

Video Games and Gaming Communities in Mental Health Recovery

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- No current or past financial relationships with any industry
- MCC has received honoraria from universities to speak about behavioral addictions
- MCC identifies as a cis/het, white, woman with a psych disability
- MCC has behavioral addiction lived experience in self/family members

Intellectual conflict: The authors are video game players.

The content herein does not represent the positions, policies, or opinions of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.





Intro to video games

Games for health/serious games



- Designed for a specific health purpose
- Often lack appropriate user-centered design
- Sometimes make inappropriate claims
- Lengthy development to scale timeline



Games for health/serious games



Evolution of video games



Games differ: Sandbox



Minecraft



Rust



Perceptions of gaming-addiction



© Bryan Lewis Saunders, 2012

Internet gaming disorder (DSM)

- Continued excessive use of Internet games despite knowledge of psychosocial problems.
- Loss of interests in previous hobbies and entertainment as a result of, and with the exception of, Internet games.
- Unsuccessful attempts to control the participation in Internet games.
- Withdrawal symptoms when Internet gaming is taken away.
- Preoccupation with Internet games.
- Use of Internet games to escape or relieve a negative mood.
- Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of participation in Internet games.
- Has deceived family members, therapists, or others regarding the amount of Internet gaming.
- Tolerance—the need to spend increasing amounts of time engaged in Internet games

Gaming disorder (WHO)

- Impaired control over gaming
- Increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities
- Continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences
- The behavior is of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning
- The behavior is evident for at least 12 months.

Perceptions of gaming- engagement

Forbes

Jan 17, 2021, 11:24am EST | 7,826 views

Video Games Are Not A Pandemic Scourge, They're Keeping Both Children And Adults Sane



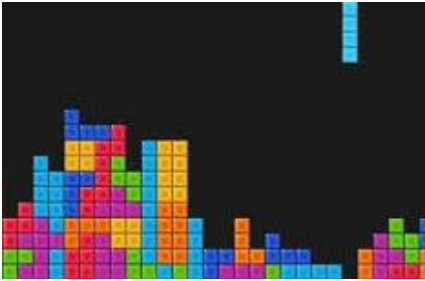
Paul Tassi Senior Contributor

[Games](#)

News and opinion about video games, television, movies and the internet.



