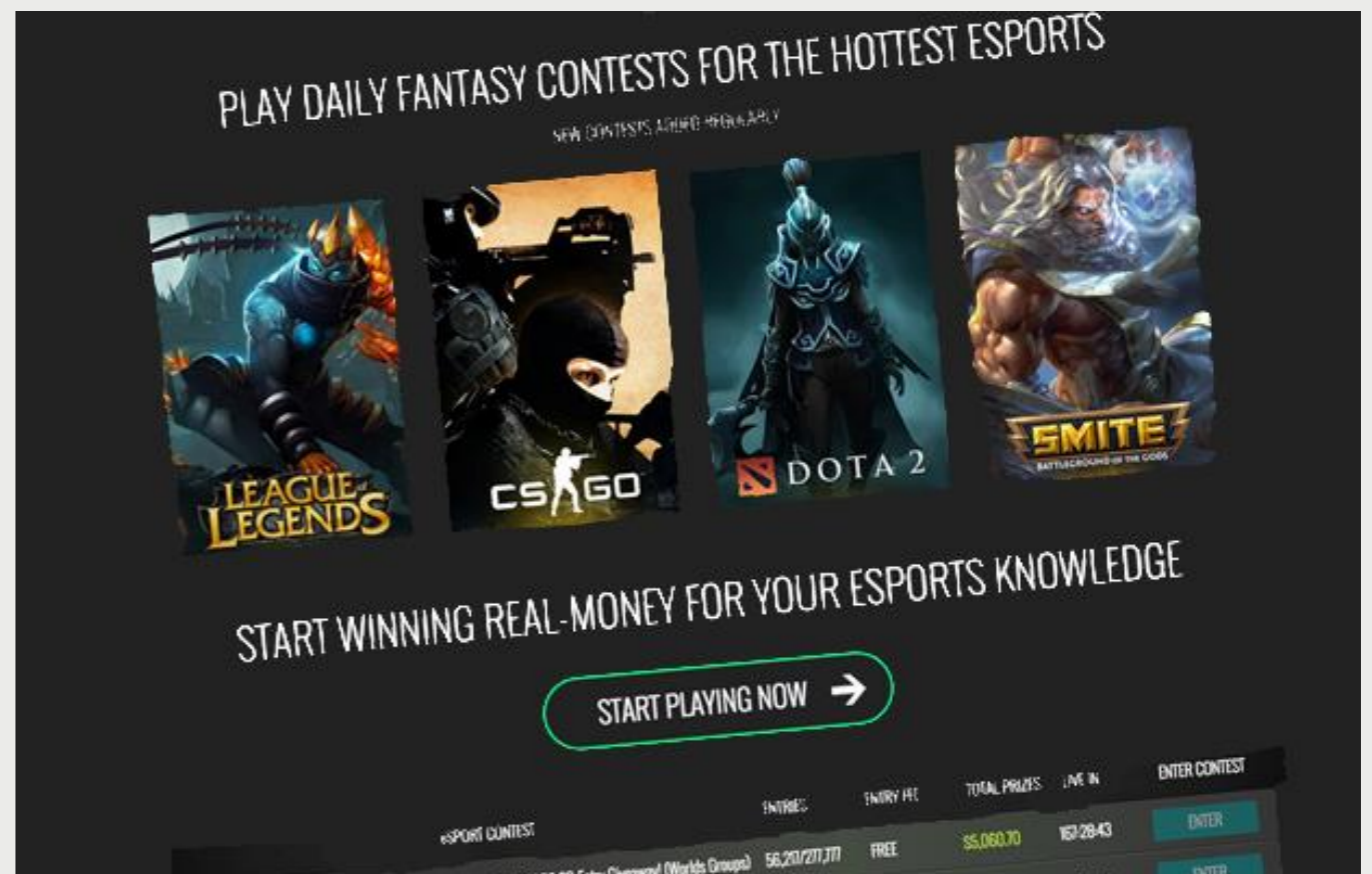
# The Rise of Esports

- Esports is a term for organized competition for video games
- Universities are adding esports teams, and offering scholarships for esports
- 600 universities and 19,000 high schools in U.S.
- Revenues will cross \$1B in 2019
- eSports betting, eSports arenas in casinos



