



Stop the Fortnite Addiction

B.E.S.T. Screen Solution Ed Sheet

Families
MANAGING MEDIA

Does your child get furious and have meltdowns when you take away the game?

Are his only friends on *Fortnite*?

Does your child play *Fortnite* every day?

Is your child bored with their other hobbies?

5 Fortnite Myths

1. It's just a cartoon, it's not violent.

Some kids (especially yours) will argue that *Fortnite* isn't as bad or as violent as a game like *Call of Duty*. Blood or no blood, this game is violent, and human avatars are being shot and killed. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement on virtual violence, "Cartoon violence can have detrimental effects...first-person shooter games are not appropriate for any child...violent video games teach children to associate pleasure and success with their ability to cause pain and suffering to others."¹

2. He won't have any friends if he doesn't play.

Socializing on a video game cannot replace in-person socialization, especially for shy, socially awkward kids. Your child's social awkwardness may only grow worse on *Fortnite*. If your child tells you he's going to lose all his friends if he doesn't play, then he needs to find some new friends or new hobbies that will introduce him to other friend groups.

3. "At least I know where he is."

Parents mistakenly believe that their kids are better off playing *Fortnite* because it keeps them out of trouble. This is a dangerous position as using *Fortnite* as a babysitter is setting your child up for a long-term addiction pattern. Don't be fooled, the game is not a benign activity; there is both a short-term and long-term risk. Short term, he is not developing other interests. Long term, he will grow dependent on the stimulation that's rewiring his neuronal pathways as the first preference of choice for downtime activities.²

4. Gaming ignites an interest in technology careers.

Playing more *Fortnite* leads to...playing more *Fortnite*, not learning about technology. *Fortnite* is not an educational game, and *Fortnite* skills do not translate to science or engineering skills. Your child's mind is not being stretched. Rather, research shows that his brain is actually getting smaller.³

5. Gaming develops his creativity and imagination.

Game designers are not concerned with developing your child's creativity. Like rats in a research lab, your kids are

reacting to a predetermined program and preset algorithms.⁴ They are not creating anything. Don't confuse the humorous skins and funny dances that your kids can buy with real money for creativity and imagination. The best way to build creativity and imagination is through activities that fully engage them in real world and allow them to actively create something (e.g. art, music, theater).

Over time, your child's brain is rewired to only choose *Fortnite* over all other activities. Chronic high levels of adrenaline and dopamine from video game overuse causes stress and cravings that lead to addiction.⁵

Why is *Fortnite* so hard to limit?

- You can't change the **addictive hooks** of *Fortnite*. You can't compete with the neuroscientists and engineers who write these games with the intention to keep your child online as long as possible.
- You can't change **brain science**. You can't stop the amount of dopamine and adrenaline produced by interactive game play. When released in excess, these neurochemicals have a detrimental effect on your child's developing brain.
- You can't change your **child's maturity**. Developmentally, his frontal cortex, which is responsible for self-control and limit setting, is not yet fully developed. Simply put, he needs you to take the lead for setting strict game limits.
- You can't change your child's age. According to the ratings set by the game company itself, **no child under 13** should be playing *Fortnite*.

Facts:



Tips for replacing *Fortnite*.

1. Get educated about the long-term effects of video game overuse on a child's brain.
2. Take your parental leadership back and take the game away.
3. Partner with other families who are also interested in taking a break from the game.
4. Rebuild life skills and chores.
5. Replace *Fortnite* with real world play, reading, exercise, nature and face-to-face interactions.
6. Spend one-on-one, non-tech time with each of your kids every week.

If your child can't list three other activities that he loves as much or more than Fortnite he may be headed for long-term trouble. –Melanie Hempe, BSN

Footnotes

1. "Virtual Violence." Edited by Council Communications And Co Media, Pediatrics, American Academy of Pediatrics, pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2016/07/14/peds.2016-1298, (July 18, 2016).
2. Victoria L. Dunckley, MD. Reset Your Child's Brain: a Four-Week Plan To End Meltdowns, Raise Grades, and Boost Social Skills by Reversing the Effects of Electronic Screen-Time. (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2015), 42.
3. Dunckley, Reset Your Child's Brain, 42.
4. John Hopson. "Behavioral Game Design." Gamasutra, www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/131494/behavioral_game_design.php. (April 27, 2001).
5. Dunckley, Reset Your Child's Brain, Chapter 2, Endnote 34.