

How I Help 25,000 Video  
Game Addicts a Month in  
80 Countries

# What You Will Learn Today:

- What video game addiction is, what the causes are, and how to help someone with it
- Who the demographics are, what to expect after someone quits, and what to screen for
- How to reach more people who \*want\* help
- What gaming addicts want therapists to know

# Who's This Handsome Guy?

- 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
- Shared my story online, went viral. Founded [GameQuitters.com](http://GameQuitters.com), the largest support community for video game addiction
- Originally from Canada, now based out of San Diego

# I'm not just good looking!

- Game Quitters supports 25,000 members a month in 80 countries around the world
- YouTube: 150+ videos of free content
- Community Forum: 20,000+ journal entries
- Online Recovery Program: Respawn (\$47)
- Parent/Therapist Program: Reclaim (\$97)

# Video Game Addiction 101

- Video games fulfill four specific needs: Temporary Escape, Social Connection, Constant Measurable Growth, and Purpose
- Games are intentionally designed to keep you hooked using state of the art behavioral psychology
- To quit, you need to “fill the void” with three types of activities: Mentally Engaging, Resting, and Social
- Use a 90 day detox to reset the brain’s dopamine expectation levels due to structural changes

# Expect the Following:

- Cravings and urges, compulsions to play
- Withdrawal symptoms, especially boredom
- Loss of friends, lack of conversation topics
- Loss of “Gamer” identity
- Struggles with Time Management (mindless browsing, just consuming entertainment)

# Who Are Gaming Addicts?

- 90% Male, Average Age: 23, College students
- 48% of YouTube audience is 25-34 years old
- CAMH: 13% of students grades 7-12 had symptoms of a gaming problem, 4% increase since 2007
- 60% of Game Quitters are in school, unemployed, or earn less than \$500/month
- Most also struggle with porn and mindless browsing on the internet

# Game Quitters 90 Day Detox Study

- Dropouts: Met an average of 6.6 of 9 criteria for IGD, 54% had an intention of quitting indefinitely, 84% knew they had a problem over 12 months ago.
- Abstainers: Met an average of 6.1 of 9 criteria for IGD, 48% met Moderate+ Comorbidity/Risk for Depression. Overall Quality of Life measure went from an average of 3.5/10 to 7/10.
- Both started gaming at an average age of 9 years old. Gaming over 25 hours/week and over 25 hours/week on other online activities.



# SCREEN FOR

- Continued play despite negative impact (87%)
- Failed attempts to quit (80%)
- Loss of interest in other activities (77%)
- Use gaming to escape (71%)
- Pre-occupation (80% of Dropouts)
- Depression (Moderate+)

# IN THEIR WORDS

- “My freshman class was the first to have more dropouts due to World of Warcraft than to drugs, and it wasn't because drug use was down.”
- “Failing college pretty hard right now. I kept this to myself, but everyone knew I was taking too much time playing instead of doing real work, they just see this more as a failure than a real problem.”
- “I didn't request or receive any help from the school. I remember going to the in-house psychiatrist once, and I was diagnosed with having trouble adapting to a new environment. They didn't ask me if I was gaming excessively, and I didn't tell them either.”
- “It affected my academic performances heavily in university. I didn't show up to classes, procrastinated immensely to skip tests and homework, and used gaming as an escape. My teachers and professors weren't aware of it, and didn't even care. No one asked any questions.”

# Gamers are DEFENSIVE

- Society has shamed gamers for being gamers (lazy, wasting their potential, those aren't your 'real' friends)
- This has created A LOT of stigma, "Us vs. Them" mentality
- Reddit post on failing out of college due to a gaming addiction went viral
- 55,000 people came to our community in 3 days, 2,500 new members signed up
- Half of these gamers were "haters" who attacked our community for wanting to quit
- "Is this a joke?" "Video game addiction isn't real."

# How do we help so many?

- Website isn't bland, boring, and sterile. It's cool, fun, and relatable. Something to be proud of. We use colors! Market to the addict, not the therapist!
- We reach them where they are: YouTube, Reddit, Forums, and Google Search.
- Where do the people you want to help 'hang out' online? What are the top questions they're searching for? "How to quit playing video games."
- **WE DO NOT SHAME OR STIGMATIZE**

# Advice for Therapists

- “Games have no pause button, or end. There’s always something else to do.”
- “That unlike any other addiction out there, it’s omnipresent. There aren’t barriers like the cost for alcohol, hoops to jump through for drugs, or limited locations for gambling.”
- “Gaming addicts are great BSers like other addicts. Parents will think ‘at least my kids aren’t out there drinking or doing drugs’ without knowing how deep the spiral goes.”
- “That online games provide a sense of accomplishment, conquest and belonging in a group. It then numbs and diminishes the drive to achieve those things in the real world, which in turn contributes to cravings, because you want to return to the online world as soon as possible to experience those sensations again.”

# Advice for Therapists

- “A non-gamer therapist may struggle to understand just how thoroughly games can supplant one's understanding of value/work/effort in the real world. Games are extremely explicit in their expectations and consistent in their rewards. Real life is murkier; actions and outcomes often have no linear relationship. To a gamer this inconsistency can be extremely demotivating -- getting your life on track doesn't have an xp bar.”
- “You are up against an industry that made \$30.4b in the United States in 2016. They are terrifyingly good at what they do. A solid grounding in abusive game mechanics (e.g. Skinner boxes, free-to-play, micro transactions) is IMhO extremely important, as well as a set of best practices to combat them.”
- “For me personally I love the competitive aspect, as I am a very competitive person but I'm not great at sports due to physical problems. However with gaming if I play lots and try hard I get better and therefore a higher skill rank. It's rewarding and I use it as a competitive outlet, but it simply takes up too much time.”

# CONCLUSION

- Video game addiction impacts 10+ million people around the world, of all ages and backgrounds
- Starts in high school, but expresses itself in college
- Significant gap of awareness for all, including for gamers, parents, schools, and therapists
- Stigma and shame are major factors keeping addicts from reaching out for help
- [GameQuitters.com](http://GameQuitters.com) has a ton of resources for gamers, parents, and therapists

# CONTACT

- Email me: [cam@gamequitters.com](mailto:cam@gamequitters.com)
- Call me: (720) 903-5032
- Twitter: @camerondare
- Love to speak at schools, or organizations
- For Gamers: [gamequitters.com/respawn](http://gamequitters.com/respawn)
- For Parents: [gamequitters.com/reclaim](http://gamequitters.com/reclaim)