



the facts:  
navigating life



headspace  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# maintaining healthy gaming

**Gaming can be a positive and enjoyable activity. It can help us connect with others, feel a sense of belonging and provide opportunities to learn new skills.**

Healthy gaming can help us have structure and routine in our lives and give us some beneficial downtime, relaxation and fun.

However, for a small number of young people, gaming can have an unhealthy impact on their everyday lives.

If you think your gaming is impacting on other areas of your life, there are lots of things you can do to get some balance back.



## Signs of possible issues with gaming

Gaming can be a great way to help with stress. However, we know that increased or excessive time spent gaming can take time away from being able to do the things that keep you healthy and well. For example, you might find that you're spending less time than usual with people you care about. You might be less active than usual or find that you're having trouble with sleep, studies or work.



If you're experiencing some of the changes below, it might be a sign that gaming is starting to have an impact on your everyday life.

- feeling sad, irritable, anxious, frustrated or angry when you're not able to game
- changing sleep patterns or sleep difficulties (e.g., staying up late to game)
- getting angry or experiencing conflict with others over gaming
- other people expressing concern at the amount of time you spend gaming
- spending less time with family and friends outside of gaming
- spending large amounts of time thinking about gaming
- losing track of time and a loss of control over the time you spend gaming
- feeling physical pain or irritation, for example pain in your neck, wrists, or back, dry or red eyes
- eating meals while playing or skipping meals
- spending more money than you can afford on gaming
- using gaming as a way of avoiding the real world
- often feeling frustrated at losses
- unsuccessful attempts to quit gaming or cut back.



**You might also notice changes to your life that don't appear directly related to your gaming such as:**



**Loss of interest in activities that you previously enjoyed.**  
**Lowered self-esteem or self confidence.**



**Changes to eating habits.**



**Headaches/migraines.**  
**Decreased personal hygiene.**



**Difficulties with studies or work.**

## Things you can do

It can help to check-in with yourself to see how your gaming is impacting on your life. Ask yourself questions like – is it a fun activity that's helping you feel good? Does your gaming support you to have a healthy life or take away from it? How's your balance with other activities? Are you feeling more or less connected with others?

There are lots of tips that can help keep your game time in balance. Time on screens can sneak up without you realising it. Here are some things that you could consider:

### Treat it as a reward

Leave your gaming time for after your activities/jobs are done.

### Decide in advance how much time you want to spend.

Set a timer or an alarm to give yourself a finish time.

### Set up times in your day to be screen free.

### Explore other hobbies and interests

Get up and move regularly. Doing some simple stretches can really help.

### Make sleep a priority

Charge your devices outside of your room or leave them outside your bedroom. You'll reduce the temptation to be online instead of sleeping.



## Getting support

If you find that your gaming is impacting on your relationships, mood, studies or work, reach out to someone you trust like a friend, family member, teacher, Elder, counsellor or health service. A general practitioner (GP) is another good place to start.

With the right support, most people are able to get back to enjoying the benefits that gaming can contribute to their lives.

There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health – [headspace.org.au/tips](https://headspace.org.au/tips)



If you're finding it hard to make changes, reach out for some support.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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