Paradigm shift



Tetris: PTSD



Second Life: Cross-disability



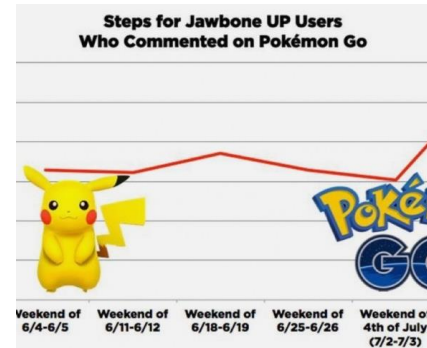
Solitaire: Cognitive monitoring



Bejeweled: Depression



Gameboy: Autism

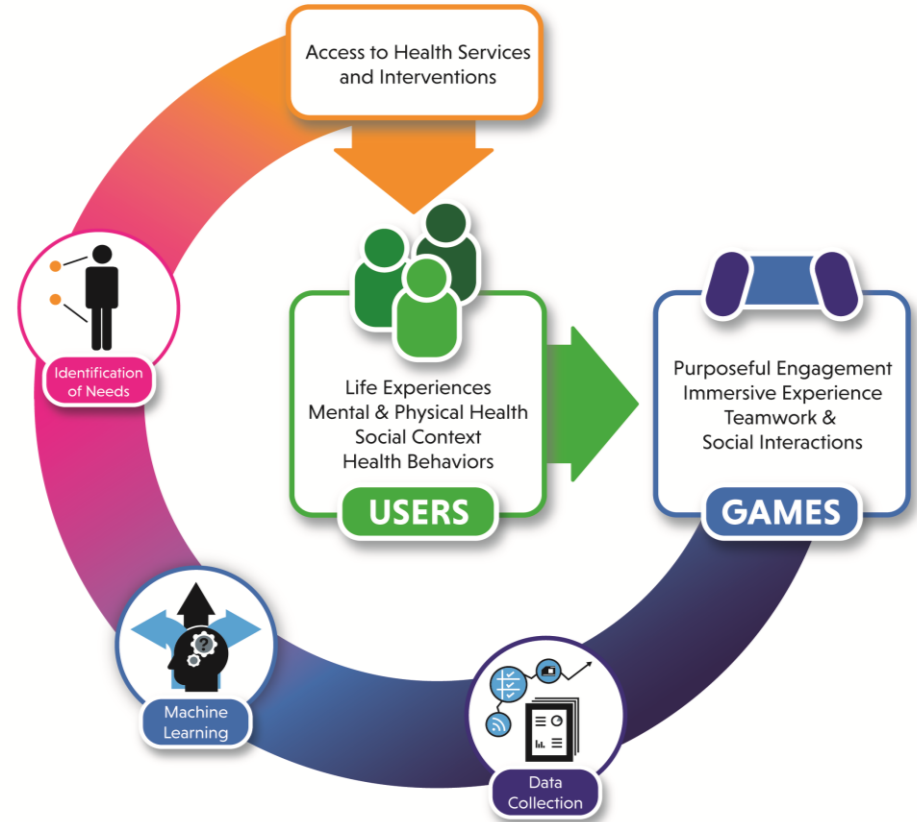


Pokemon GO: physical activity



The VGTX Framework

- Life experiences/social context
- Choosing to engage
- Teamwork, social interactions
- Back-end: Collect real-time data
- Deliver interventions



