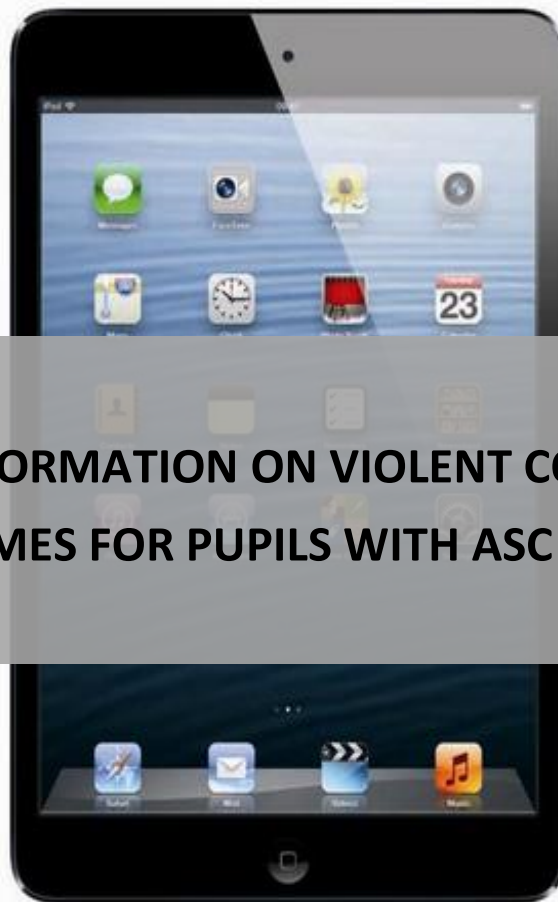


9/4/2014



CEAT.
CHESHIRE
EAST
AUTISM
TEAM

INFORMATION ON VIOLENT COMPUTER/VIDEO GAMES FOR PUPILS WITH ASC

Information on violent computer/video games for pupils with ASC

Further to discussions with Cheshire East high schools CEAT (Cheshire East Autism Team) have been asked to compile some information regarding the appropriate use of computer gaming for pupils with ASC.

While there are many benefits to playing computer games (problem solving or conflict resolution for example), it is important to remember the effects which gaming, and especially engaging with violent and non age appropriate games, can have on people with ASC.

Pupils with ASC usually learn best through visual means, hence their attraction to computer/video games, but can have difficulties with;

- distinguishing between fantasy and reality
- self control
- problem solving
- empathy
- becoming 'overloaded'
- emotional recognition and regulation
- social interaction
- appropriate use of language

Due to the difficulties listed above many pupils with ASC struggle to differentiate between socially appropriate reactions to their environment and the reactions they have seen/ learnt when gaming. This can lead to difficulties with relationships with peers and teachers.

The following are evidenced and research based facts;

- Children with an autism spectrum condition (ASC) spend about twice as much time playing video games as children who don't have a developmental disability.
- Researchers also found that children with an autism spectrum disorder or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are at an increased risk of [gaming](#) addictions, compared to children without the disabilities.
- Children with ASC or ADHD were more likely to have a video game system in their rooms.
- Children who play violent video games experience an increase in physiological signs of aggression; it increases heart rate and the natural 'stress' hormones start to flood the brain (adrenalin, for example.) This is exactly what happens to you if you get into a real, not computer animated, fight.
- Children who play violent video games experience an increase in aggressive actions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, in a local high school during the time GTA5 was released, attendance dropped and the number of behaviour incidents increased. This was across the general school population not just pupils with ASC.
- Children with autism and ADHD were more likely to play role-playing games, these types of games have been linked to video game addiction in previous studies.
- The number of hours a child spent playing video games and inattention (for example at school) were linked to video game addiction.

- The brain scans of children who had been playing violent video games showed an increase in activity in the amygdala, the part of the brain which stimulates emotions, and decreased activity in the prefrontal lobe, which regulates inhibition, self-control and concentration.
- A study, in which two sub-groups of pupils played non-violent games and some violent games, then allowed the pupils to 'punish' their opponent with a loud audio blast. The study found that the pupils who had played the violent games punished their opponents with louder and longer audio blasts than the pupils in the other sub-group.

Helpful suggestions:

- ✓ Computers and computer games are particularly fascinating but can become a dominant obsession so, it is recommended, that parents should, from the start, impose clear limits on the time allowed such, as turning off gadgets or wifi at the same time each day. (Digital Parenting)
- ✓ A visual timer could be used to help limit time spent on games. The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends that children not spend more than two hours in front of a screen per day.
- ✓ Careful consideration should be given to the age and content guidance attributed to games. (see information below)
- ✓ When playing with others on line give child visual reminders such as:
 - Use nickname rather than your own name
 - Keep personal information including school and home address, phone number etc. to yourself and try not to share this
 - If chatting, remember that the people you are talking to are essentially strangers.
 - Try not arrange to meet people you have met through gaming without checking with your parents first.

- ✓ Teach your child to recognise their own body's signs that they've had too much time on the screens. Here's some suggestions that can be listed and kept handy as a visual reminder;

ALTHOUGH I LOVE MY GAMES I NEED TO STOP NOW BECAUSE.....

- I notice after an hour that my brain becomes so fixed that I can't think of anything else, which means my brain needs a rest.
- Too much screen time can make my eyes tired.
- My brain can become too 'busy' with thoughts of the game. Not leaving room for anything else.
- Brains need a healthy balanced diet just like bodies do- time to play on the computer, time to solve problems, and time to sleep. Brains also like fresh air!
- Brains, like computers, need time to recharge.
- I start to feel a little crazy if I have too much screen time, my head goes hot.
- I can forget that there are other things I really like to do, until I do them.



Age rating for games

The following information is readily available regarding age and content ratings. (see web sites listed below). The information below is from the video standards web site.

iPHONE APP

If you have an iPhone you can download a free PEGI app. This app not only explains the PEGI system but also gives you the ability to search for any game rated under the PEGI system. Once you have located the game you are looking for the app will give details of the age rating descriptors and a short text description of the content of the game.

It is important to note that the age ratings 12, 16 and 18 are mandatory and that it is illegal for a retailer to supply any game with any of these ratings to anyone below the specified age. The age ratings 3 and 7 are advisory only. The PEGI age ratings enable parents and carers to make an informed choice when buying a game for their children.

12 = This rating is applied to video games that show violence of a slightly more graphic nature towards fantasy characters and/or non graphic violence towards human-looking characters or recognisable animals, as well as video games that show nudity of a slightly more graphic nature will fall into this category. Any bad language in the category must be mild and fall short of sexual expletives.

16=This rating is applied once the depiction of violence (or sexual activity) reaches a stage that looks the same as would be expected in real life. More extreme language, the encouragement of the use of tobacco and drugs and the depiction of criminal activities can be included in this category.

18=This adult rating is applied when the level of violence reaches a stage where it becomes gross violence and/or includes elements of specific types of violence. In general terms it is where the level of violence is so visually strong that it would make the reasonable viewer react with a sense of revulsion. This rating is also applied where the level of sexual activity is explicit which may mean that genitals are visible. Any game that glamorises the use of real life drugs will also probably fall into this category.

It is important to remember that some games are designed for an adult audience. If it says 18 on the box it is not because it is difficult to play, it is because the content, often violence, sex and bad language, is more suitable for adults

Further information is given in the following categories:



Information in the parents section www.pegi.info gives details of how each of the content categories relates to each age group rating.

For further information www.pegi.info and www.videostandards.org.uk