

'Gaming Disorder' recognized as a worldwide mental health condition

December 28 2017, by Howard Cohen, Miami Herald



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Americans had "Pac-Man Fever" as far back as 1981 but it has taken until now for the World Health Organization to officially recognize that playing video games too often could be a mental health disorder.

The WHO is planning to add the term "Gaming Disorder" to its official list of diseases in 2018, according to a draft of the organization's 2018 International Classification of Diseases.

The WHO's description of Gaming Disorder says that those who are afflicted are characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behavior, either on digital devices like smartphones or video-gaming offline on machines.

According to the WHO's description you may have a problem if your symptoms include impaired control over gaming—you just can't stop playing. Right now you are jonesing for a round of "Horizon: Zero Dawn," "Assassin's Creed: Origins" or "Star Wars: Battlefront II," that millions are playing at this very second and you feel left out. This could be a red flag.

Or, you give an increased priority to playing video games to the point they take precedence over other life interests and daily activities like eating and sleeping and socializing.

And, the continuation and escalation of gaming continues even after you suffer negative consequences like getting fired for playing on company time or you keep losing relationships because you just aren't present.

The WHO's classification means that doctors and insurance companies can recognize Gaming Disorder as a disease.

The WHO's clinical description does not include prevention or treatment options.

But Forbes suggests you can self-diagnose by asking yourself the same questions people use to detect alcohol addiction. Just swap the word "alcohol" for "gaming." If you identify strongly with the four questions

you may have a problem and are advised to try to cut down:

- Have you ever felt you should cut down on your gaming?
- Have people annoyed you by criticizing your gaming?
- Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your gaming?
- Are video games usually the first thing you think about in the morning when you wake up?

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Citation: 'Gaming Disorder' recognized as a worldwide mental health condition (2017, December 28) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-12-gaming-disorder-worldwide-mental-health.html>

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