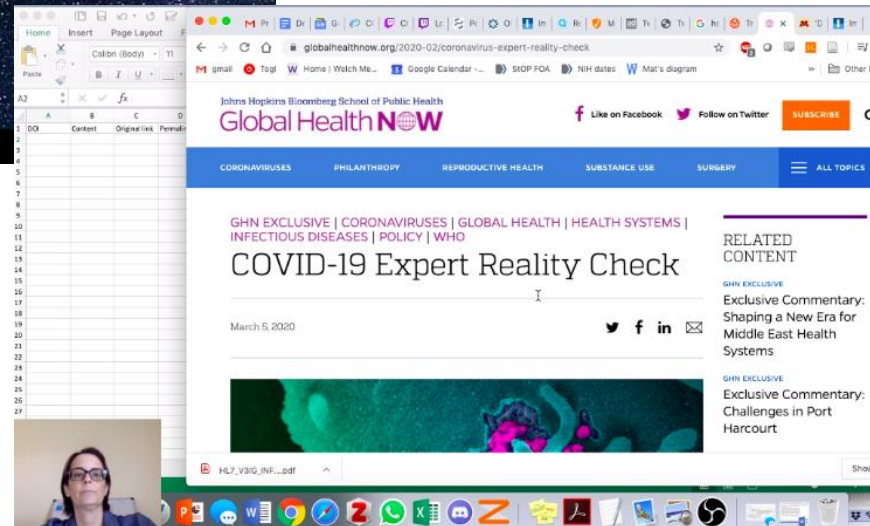
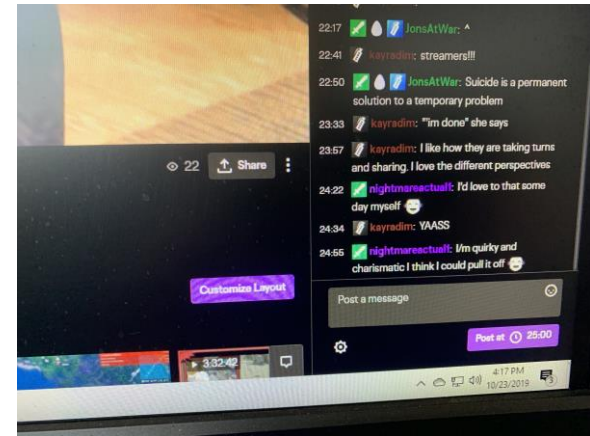
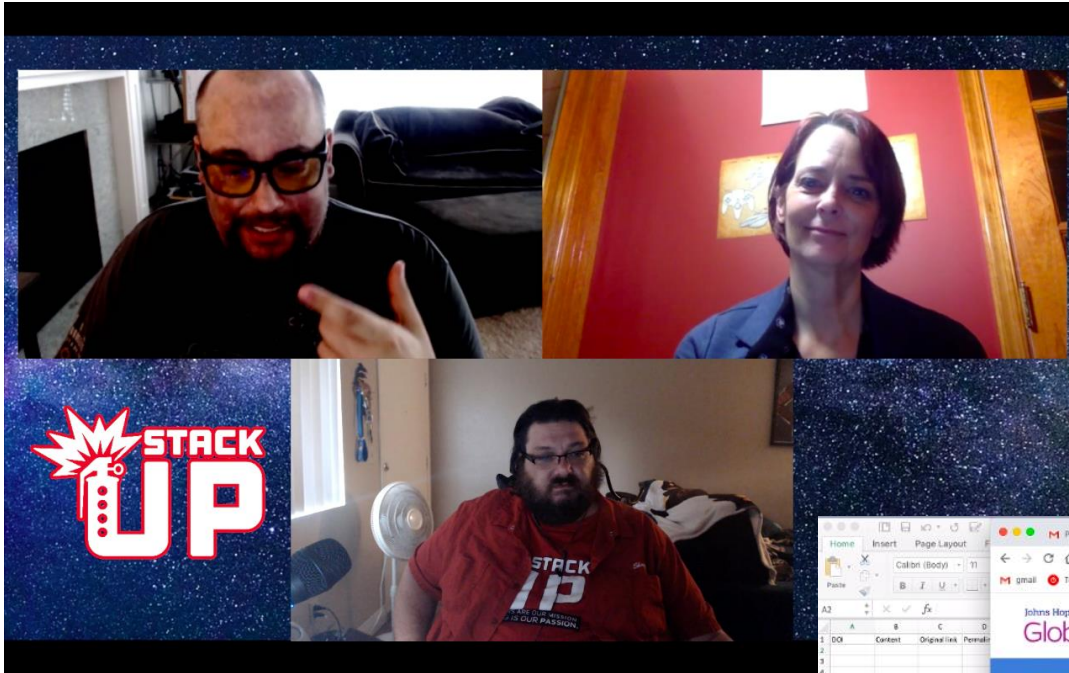
Colder Carras, M., Van Rooij, A. J., Spruijt-Metz, D., Kvedar, J., Griffiths, M. D., Carabas, Y., & Labrique, A. (2017) *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 8, 300.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2017.00300>



Veterans and video games

Gaming social platforms-Twitch



Discord platform & StOP

Notifications

Age disclaimer

Channels

Stack Up 3026

the-overwatch-program You must be 18+ in order to receive Stack Up Overwatch Program (StOP) Squad services. Services offered

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- # welcome
- # announcements
- # game-nights

DISCUSSIONS

- # general
- # health-and-fi...
- # va-benefit-as...
- # jobboard
- # suggestionbox
- # designideas
- # movie-night
- # johns-hopkins...

Hey anyone in the @StOP Team a gun owner and want to help me with coming up with a plan on becoming one myself in a way that takes my mental health into account?

Hey! I just wanted to let you know I'm here, but I'm not a gun owner and really don't think I can help you with that. But I'm here if you want to talk about anything else!

