

Is gaming making you anti-social?

BT finds out if the average amount of time spent by a person playing video games being recorded at 18 hours every week, is a cause for concern

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The time you spend playing video games may actually have its advantages. Take, for instance, a new study, presented by the University of Iowa, which suggests that gaming slows down mental decline among adults. On the other hand, young parents today have a totally different point of view. They fear that the number of hours their children spend gaming is directly related to the decline in the number of hours they spend playing or communicating with real people. The average amount of time spent by a person playing video games has been recorded at 18 hours a week. With the numbers seeing a steady rise over the last few years, **BT** finds out if there is any truth in the statement that the next generation could be one that lacks social skills.

Bangalore-based entrepreneur and socialite Batita Sharma voices the concern of many parents when she says, "Every time I ask my sons something when they're playing a game, they just nod their heads without saying anything and I know they're not paying attention."

However it's not only children that people are concerned about. It is reported that a huge percentage of adults are so addicted to gaming devices that they prefer playing to attending a social gathering.

Counsellor Meera Ravi points out, "Today, people can't function if they don't have their cellphones with them. This holds good for both men and women. This 'accessory' not only intrudes on privacy, but it also affects relationships. Getting the highest score on a game has become more important than sharing real quality time. They tend to get so involved in the game and often neglect or ignore the people around them." And for all

A huge percentage of adults are also addicted to their gaming devices



those who insist that gaming is what they indulge in to kill boredom, Meera asks, "Twenty years ago, when there were no video games, did people die of boredom?"

Contradicting the fact that gamers lack adequate social skills, the gamers themselves argue that a lot of the games they play involved social interaction too, albeit virtual. "Games like *Call of Duty*, and such others, require a lot of interaction with others within the game itself, even though there is no face-to-face encounter," they point out.

A piece on the topic by Washington-based research

specialist Amanda Lenhart highlights the fact that the average teen generally plays online games with friends and family. Singer and musician Richa Paul reacts, "It's alright to indulge in a bit of gaming every now and then — say for instance when you are waiting at the airport or travelling by plane. But I don't understand why one would engage in the virtual world when you can be socially active in the real world. Leave those gaming controls, go out and get a life."

— Contributed by Sneha Kalra

YOU ARE A GAMING ADDICT IF YOU...

- Make it a point to check out the high score of the day on all of your games every day
- Often find yourself having to ask what was spoken to you when you were aiming at a high score
- The techniques of a game often become your topic of conversation when you socialize
- Find yourself foregoing sleep without even realising it is too late to be obsessing about a game