# Esports Betting

- eSports arenas in casinos
- Betting on professional gaming teams
- Fantasy eSports
- Betting in-game items (“skins”)





# Esports Betting

- Gainsbury & Blaszczynski 2019
- Sports betters (n=501) showed that esports bettors:
  - are younger, more likely to be Asian, more likely to gamble offshore
  - are more likely to have a greater breadth of play (more types of gambling) & greater severity of gambling problems

# Twitch & YouTube

- Twitch - 15M daily visitors, 355 billion minutes watched (2017)
- Amazon acquired Twitch for \$970 million
- Gamers spend just as much time playing as they do watching other people play
- Opportunity for gambling industry to advertise

Twitch Prime Monthly games and in-game loot, exclusives, and access to hundreds of movies & TV shows with Prime Video.

Start Your Free Trial







endar\_telvanni What happens when Baba is More?  
fordicon98 he does the normal bunny thing  
mightytrigger7 floor is lava  
thenix I love how we immediately sacrifice "Win"  
endar\_telvanni so like, the map turns into Baba? thats what I hope  
thenix get out of here, you aren't important, "Win"  
tweetwire what happens if we make something like "baba is level"?  
mwobee then you must go deeper



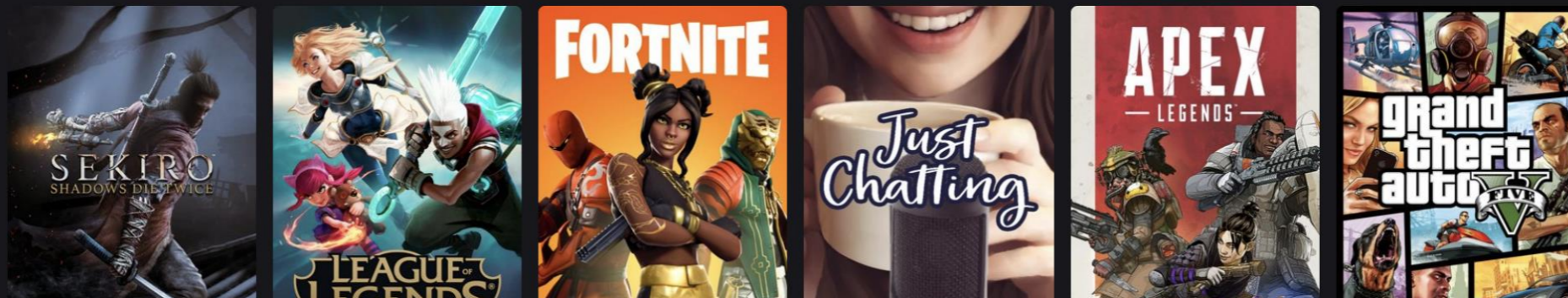
Patty playing BaBa Is You

### Join The Patty Party

With gaming skills second only to his dashing good looks, Patty is sure to be your new favorite streamer. Enjoy the dulcet tones of his voice as he regales you with complaints and woes about the video games he attempts to conquer. Welcome to the party.

 723	 598	 1,999	 19,828	 1,296	 392
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### Featured Categories Categories people are watching now



FPS: 69 | PNG: 39 MS

8% 0% 0%

POWDR BRAVO1206 ALPHA

DEFEND

WILLESJOS123 FOLLOW  
VLUGISH FOLLOW  
ODELBERG FOLLOW

Intel Core i7-7700 €237.76 €400.00  
#4 €0.00

SIGATONNOOBA

RECENT DONATOR Major1NiNJA: €10.00  
TOP D OF THE MONTH Synt: €100.00  
MUSIC

Gamewisp subscribers: 8/10  
**CASINO calzone**

200/200

47%

LSHIFT



credit: Brett Abarbanel

Video Credit: Erotitica

# FIFA (FUT)

- Mode: FIFA Ultimate Team (FUT) - build your custom 'dream' team
- Obtain players by purchasing "packs" that contain the **chance** to win the players you want
- James Good: Purchase the game for \$50, then spend another \$150 of his student loans on packs to try and win players "it's just normal"
- If your team wasn't good you couldn't win - pay-to-win
- Streamer spent €5,000 on packs to win the best players and still didn't
- Gold pack: 7,500 FIFA coins or spend £1
- To get 7,500 coins you would need to play 25 games of 15 minutes each: 94 hours