@ZlpiocKob i will be happy to discuss that with you. do you mind if i do it via PM to keep this channel open for folks in crisis?

sure

Anyone free for a chat just want to speak to someone im not in a dark place just cant sleep and got time on my hands

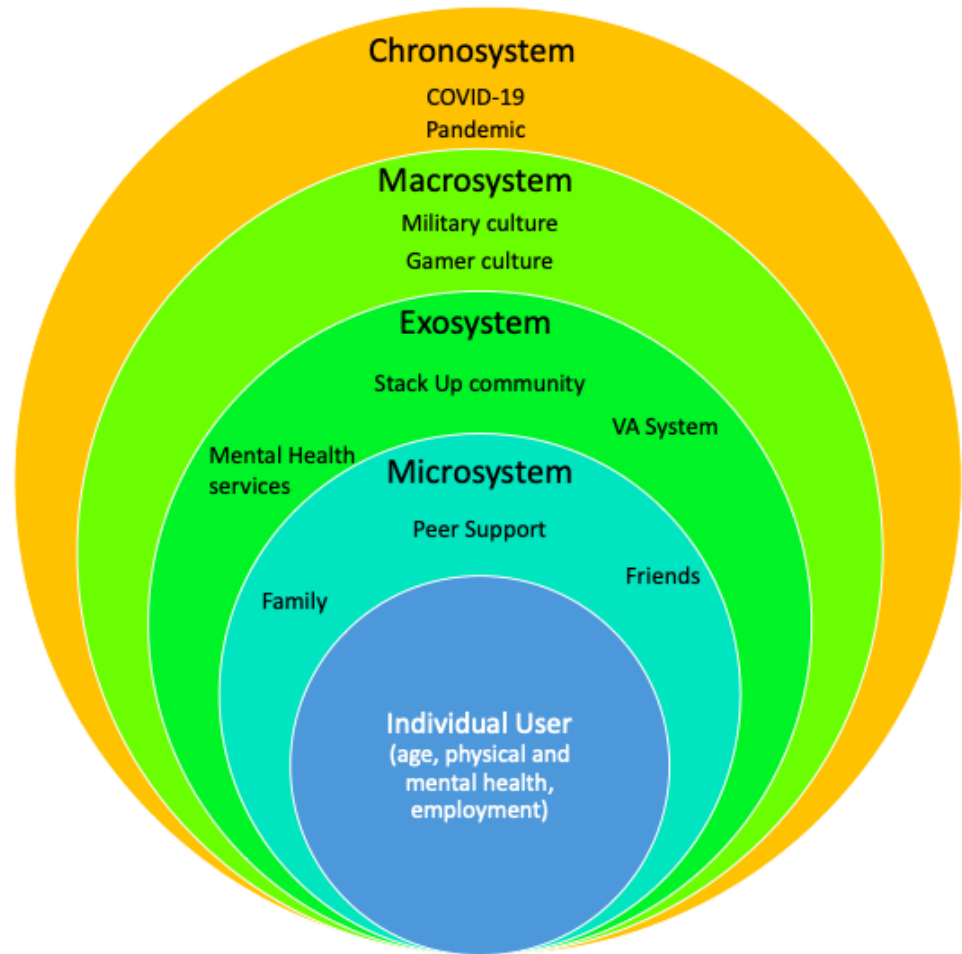
Cosmic

Hey there @vvingnuCANA_nye, I'm glad to hear you're not in a dark place, sounds tough not being able to fall asleep though. What's up?

Click here to log in and participate in chat

Discord account creation

Veteran Gamer Context



Stack Up

Four Pillars:

