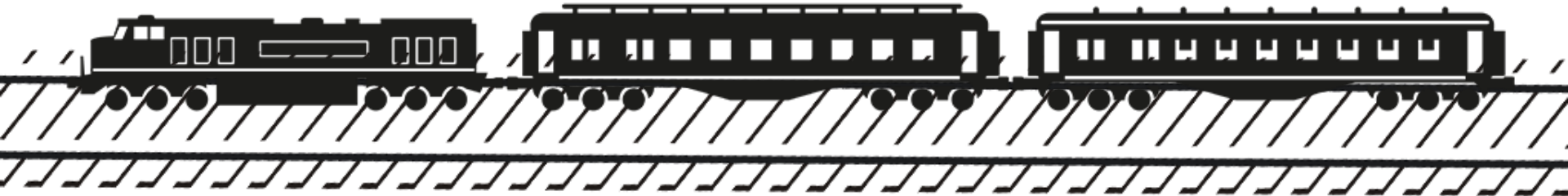


Blurred Lines: The Convergence of Gaming & Gambling

NJPN 19TH ANNUAL ADDICTION CONFERENCE



**CREATING
CONNECTIONS**
THE PATH TO WELLNESS

Daniel J. Trolaro, MS

Assistant Executive Director

800-GAMBLER

Blurred Lines...The Convergence of Gaming and Gambling

Daniel J. Trolaro, MS
Assistant Executive Director
Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, Inc.
3635 Quakerbridge Rd, Suite 7
Hamilton, NJ 08619
1-800-GAMBLER
www.800gambler.org

Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ
800-GAMBLER®







Fortnite addict headbutts mom
after she tries confiscating console (9/3/18)

13-year-old boy used his parents' credit card to fund
his video game addiction



Q: WHAT CAN EARLY EXPOSURE TO GAMING OR GAMBLING DO TO A CHILD?

A: THINK OF WHAT IS BEING LEARNED:

- Immediate gratification
- Inability to develop patience or control
- Early exposure or a Big Win can be a predictor in future problems for gambling
- For gaming, speed and action dominate the brain (Overdrive)
- If coupled with unresolved trauma in childhood, can lead to multiple issues in the future



Essential Facts About Computer and Video Game Industry (2017)

- Data from the Entertainment Software Assoc.
- 67% of U.S. Households own a device used to play video games.
- 65% of U.S. Households have at least one person who plays 3+ hours per week.
- Average gamer is 35 years old.

Essential Facts About Computer and Video Game Industry (2017)

- 54% cite social connection as most frequent reason to play games with friends. (Feeling of connection)
- 67% cite 'quality of graphics' as the number one reason influencing a decision to purchase a video game. (Realism / Escape)
- Most widely played multi-player genre is Shooter at 29%. (Action / Fast Pace)

What are eSports?!

- ◆ A global industry!
- ◆ eSports as an Olympic sport!
- ◆ Audience 225 million 2015 // 380 million 2018
- ◆ Revenue \$325 million 2015 // \$906 million 2018
- ◆ Competitive gaming in real time
- ◆ You Tube and Twitch streams tournaments
live...Twitch now owned by Amazon who bought it
for \$1 Billion in 2014





What is a Loot Box?!

- 1) A consumable virtual item in a [video game](#) which can be redeemed to receive a random selection of further virtual items.
- 2) A loot box is typically a form of [monetization](#), with players either buying boxes directly or receiving the boxes during play and later buying "keys" with which to redeem them.
- 3) Regulated under [gambling law](#) in some Asian countries.
- 4) Criticized for being a form of unregulated gambling, for creating situations in games that make people "pay-to-win."

Loot Boxes Defined Another Way

- ◆ Random Reward Mechanism that requires 3 components:
- ◆ Eligibility: Requirement to trigger the random event of a loot box (i.e. accomplishment, paying \$, spending time). The triggering event is done actively which perpetuates that “illusion of control.”
- ◆ Random Procedure: The randomness is the process and is what makes it feel like gambling.....the HOOK!!
- ◆ Reward: Skins, VC, Weapon, item of value, advancement

The Psychology of Gambling and Loot Boxes

- ❖ Gambling is a 'Variable Ratio' Payout – You have to keep playing in order to win but you never know when you will win....so are loot boxes
- ❖ Surprise element of when you will win is the addictive quality...same in loot boxes
- ❖ You also do not know how often or when it will occur but it is that uncertainty that is the hook.....see above!



The Psychology of Gambling and Loot Boxes

What causes people to act against what they normally otherwise would not do?

- ◆ 'Scarcity principle' - fear of missing out since it will not be available later on.
- ◆ 'Social Proof' – HSN shows proof that item is being purchased and is desirable to consumers.
- ◆ In this vein, loot boxes should be viewed with caution and done responsibly due to ethics and predatory behaviors.

The Psychology of Gambling and Loot Boxes

- ◆ Activision continues to explore a matchmaking patent that encourages players to buy microtransactions.
- ◆ Filed in 2015 and granted in 2017.
- ◆ 2 Examples...



