

Video Games for Depression and Anxiety

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Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of video game therapy on depression and anxiety in children and adolescents.

Introduction

Depression is defined as "feelings of severe despondency and dejection." Anxiety is defined as "a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome." Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a gold standard for changing thinking patterns and behaviors that cause anxiety and depression. Since video games are emotionally engaging, motivational, and accessible, they have been used to address mental health issues as a form of CBT.

Public Perception

More psychologists are beginning to see the benefits of video gaming as an new approach to improving mental health. There continues to be a stigma about identifying and addressing mental health problems like depression and anxiety, especially in the African American community. So, video game therapy may be a good way to overcome the barrier in order to prevent and treat mental health. However, many people believe video games can lead to violent behavior or an addiction.

Discoveries and Innovations

Types of Games:

Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG)

- Start relationships and pick up social cues
- Work as a team to create strategy

Role Playing Games

- Solo and low-risk environment

Puzzle Games

- Solo and provide distraction from anxiety situations

Social Media/Party Games

- Build relationships and simple yet enjoyable

Applications in Medicine

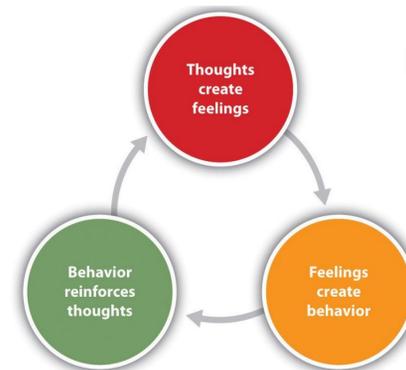


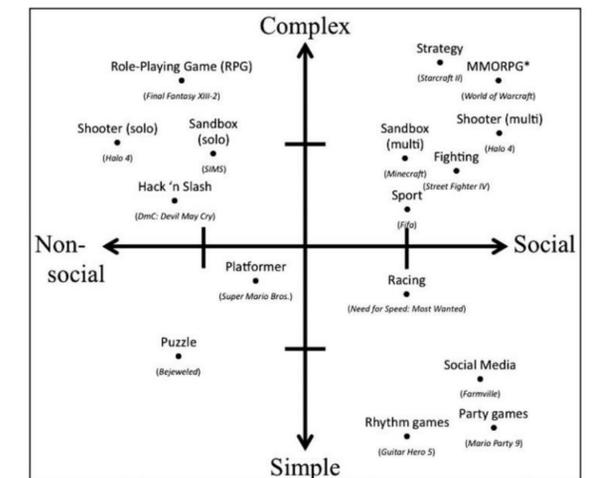
Figure 1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Circle:

Thoughts create feelings;
Feelings create behavior;
Behavior reinforces thought.

Clinical studies show that video games can build self-confidence and real life social skills depending on the complexity and level of social interaction. When you play a game, you build mental, emotional and social resources.

Data

Figure 2. Conceptual Map of the Main Genres of Video Games Organized According to Level of Complexity and Extent of Social Interaction.



Conclusion

The major aim of this study is to shed some light on how video games can help to improve depression and anxiety in children and adolescents. More research needs to be done to measure benefits and risks of video game therapy.

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