How Gaming Can Play a Positive Role in Mental Health

Games are an integral part of human life, regardless of one's current age. It is through the process of play that a child learns to explore the world – they discover sounds, colours, object names, geometric shapes and much more. Games play a vital role in shaping physical, mental and emotional health.

Underestimating games by attributing them only an entertainment role is a mistake. Such pastimes are often capable of developing various skills. For example, if you decide to play online poker, you will eventually notice that it has become easier to control your emotions, that you have learned to read the moods of those around you, and that you can perform mental arithmetic more quickly.

Today, we will talk about how computers and other games will affect your mental health, specifically focusing on all the existing positive aspects of such entertainment.

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Improving Self-Esteem

To advance to the next level, players often have to solve various tasks. The difficulty of these tasks depends not only on the game settings but also on the gamer's skills. Choosing the right genre and difficulty level of a video game can help improve mental health.

Here's how it works: a feasible task is presented to the individual, requiring specific efforts to be applied for its resolution. Each time a player completes a new level, they experience satisfaction. Additionally, in many games, players' achievements are rewarded with badges and trophies. As a result, successful task completion contributes to an enhanced sense of well-being and boosts self-confidence, helping to maintain mental health.

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Games for Combatting Depression

There is a special category of entertainment designed to combat depressive states in individuals. They have been created based on traditional therapeutic methods. For example, the role-playing game Sparx was developed for the treatment of depression. In a study conducted by researchers from the University of Auckland in New Zealand, 187 adolescents with moderate depression participated.

The children were divided into two groups: one group played Sparx, while the other received traditional therapy with a psychologist. In the initial phase of the experiment, improvements were observed in 44% of the participants in the first group and 26% in the second. In the subsequent stages, the difference in the results was insignificant, demonstrating the effectiveness of Sparx.

Games are Closely Linked to Motivation and Goal Achievement

You complete quests, evade hordes of zombies, or defeat powerful bosses, earning a bunch of in-game items in the process – this is likely to please you. A complex system of incentives is at play here. On the one hand, a personal desire to accomplish something specific or the prospect of receiving a reward for your overall efforts can motivate you.

However, not all game mechanics are solely built around deriving pleasure in one way or another. In particular, there is the principle of avoiding pain. This is the case when you escape from zombies or stealthily pass by a guard.
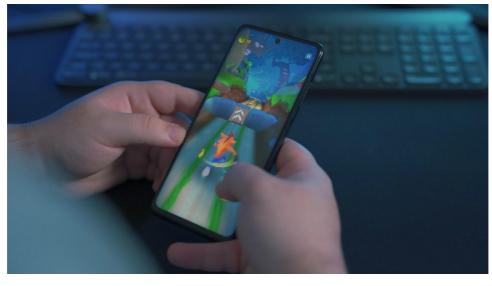
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Certainly, setbacks can trigger negative emotions, but they can also contribute to achieving a goal through new attempts – the game design of the Dark Souls series is based precisely on this. Researchers associate this with the hypothesis that intelligence can be perceived as a dynamic entity rather than something predetermined. It has been proven that adhering to this idea, which is prominently demonstrated in the gaming process, leads to improved academic performance.

How to Further Work on Your Mental Health

Below, we've gathered a few more tips to help maintain your mental well-being:

1. Maintain social interactions with your friends and family. Isolation may sometimes help you reflect on existing issues, but prolonged detachment from society will eventually lead to the loss of your basic social skills. As a result, it can lead to poor mental well-being, the development of depression, and other psychological problems.
2. Use social media. If you find yourself in a situation where face-to-face communication is not possible for various reasons, social media can come to your rescue. It can help you maintain consistent communication even with those who are currently far away.
3. Engage in physical activity. The best option is to join a gym where you can both engage in physical exercises and have the opportunity to make new acquaintances for social interaction. If going to the gym is not an option, simply spend more time outdoors. You'll notice how quickly your thoughts start to fall into place.

As you can notice, computers and other games have a multifaceted impact on a person's well-being and ultimately support their mental health. It is important, however, not to become overly engrossed and to remember other forms of positive influence on the psyche, such as sports, walks, social interactions with loved ones and friends, attending various events and more.

Try to also keep track of time during the game. Uncontrolled gaming sessions can lead to the development of addiction.

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