



Video game addiction now recognized as a mental health disorder by the World Health Organization

For many years, parents have raised concerns that their child might be addicted to video games. Now, a new ruling by the World Health Organization (WHO) gives credence to those beliefs, as the agency agreed this weekend to recognize gaming addiction as a mental health disorder.

To be diagnosed with this disorder, people must be playing video games so much that it 'takes precedence over other life interests.'

The change has been reflected in the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD), a list used by health providers as a guideline for diagnosing patients.

Gaming disorder falls under the WHO's list of 'mental, behavioral or neurodevelopmental disorders' and closely mirrors the language used by the WHO to describe 'gambling disorder.'

The definition says gaming disorder is characterized by a '*pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behavior ("digital gaming" or "video-gaming"), which may be online (i.e., over the internet) or offline.*'

A person who suffers from gaming disorder may have trouble controlling how often they play video games, how long each session lasts, as well as quitting a game, among other things.

More importantly, those with gaming disorder give increasing priority to video games '*over other life interests and daily activities, as well as a continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.*'

In most cases, a person is diagnosed with gaming disorder after showing symptoms for at least 12 months, according to the WHO.

During research, experts found that some of the most critical examples of gaming addiction included individuals who played video games for up to 20 hours a day and didn't eat or sleep, as well as engage in normal activities like school or work, noted Shekhar Saxena, director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the WHO.

While gaming disorder is not likely to affect many gamers, if the described symptoms persist for more than a year, they could be diagnosed with the disorder, he added.

The WHO's decision has faced some criticism from those in the gaming industry, including the Interactive Games & Entertainment Association, which counts representatives from the US, UK, Canada, Australia and other countries around the world.

'Gaming disorder is not based on sufficiently robust evidence to justify inclusion in one of the WHO's most important norm-setting tools,' the IGEA said in a statement.



source: Daily Mail