The Psychology of Gambling and Loot Boxes

Example #1

- ◇ Outlines a process in which computer algorithms can match players together in order to increase the likelihood of microtransaction purchases.
- ◇ “For example, if the player purchased a particular weapon, the microtransaction engine may match the player in a gameplay session in which the particular weapon is highly effective,” the text of the patent reads. **“This may encourage the player to make future purchases to achieve similar gameplay results.”**

The Psychology of Gambling and Loot Boxes

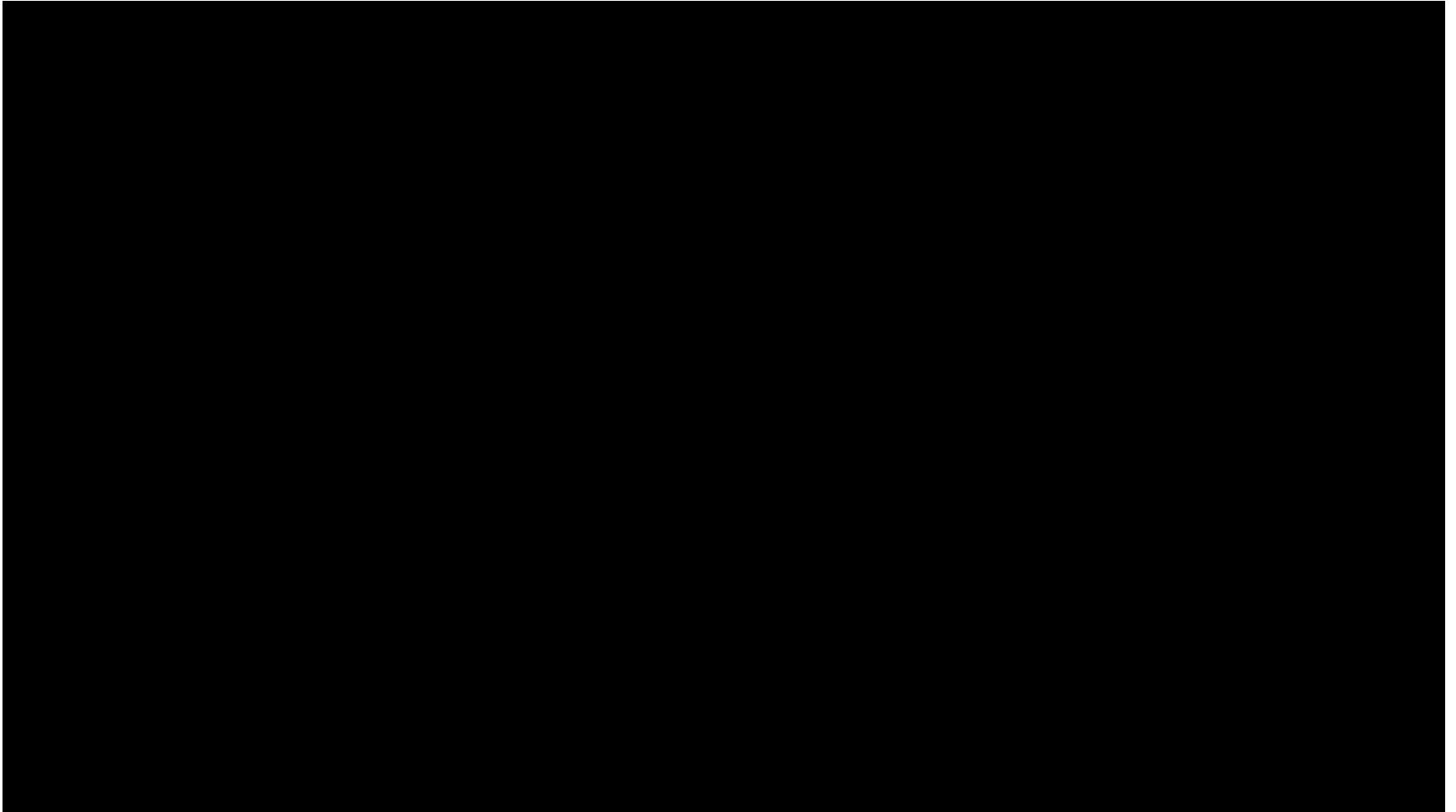
Example #2

- ◇ Dynamic Pricing (Charging players more or less for the same content) of Loot Boxes within a game based on player participation, level of skill, and time.
- ◇ Example – 2 players within a game both wish to purchase an item. Player 1, who is an experienced player, pays \$10. Player 2, who is new to the game, pays \$20.
- ◇ No clear disclosure
- ◇ Are their supply restrictions on virtual items that should warrant this?

Why is Gaming so Popular?

- Free to play and Freemium
- Temporary Escape
- Social Connection
- Measurable Growth
- Purpose and Meaning
- Dopamine Overload
- Behavioral Psychology keeps you in
- Safe place to play, experiment, fail

Gaming Rehab Facility Video



Internet Gaming Disorder

- A condition for further study in DSM-5 (APA 2013)
- Not an “official” disorder in the DSM but one in which the American Psychiatric Association wants additional research done.
- W.H.O classifies as addiction in 2018!



