

You are only focused on what is happening right now, and you forget about everything else around you (like feelings you might be having, or the list of things you need to do).

Games researcher Dr Jeff Brand told the radio station Triple J that we can use games to achieve this feeling.

“Mindful gaming is really the exercise of enjoying an experience – often replicating the real world – and providing a benefit for you that you often can't get without actually going to a real-world experience,” he said.

PROBLEMS WITH GAMES

There are benefits to gaming IF we're mindful about when and how often we play them. The World Health Organisation recently decided to add gaming disorder to its guide that helps health professionals diagnose physical and mental illnesses.

Dr Jocelyn Brewer is a psychologist who specialises in technology and digital wellbeing. She says the warning signs that someone might be developing a gaming disorder is when they start showing changes for the negative.

“That might be withdrawal – so when you're not playing, you think about playing; you think you need to play more to make you feel like you're getting enough time playing. Also, hiding the fact that you're playing is another warning sign,” she says. It's also important to look at what's in the games, as some games encourage toxic behaviour like bullying, treating each other badly, or being violent.

GAMES FOR GOOD

Instead, Dr Brewer says we should look at what we do with our full 24 hours of the day and if we are getting enough sleep, exercise and healthy food before we judge if games are good or bad for us. Mental health organisation headspace says practising mindfulness regularly can help us be calmer and more productive at school. By combining mindfulness with games that give us a positive experience, we can reap the benefits of a fun and healthy hobby. So why not load up a game that will be good for your brain?

Words by: Sharon Smith



WELLBEING AND PLAY

Sometimes you just want to collect herbs or build a Minecraft house instead of meditating. These kinds of games are perfect for mindful gaming.

GAMES WITH CREATIVE MODE

Building your own world with Roblox or using creative mode in Subnautica, No Man's Sky or Minecraft to roam and explore can be fun and relaxing.

ROLE PLAYING GAMES

Games that make you focus on what you're doing by working on simple tasks and objectives like Stardew Valley and Playne can also help.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

CheckPoint is a charity helping people use games to find good mental health. Their website is full of information about mental health and includes even more examples of good games to play at www.checkpointorg.com.