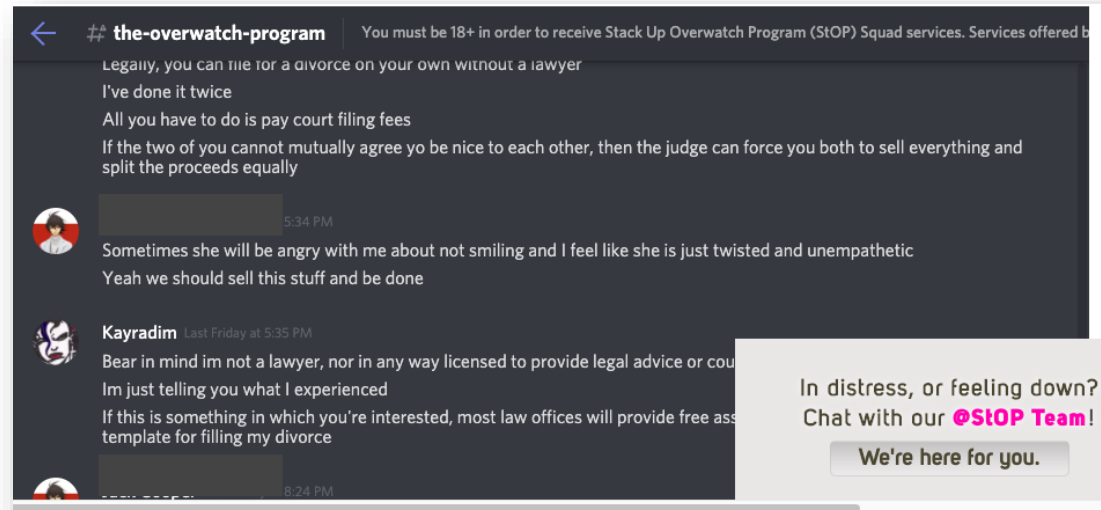
- Stack Up Overwatch Program
- Stacks
- Air Assaults
- Supply Crates



Our research



What Gamers Think of Gaming Disorder



Evaluating the Stack Up Overwatch Program



Veterans' use of Video Games



Veterans' Use of Video Games

- Relief from rumination
- Control (e.g., rewinding time)
- Sacrificing to help
- Could be traumatic



Connection

*I've met a bunch of active duty infantry guys [online] and **we play specific combat games together. We all know the lingo and it's awesome.** We kick some serious ass out there.*

*The most important thing to me now is just **maintaining a good relationship with my family. And we do it through video games...** because even though we're playing, you've got a nephew who's graduating high school, he's thinking about going to [college], we're just talking about it while we're playing.*