Potential Risks with Gaming

- Can lead to Problem Gambling.
- Bigger concern among the youth.
- The earlier one starts, the higher likelihood to develop a problem.
- The brain develops the “gas pedal” faster than the “braking system.”
- Inability to control impact on time or money.
- Illusions of Control
- Sense of identity and belonging.

Problematic Cognitions with Gaming

- Allows the behaviors to hang around longer
- No amount of time spent is ever enough
- Continue until a level, reward, or feature is completed
- Gaining power and status through the game
- Escaping the real world
- The computer or console is an “electronic friend.”

Motivators and Advantages Around Internet Gambling

While prevalence is relatively low, participation is increasing:

- Convenience and Accessibility
- Greater value for dollar spent (*i.e. payout rates and bonuses*)
- Speed and Ease of Betting
- Variability and Robust Selection
- Comfort and lack of stigma



Challenges to Prevention

- Difficulty in differentiation between “Gaming” and “Gambling” activities in addiction research
- Many common features in terms of speed, aesthetics, and structure
- Both can create harm through excessive involvement
- Boundaries and lines are getting blurred (digital games with free and paid virtual currencies or items, as well as the capacity for wagering)
- Delay of gratification

Potential Pathways to Adolescent Gambling

- Social Casino Games: Easy, short duration, multiple devices, fun or competitive, isolation or social.
- Constant exposure normalizes the experiences
- Availability and Supply
- Positive experience + social interaction
- In game purchasing normalizes the habit of spending money on games.....may carry to adulthood.
- Rewards (loot boxes and skins) and leveling up carries may carry over to comps in adulthood.

The 5 E's of Why People Play Games or Gamble!

- ◆ Excitement!
- ◆ Entertainment!
- ◆ Escape life's problems or pain
- ◆ Economics....It's all about the Benjamin's!
- ◆ Ego....Pride, reputation, or identity

Summarizing the 'Blurred Lines' between gaming and gambling:

- 1) Illusion of Control – skill vs. luck
- 2) Intermittent Reinforcement – every so often win
- 3) Social Proofing – others are doing it
- 4) Scarcity Principle – act now; act Fast!
- 5) “Near Miss” is a Hook – Soooooo close, do it again!

Principles of Recovery

Instill a Proper Attitude

- ◇ Humility vs. Pride
- ◇ Gratitude vs. Blame
- ◇ Mindfulness vs. Denial
- ◇ Determination vs. Incompetence
- ◇ Respect vs. Ignorance
- ◇ Relation vs. Isolation
- ◇ Love vs. Hate
- ◇ Attention vs. Neglect
- ◇ Being Present vs. Being Absent

Cultivate a Culture

- Mindfulness
- Laughter / Levity
- Identity
- Life Skills
- Multiple “Tools in the Toolbelt”
- Resiliency
- Self-Empowerment
- Respond vs. React
- H.A.L.T
- Accountability
- Emotional Awareness
- Others First
- Language
- Presence
- Balance
- “Feeling Safe”
- Care and Connection

Importance of Language

- 1) Using the proper language can impact one's recovery
- 2) Language can be stigmatizing
- 3) Can influence how a person is viewed outside
- 4) Can influence self-identity
- 5) Labels and perception (Abuse vs Use Disorder)



Summary of Recovery Principles

- Don't think less of yourself....think of yourself less
- Rules without Relationships lead to Rebellion
- "The greatest sources of suffering are the lies we continue to tell ourselves" (Elvin Semrad, Boston U.)
- For people trapped in a mental prison, they battle between enjoying the pain of pleasure while suffering from the pleasure of the pain
- 'The Body Keeps the Score' by Bessel Van Der Kolk
- A 'Dis-Ease' of one's inner being at varying levels



SUPPORT. TREATMENT. HOPE.

Thank you!

Visit www.800gambler.org

OR

Phone: 1-800-GAMBLER

OR

Send a Text to '800GAMBLER'

References

- <http://www.pacouncil.com/>
- <http://www.deproblemgambling.org>
- <http://www.ncpgambling.org>
- <http://www.problemgambling.ca/EN/ResourcesForProfessionals/Pages/GamblingandSubstanceAbuseAComparison.aspx>
- <http://dbhids.org/gambling>
- https://www.hbo.com/addiction/understanding_addiction/142_co-occurring_disorders.html
- <http://gamingcontrolboard.pa.gov/?p=67>
- <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/Researchers/if-res-problem-gambling-mental-health-suicide.pdf>
- American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2013.
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/gamble/etc/cron.html>
- Gainsbury, S. M. (2015). Online gambling addiction: The relationship between internet gambling and disordered gambling. Current addiction reports, 2(2), 185-193.
- California Council on Problem Gambling 2. National Council on Problem Gambling 3. Prof. John Warren Kindt Bankruptcy Developments Journal, volume 19, No.1 4. National Research Council, The Guardian 5. Atlantic City Rescue Mission and Association of Gospel Rescue Missions in Kansas 6. National Opinion Research Center survey 7. CT Department of Mental Health
- <http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/pdf/Social-gaming---January-2015.pdf>