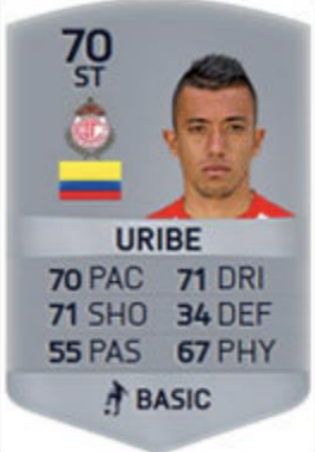
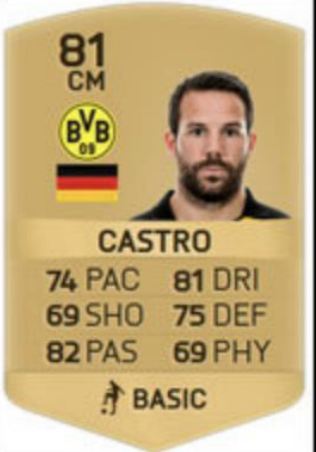
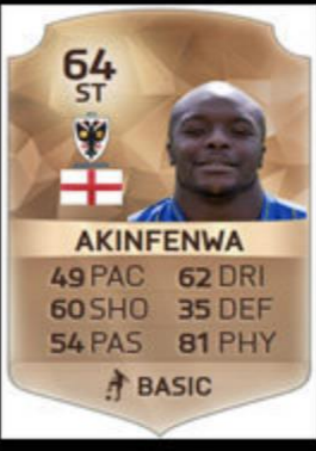
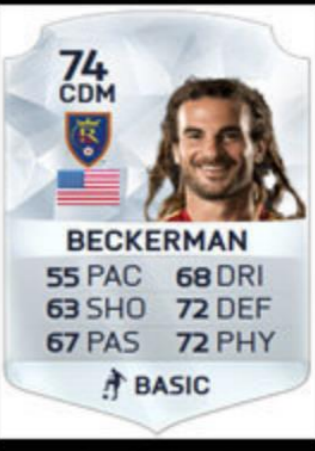


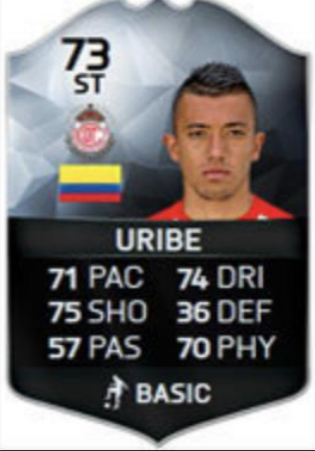

PACK

How would you like to purchase this item?


**5,000**  
 Coins


**100**  
 FIFA Points

BRONZE PACKS	SILVER PACKS	GOLD PACKS
1,600 FIFA POINTS	2,200 FIFA POINTS	4,600 FIFA POINTS
		
€14.99	€19.99	€39.99
1,600 FIFA POINTS	2,200 FIFA POINTS	4,600 FIFA POINTS

	Bronze 0 - 64	Silver 65 - 74	Gold 75 - 99
<b>Standard</b>	 <p><b>O'BRIEN</b> 72 PAC 63 DRI 56 SHO 30 DEF 48 PAS 65 PHY BASIC</p>	 <p><b>URIBE</b> 70 PAC 71 DRI 71 SHO 34 DEF 55 PAS 67 PHY BASIC</p>	 <p><b>CASTRO</b> 74 PAC 81 DRI 69 SHO 75 DEF 82 PAS 69 PHY BASIC</p>
<b>Rare</b>	 <p><b>AKINFENWA</b> 49 PAC 62 DRI 60 SHO 35 DEF 54 PAS 81 PHY BASIC</p>	 <p><b>BECKERMAN</b> 55 PAC 68 DRI 63 SHO 72 DEF 67 PAS 72 PHY BASIC</p>	 <p><b>RONALDO</b> 92 PAC 90 DRI 93 SHO 33 DEF 80 PAS 78 PHY BASIC</p>
<b>In Form</b>	 <p><b>O'BRIEN</b> 73 PAC 65 DRI 61 SHO 32 DEF 50 PAS 67 PHY BASIC</p>	 <p><b>URIBE</b> 71 PAC 74 DRI 75 SHO 36 DEF 57 PAS 70 PHY BASIC</p>	 <p><b>RONALDO</b> 93 PAC 91 DRI 94 SHO 35 DEF 82 PAS 80 PHY BASIC</p>

