



*Aldersgate Youth Services "COVID-19 Weekly Tips & Activities" assists & supports parents, health care providers, employers & religious leaders who work with and care about children, teens, young adults and their families at this challenging time.*

## **Weekly Update**

### **Parent Tip Sheet**

#### **Video Games and Screen Time**

Video gaming is a reality in our culture. During the Covid-19 crisis, social media use has increased 50%, and gaming has increased 75%. Children are spending time doing schoolwork on the computer as well as gaming and accessing social media to stay connected to friends and avoid feeling socially isolated.



**When does video gaming become a problem?** Gaming can be a problem: if it interferes with sleep, if your children are staying up all night to play, if it interferes with family meals and opportunities for connection, and if your child become reactive when limits are set. Take the time to notice any negative behaviors or attitudes related to playing video games. Some children may become angry when they lose, become stuck on a certain level or in a certain realm while gaming.

**Why is it so attractive to our children?** Video gaming, social media, and all other screen use are high dopamine activities or HDAs. They activate the pleasure center of the brain. Binging on video games increases dopamine levels. Eventually children require increased amounts of screen time to achieve the same brain reward, and that is how addiction can start.

**What's a parent to do?** While some parents use contracts to limit or monitor screen time, some experts recommend alternating HDAs and low dopamine activities or LDAs. For every block of time spent on HDAs, there should be a block of time spent on LDAs. LDAs include sports, reading, music, board games, crafts, cooking, or other non-electronic activities. LDAs can teach children delayed gratification skills and promote creativity. Children may have to go through a screen detox to reprogram their brain. A tech-free day may provide an opportunity for the whole family to disconnect from the electronic

world and reconnect with each other.

Aldersgate is available for telehealth individual therapy and family counseling sessions. Please contact Aldersgate at 215-657-4545 or [info@aldersgateservices.org](mailto:info@aldersgateservices.org) to schedule.

**Pat Wilcke, MFT**  
**Clinical Program Coordinator**

## Important Resources

### Gaming Resources

It's difficult for parents to know what to do regarding their children's use of video games. It's important to know that not all video gaming is harmful. There are certainly benefits to gaming including improved coordination and problem-solving skills. These can also be an excellent source of learning and can provide positive social interaction. The challenge is learning to find a balance. \*Visit [www.common sense media.com](http://www.common sense media.com) to learn about the healthy use of social media including movies, video games, apps, etc.



Here are some other helpful resources to help parents learn more about video games, and how to set healthy boundaries for their children to enjoy them. Also check out additional information on Aldersgate Youth Services' Resource Page on the agency's website related to video games and screen time.

[www.olgannon.org](http://www.olgannon.org) On-Line Gamers Anonymous, a 12-step self-help support group

<https://techsavvymama.com> helps parents navigate the digital world

[www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) Entertainment Software Rating Board provides gaming ratings

[www.gamequitters.com](http://www.gamequitters.com) helps addicted gamers change their behavior.

[www.pacouncil.com](http://www.pacouncil.com) Council on Compulsive Gambling

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## Aldersgate Welcomes Your Thoughts & Feedback

Survey

## We Create Success Stories



### Who We Are & What We Do

Aldersgate is a non-profit human services agency located in Willow Grove, PA. We offer counseling and other emotional, behavioral health supports and drug and alcohol prevention/intervention services. Social and emotional learning programs are also provided at the agency, in area schools and in the community.

Aldersgate is currently providing telehealth support services for adults and for children, teens, and their families.

Contact us for more resources:

Aldersgate provides support services to students in Abington, Bishop McDevitt, Cheltenham,

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