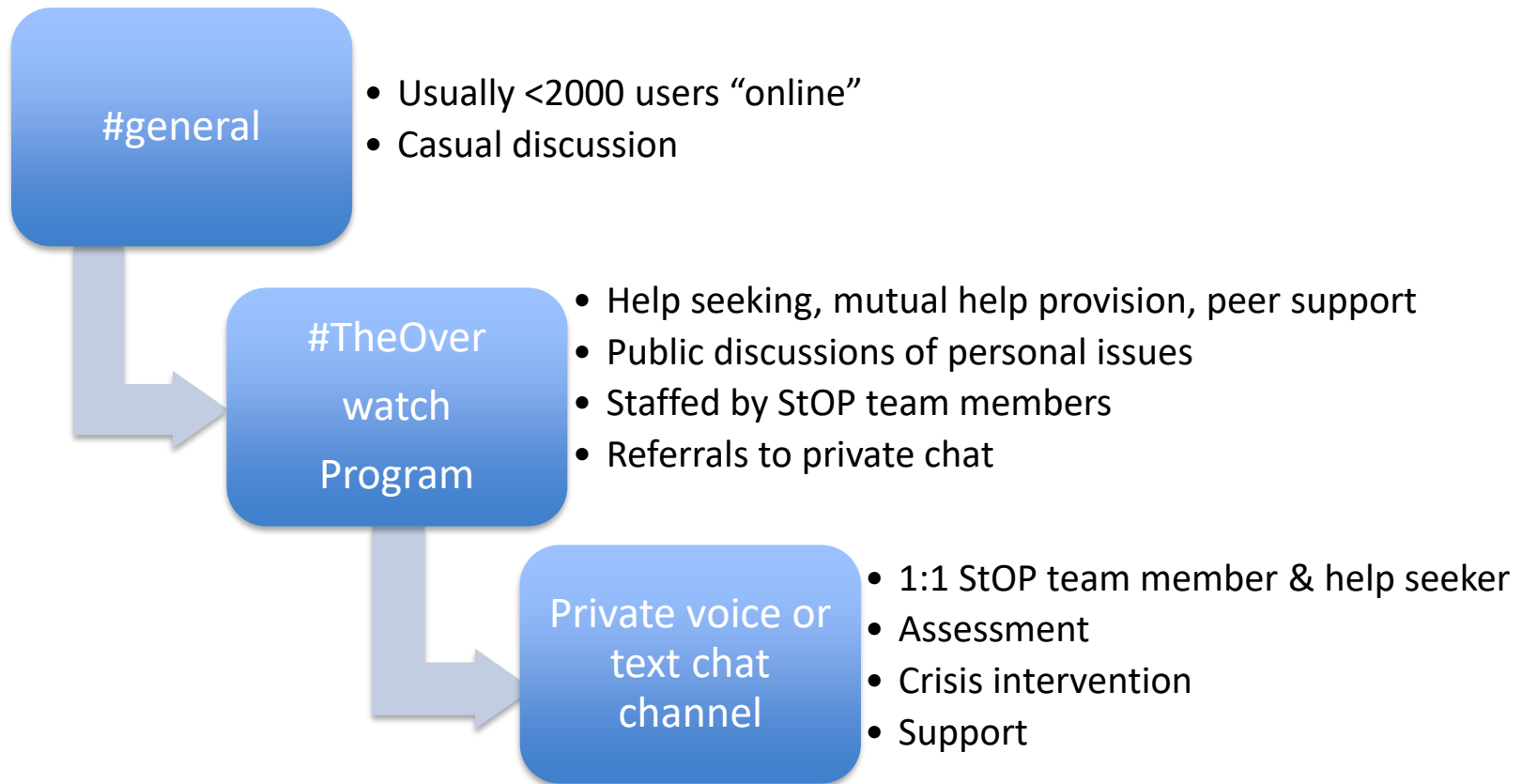
Distraction

With my mind racing a million miles a minute those kinds of settle me down and I'm not thinking about nonsense...it evens my line, stops my recent thoughts ...I focus on that video game everything around me is obsolete.

It passed time, kept me on the right track. I could have used if I wanted to, but it kept me from using...I might be playing video games for two hours one day, well I'm sober for those two hours.



Evaluating the Stack Up Overwatch Program



**Data
Collection**

Surveys,
Encounter
Forms,
In-dept
Interviews,
Chat Data

**Data
Analysis**

Content
Analysis

**INTEGRATION
RESULTS MERGED
FOR COMPARISON
AND/OR VALIDATION**

Surveys,
Encounter
Forms,
Chat Data

Descriptive
Statistics,
Counts of
chat
domains

Evaluation questions

What is StOP?

Is it being delivered as expected?

Is it fulfilling its mission?

Identify problems related to the pandemic that are affecting veterans who use Stack Up and StOP



What is StOP?

StOP is designed to be an online chatroom-based crisis intervention program and mental health support program for veteran/military gamers

Users have tried other approaches to address mental health issues. StOP provides a new method when options have been exhausted.

StOP offers several formats to communicate that appeal to users and work seamlessly.



Is it being delivered as expected?

StOP team members work with the user to identify the reason they are seeking help, provide resources and promote user resiliency.

Users reported few technical problems using StOP, and the Discord platform was seen as largely stable. However, changes to Discord meant the StOP Team needed a work-around to identify when users needed help.

Screening for suicide risk is inconsistent, but changes have already been made.



Is it fulfilling its mission?

Connection: The peer support format answers needs for connection that may be missing in professional mental health encounter

StOP provides users with suggestions for professional counseling, social programs, and other valuable resources they otherwise may have trouble finding.

Military/veterans who use StOP appreciate the specific knowledge and experience working with the military/veteran gaming culture that StOP members bring.



Surveillance: Veterans & the COVID-19 pandemic

Veterans who are used to participating in Internet communities and already spend a lot of time online can maintain important contacts, connections, and community participation.

Veterans using StOP already have complex problems; the pandemic just adds another level.

Veterans, in particular, may already feel “disconnected with the civilian world”. The uncertainty strains coping skills and unhealthy behaviors emerge (“day drinking is a thing now”).



Challenges and lessons learned

- Participatory methods are vital
- Target population vs. sample
- Facilitating data collection
- Programs evolve; times change
- Plan for monitoring and evaluation
- Defining peer support



Questions?

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