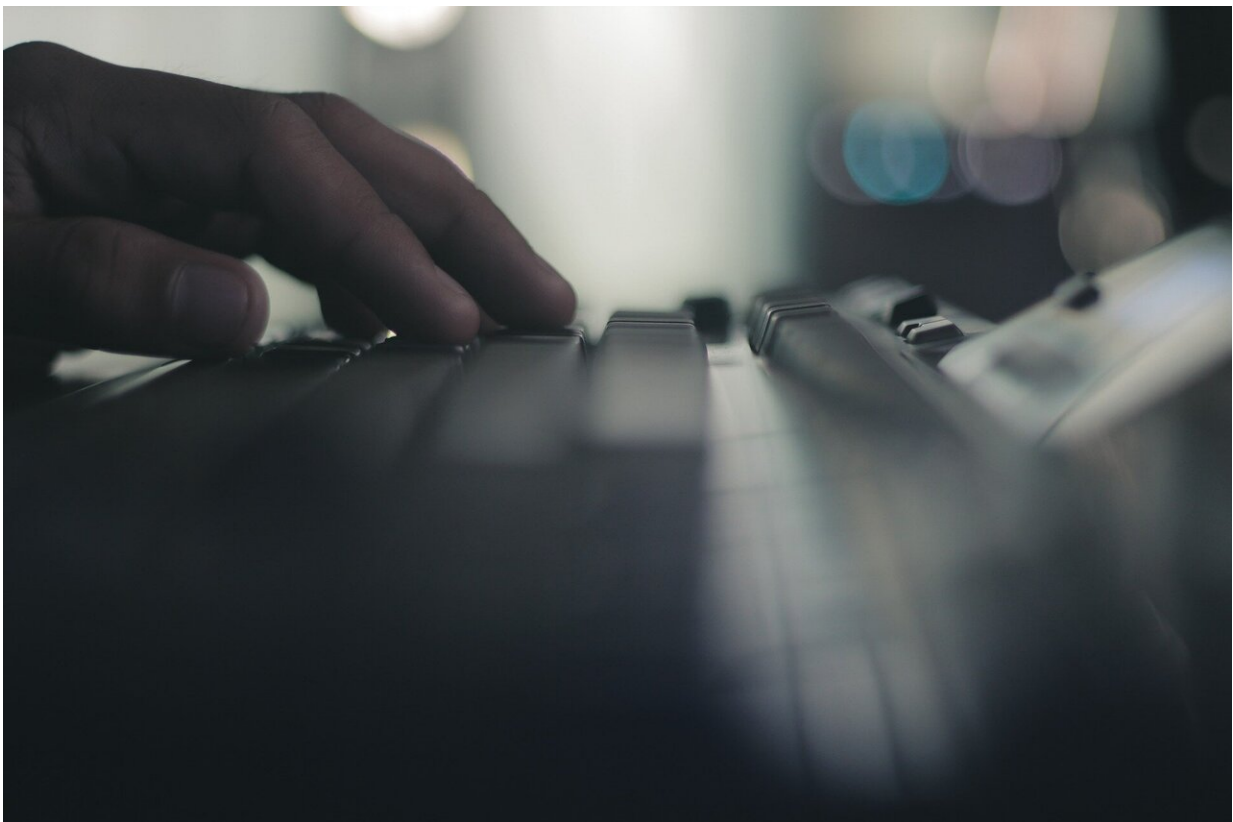


# **PROTECT intervention found to be effective in reducing symptoms of gaming and internet addiction**

February 24 2022, by Bob Yirka

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A trio of researchers at Goethe-University Frankfurt, has found that the PROTECT intervention technique can be somewhat effective in

reducing symptoms of gaming and internet addiction in teens. In their paper posted on the open-access site *JAMA Network Open*, Katajun Lindenberg, Sophie Kindt, and Carolin Szász-Janocha, describe how they tested the technique on teen volunteers and what they found by doing so.

Prior research has shown that both gaming and [internet use](#) can be addictive, particularly for young people. Prior research has also shown that such addictions can lead to [mental health problems](#) and schoolwork issues. For that reason, [mental health professionals](#) have been looking for ways to help both parents and their children who have become addicted to playing video games or cruising the internet. In this new effort, the researchers tested the use of an approach called PROTECT (Professional Use of Technical Media)—a type of cognitive therapy. When used to treat people with addictions, professionally trained therapists use techniques that have been developed to reduce negativity and negative thought patterns. In teens, the program has been tweaked to address problems with anxiety and boredom, factors that have been associated with gaming and [internet addiction](#).

To find out how successful PROTECT might be as an intervention for teens, the researchers enlisted the assistance of 422 [high school students](#) from 33 schools—127 of them were enrolled in a PROTECT program while 255 were used as a control group. Those in the PROTECT program attended four 90-minute therapy sessions. After that, each was interviewed periodically over the course of the following year to learn about their gaming and internet usage habits.

In looking at the data, the researchers found that the severity of symptoms of the teens who had participated in the program dropped an average of 39.8% compared to 27.7% for the control group. They also found that, unfortunately, the program did not lead to reductions in the number of teens who were addicted to either gaming or using the

[internet](#). The researchers also found that most of the participants in the PROTECT program experienced an increase in symptoms during the first month after training but then saw decreases after that. The researchers suggest this was likely due to an increased awareness of their addiction problems.

**More information:** Katajun Lindenberg et al, Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy–Based Intervention in Preventing Gaming Disorder and Unspecified Internet Use Disorder in Adolescents, *JAMA Network Open* (2022). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.48995](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.48995)

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