Talking to Your Child About Gaming

Is Gaming Becoming a Problem? Here's What to Look for:

- Changes in behavior – irritability, anger, sadness

- Problems with school, friends or family

- Loss of interest in activities

- Health issues, such as less sleeping or not eating properly

- Obsession with gaming – unable to stop

- Lying about time or money spent

Next Steps if There is a Problem:

- Make sure your child is safe.

- Speak with a mental health professional or a trusted person in your community.

- Protect financial resources and remove child's access to money.

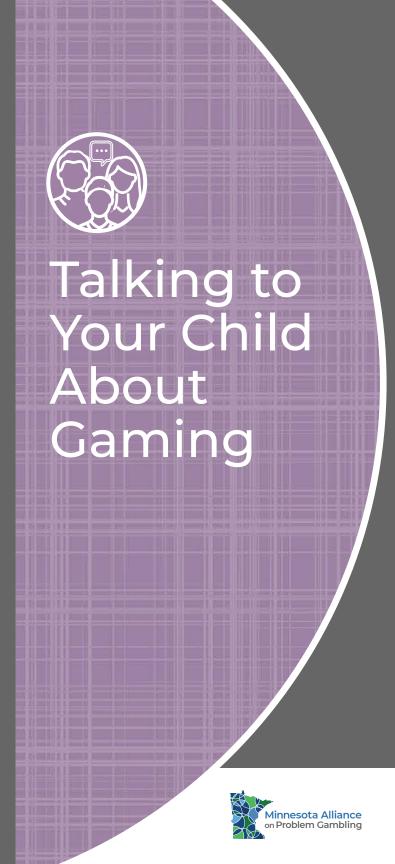**Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling**

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As the state advocate for problem gambling, we are available for community presentations.

Minnesota gambling helpline
1-800-333-HOPE (4673)

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Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling

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Gaming is growing in popularity among all ages and game designers are targeting ever-younger audiences. While these games can make for fun entertainment, here are some tips that adults can use when engaging in conversations about their child's gaming activities.

Open Communication is Key

Show interest in what your child does on their phone, tablet or gaming system. Ask questions and listen to their answers. Keep judgement and opinions to yourself for now.

CONVERSATION STARTER
"Can you show me how to play that game?"

Timing is Everything

Pick a non-stressful time to have a conversation, such as during dinner, on a car ride or during a family activity. Kids are more likely to talk if you aren't looking directly at them.

Frequent, short conversations are more helpful than one, long conversation.

Provide Facts and Information

Gather information about the negative and positive aspects of video and online gaming.

Explain to children that many games now offer activities within them that look like gambling and that several online games trick players into spending money. Tell them that gambling is illegal and unregulated. This means there are no player protections and game operators can be predatory.

CONVERSATION STARTER
"Does this game ever ask you for money?"

Develop Rules Together

Kids of all ages need and want boundaries and rules around technology use. Rules are more likely to be followed if kids help with the development of them.

Rules should include screen time limits, types of games, whether money can be spent and how much, what time of day or days of the week, and other rules that are appropriate for your child. Follow through and enforce consequences.

Check In

Keep an eye on your child's gaming activities and watch for the time and any money that they are spending.

Also check in on how they are feeling – how does gaming make them feel, how do they feel about the rules and consequences?

Safety

Be aware of who your child is interacting with online. Adults can pose as youth and mislead children into sharing too much information about themselves.

Look at the websites and apps that they are accessing. Look for pop-up ads and requests for personal information and forms of payment.

CONVERSATION STARTER
"Let's take a look at that app together."

There are few things that you should NOT do:

- Never abruptly take away a game or turn off the power to a game. This will only cause emotional stress to a child and will not help with problematic behavior.
- Do not use scare tactics to change behavior. Using scary or false information does not lead to better behavior and can make things worse.

Children and teenagers listen to what you say. If you let them know that you care about them and are concerned about their behavior, that matters to them.

Gaming is a social activity and may be the only way that a child interacts with other people. Friendships and communities are built through gaming, which becomes important to the player.

Talking with your child about their gaming opens the door for them to reach out to you when they have a question for you, or they need help.

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