

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF VIDEO GAMES:

Flow, Mastery, and the Needs Games Meet

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use this with whatever your family is playing. This is not a guide to cutting back. It is a guide to understanding what the game is actually giving someone.

1

BEFORE PLAYING

Get curious before you get concerned.

- ★ Ask what this game is good at making you feel: skilled, free, or connected to people.
- ★ Ask the player to teach you. Twenty minutes of being bad at their game beats a month of asking.

2

WHILE PLAYING

Notice the design.

- ★ Find the moment the game got harder right as you got better. That is not an accident.
- ★ Spot the progression bar, the daily reward, and the randomized drop, and ask who benefits from each.
- ★ Notice who else is in the game with you. For many players, this is the social part of the day.

3

AFTER PLAYING

Reflect together and make meaning.

- ★ What was the best moment, and was it about winning, about figuring something out, or about a friend?
- ★ Did time disappear? That state has a name, flow, and it is a genuinely good thing.
- ★ Was it still fun at the end, or were you just finishing the bar?

4

FAMILY REFLECTION

Go deeper with empathy, honesty, and connection.

- ★ Everyone name where else in life you feel skilled, free, and connected. Gaps here are the real data.
- ★ Talk honestly about money in games, especially randomized rewards you pay for.
- ★ Try this: agree that sleep is the one line, and hold that line instead of counting hours.

DR. Z TAKEAWAY

Hours played tells you almost nothing. Most people who love a hobby put a lot of time into it and are completely fine. The questions that matter are whether it is costing sleep, school, health, or relationships, and whether the person can stop when they want to. If the answer is no, that deserves real support, not a lecture.



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Connection heals. Conversations help.