# CSGO

- Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) introduced skins
- Skins are a unique way to decorate your weapons
- Exploded popularity of the game by 1,500% in two years

# AWP | Dragon Lore

Covert Sniper Rifle



Souvenir Available



Steam

BitSkins



17 Steam Market Listings

Factory New	No Recent Price
Minimal Wear	\$1,761.34
Field-Tested	\$1,151.26
Well-Worn	No Recent Price
Battle-Scarred	\$730.04

Souvenir Factory New	No Recent Price
Souvenir Minimal Wear	No Recent Price
Souvenir Field-Tested	No Recent Price
Souvenir Well-Worn	No Recent Price
Souvenir Battle-Scarred	No Recent Price

Prices updated 3 minutes ago



# CSGO: Skin Betting

- Buy skin for cash, place bet in game, sell skin on third party site
- 3M players wagered \$2.3B worth of skins (2015), Valve received a 15% kickback
- CS:GO gambling industry was worth \$7.4B in July 2016

## Trades

★ Sarn wants to trade: (just now)

Factory New Minimal Wear Field-Tested → Any Offers Any Knife

★ BronKs wants to trade: (just now)

Battle-Scarred → Minimal Wear

★ Big Ounce wants to trade: (just now)

Field-Tested Minimal Wear Minimal Wear → Field-Tested Well-Worn Minimal Wear Minimal Wear

## Bets

44 minutes ago **LIVE**

ECS

TSM 53% vs EchoFox 47%

1 hour from now **BMC has 1-0 adv.**

RGN Pro Series

BMC 76% vs Nexus 24%

2 hours from now

CEVO

Cloud9 76% vs Splyce 24%

2 hours from now

ECS

Liquid 67% vs NRG 33%

### FAMAS | Valence

Restricted Rifle

StatTrak Available



\$0.73 - \$4.55

\$2.55 - \$22.32

Operation Wildfire Case

Inspect in-game (FN)

Search Steam Market

FAMAS Valence Skin & Price Details

### Five-SeveN | Triumvirate

Restricted Pistol

StatTrak Available



\$0.57 - \$1.46

\$2.22 - \$6.61

Operation Wildfire Case

Inspect in-game (FN)

Search Steam Market

Five-SeveN Triumvirate Skin & Price Details

### Glock-18 | Royal Legion

Restricted Pistol

StatTrak Available



\$0.52 - \$3.00

\$3.04 - \$19.10

Operation Wildfire Case

Inspect in-game (FN)

Search Steam Market

Glock-18 Royal Legion Skin & Price Details

### MAG-7 | Praetorian

Restricted Shotgun

StatTrak Available



\$0.59 - \$1.29

\$2.08 - \$5.69

Operation Wildfire Case

Inspect in-game (FN)

Search Steam Market

MAG-7 Praetorian Skin & Price Details

### MP7 | Impire

Restricted SMG

StatTrak Available



\$0.57 - \$1.50

\$2.16 - \$26.11

Operation Wildfire Case

Inspect in-game (FN)

Search Steam Market

MP7 Impire Skin & Price Details

### PP-Bizon | Photic Zone

Mil-Spec SMG

StatTrak Available



\$0.10 - \$0.57

\$0.32 - \$2.70

Operation Wildfire Case

Inspect in-game (FN)

