FAMILY

# Boys Who Play Video Games Linked with Lower Risk of Depression, Found New Study

By bestfolkmedicine · 01/04/2021 · 3 min read



*According to a new study led by an UCL researcher, boys who played video games at the age of 11 on a regular basis experienced lower likelihood of developing symptoms of depression, three years later.*

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*The study which was published in the Psychological Medicine journal also concluded that girls who spend more time on social media have an increased risk of depressive symptoms.*

*Together, these crucial findings show how various types of screen time can have a positive or a negative effect on the mental health of young individuals and how these effects differ among women and men.*

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**Playing Video Games Helps Boys Have Better Mental Health**

The head of the study, PhD student Aaron Kandola from UCL Psychiatry explains that screens engage us in various activities.

And, the recommendations about screen time should be based on how we understand these activities and their impact on our mental health and whether the impact is meaningful or not.

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Although Kandola explains they can't confirm for sure if playing video games does better the mental health; it didn't seem to be harmful and may have certain advantages, according to their study.

Despite being a favorite thing amongst teens for some time now, in the pandemic, video games playing increased even more and has been an essential social platform for youngsters.

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Kandola adds that we still need to limit the times our kids spend in a sitting position, both for our physical and mental health; however, this doesn't inherently make screen time dangerous.

Previously, Kandola led studies which discovered sedentary lifestyle to elevate the risk of anxiety and depression in adolescents.

In order to learn more about what is the drive behind this relationship, together with his colleagues, Kandola investigated screen time as it's responsible for a lot of the time adolescents spend in a sitting position.

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**What Did the Study Look like?**

The UCL team, together with the Karolinska Institutet from Sweden and the Australian Baker Heart & Diabetes Institute reviewed data from 11,341 adolescents who were a part of the Millennium Cohort Study-a national representative sample of youngsters who've been involved in the study since their birth in the UK between 2000 and 2002.

The participants answered different questions, including how much time they spend on social media or playing video games, as well as reported any symptoms of depression like low mood, loss of

pleasure, and poor focus.

The clinical questionnaire measured their depressive symptoms and their seriousness on a spectrum, rather than giving a diagnosis.

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The team also accounted for other potential factors that could've explained the results, i.e. levels of physical activity, bullying reports, previous emotional symptoms, and socioeconomic status.

At the end, they concluded that the boys who played video games on most days had 24 percent fewer symptoms of depression after three years than the boys who played these games once per month or so.

They added that the less active boys could find more enjoyment and higher social interaction from video games.

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Despite the study didn't confirm a causal relationship, the researchers note that there are certain advantages of video games that could be supportive of mental health, like the problem-solving, social, and cooperative elements.

Sources:

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