Search Steam Market

PP-Bizon Photic Zone Skin & Price Details

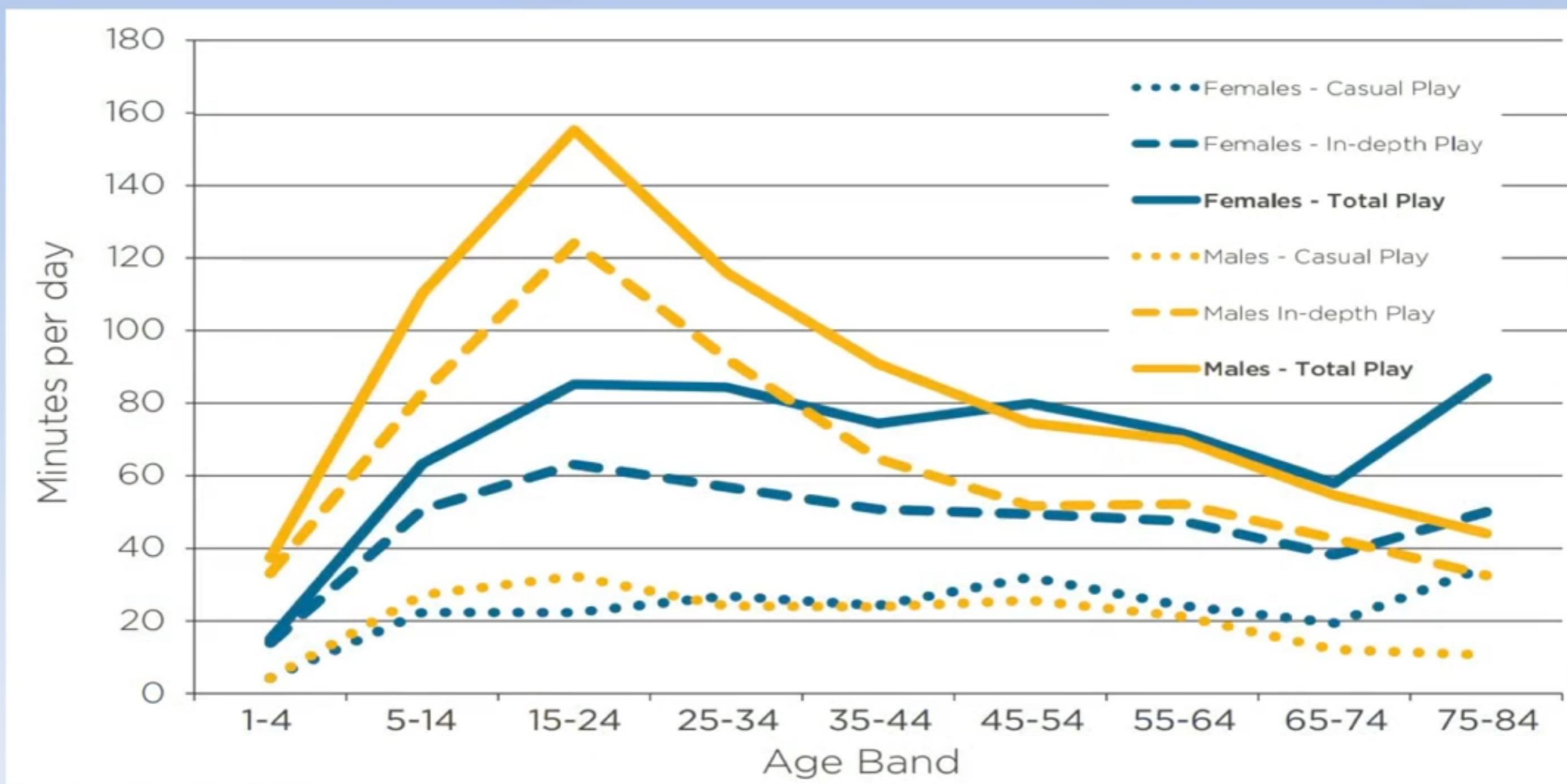
# Gold Rush

- Activision (Blizzard) generated \$7B in revenue (2017)
- \$4B of it came from in-game transactions
- Video game industry in U.S. \$43.4B (up 18% from 2017)
- Streamers can earn millions of dollars playing video games
- Ninja was paid \$1M to play (stream) himself playing Apex Legends on the first day of its release
- Apex Legends reached 50M players in two weeks

# Screen Time Guidelines

- Screen Time: TV, computers, smartphones, iPads, gaming - TV is the least harmful of them all
- Under 2 years old: none
- 2-5 years old: 30 minutes or less of TV only per day
- 5-12 years old: 30 minutes or less per day
- Over 12 years old: 2 hours or less per day
- Harm is found with 4 or more hours of screen time per day

# Gaming habits in Australia



SOURCE: Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (2018)

# Recovery Goals

- Reduce dopamine expectations, break attachments, create a contrast
- Find new activities and hobbies
- Establish new routines and habits
- Rebuild the family relationship
- Improve self-esteem and reduce anxieties
- Increase face-to-face interactions and friendships

# Your Own Tech Addiction

- Parents need to address their own tech addiction first
- Research shows kids have behavioral problems when parents are addicted to tech
- No tech at the dinner table, keep tech use out of sight
- Be aware of your own justifications and double standards
- Create a system of accountability - what will *you* give up?





# Change the Game

- Commit to a detox or reduce gaming to 2 hours or less and not every day for those over 12 years old
- Use “game-free days” as a way to earn “game days”
- Require exercise and homework to be complete first
- Be aware of bingeing cycles - weekends, holidays
- Remove gaming devices from bedroom (centralize)
- Shift to less risky game types: single-player, games that pause/end

# Limiting Access

- Setup Parental Controls on devices - Apps that can help you: Family Zone, Circle, Zift
- If you limit wifi access, also limit smartphone access
- Beware of ways around time controls - for e.g. if they factory reset the modem it will remove controls - lock it up!
- Phones and devices are handed in one hour (or more) before bedtime
- Turn autoplay off on YouTube (and Netflix)

# Find New Activities

- “Fill the void” with three types of activities: Mentally Engaging (new skill), Resting (at home), Social (new friends)
- Match new activities to gamers’ interests
- Ask them what type of games they like to play and what specifically they like about them
- Set appropriate expectations re: passion
- Find New Hobbies Tool: [www.gamequitters.com/hobby-tool](http://www.gamequitters.com/hobby-tool)

# New Routines

- Add structure with a daily agenda (free-time/weekends/school breaks) - consider a whiteboard
- Find an alternative to technology after school before homework
- Deploy the Pomodoro Technique (30-60 minute blocks of focus with a 5-10 minute non-digital break in-between - walk, get a cup of tea)
- Keep gaming from being the first priority of the day - when they wake up, have them go outside and get fresh air/sunlight
- Develop strategies to manage withdrawal symptoms - mindfulness, exercise, time in nature, face-to-face social interactions

# Potential Triggers

- Continuing to watch gaming videos and streams
- Paying attention to gaming news and websites
- Previous gaming friends inviting you to play
- New game releases (Sequels and Nostalgia)

# Withdrawal Symptoms

- Be proactive and develop 'default' strategies
- Meaning & Nostalgia (closing a chapter)
- Cravings (mindfulness & meditation, time in nature)
- Social (new environments, face-to-face interactions)
- Eating healthier, drinking water
- Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

# Rebuild the Family

- Create Family 'Sacred' Time - eat dinners together, organize activities together on the weekends
- Celebrate the small wins, change takes time
- Each family member needs to make self-care a priority - find ways to de-stress (walks, meditation, exercise)
- Find new environments to have difficult conversations - Cam's Milkshake story
- Family Therapy - be open to improving parenting styles



# Family Agreements

- Have a written set of rules or guidelines for technology use
- Enroll your gamer in the process - ask them what they think is fair
- Define your family's general values and principles
- Define family rules - translate principles into agreements
- Establish incentives and consequences - 5 consequences
- Allow wiggle room - mistakes are learning opportunities

# Setting Boundaries

- If you experience violence or are concerned about self-harm contact the police, emergency services, or a crisis line
- Boundaries are easiest to be set when children are younger
- Define your boundaries - be clear and concise
- Hold them accountable - respect yourself and have consequences
- Be kind to yourself - be aware of your own emotions, if not they will find ways to manipulate you

# Policy Suggestions

- Warning labels and notifications
- Ethical responsible design
- Leverage eSports for good (well-being handbook, training days, prevention programming at events/tournaments)
- Guide Gamers in need (personalized feedback pop-ups)
- Setup a Parent Committee in your community
- Loot Boxes being classified as gambling

# Additional Resources

- [GameQuitters.com](https://gamequitters.com)
- 200+ videos and 70+ inspiring stories
- Step by-step guides for gamers and parents (Reclaim & Respawn)
- Clinical Camps: Reset Summercamps (US)
- Residential Treatment: The Cabin (Thailand), reSTART (US)
- Game Quitters Parent Facebook Group

# Any Questions?

[camerondare.com](http://camerondare.com) | @camerondare | + 1 720 903  
5032

cam@gamequitters.com | invite me to speak!

programs & resources: [gamequitters.com](http://gamequitters.com)