

Self-Help Support Groups: Gaming Addicts Anonymous

****Resource for the Gambler ONLY (Online Gamers and Compulsive Video Gamers)**

- ❖ Self-help is a critical part of the recovery process. Self-help groups can assist callers with the tools for recovery by providing support, direction, motivation, resources and a sense that they are not dealing with the gambling problem alone.

GAMING ADDICTS ANONYMOUS (GAA)

- ❖ We use the term “**gaming addict**” to describe a condition of having an obsession and compulsion to game, which grows worse over time, and an inability to limit gaming activities, despite all the trouble and losses it causes.
- ❖ Gaming Addicts Anonymous (GAA) - formerly Computer Gaming Addicts Anonymous (CGAA) - is a fellowship and recovery program for compulsive video gamers. **The only requirement for GAA membership is a desire to stop computer/video gaming.**
- ❖ New attendees don't have to worry about calling themselves a member or a gaming addict just yet. Anyone struggling with compulsive computer or video gaming is welcome to attend the meetings and take all the time necessary to determine the best next steps for individual recovery.
- ❖ Most members of GAA have admitted to an obsession and compulsion to game, which grows worse over time, and an inability to limit our gaming, despite the negative consequences. The word in the English language that most closely describes this condition is “addiction,” which most of us use, for lack of a better word. The focus remains on being honest about the situation and choosing to deal with it through recovery efforts such as GAA.

Which types of activities fall under computer and video gaming and which do not?

- ❖ GAA strongly suggests avoiding all forms of electronic entertainment that are continuously interactive when there are any associated negative consequences occurring as a result of any of the options available. While many have preferred **online video games**, others have also had problems with **console games, single-player, solitaire and puzzle games, website games, virtual avatar games, computer gambling, and most other forms of interactive electronic entertainment.** GAA has no rules and leaves it up to the individual to decide whether or not they meet the only requirement for participation, which is having a desire to stop computer/video gaming.

GAA's “Differences between a Video Gaming Addict and a Problem Gamer”

- ❖ Many modern computer games require large amounts of time for their players to excel, creating a situation where almost any player can become what we call a “**problem gamer.**” Such people may suffer problems at work and in relationships. They may let their health and finances deteriorate. But the majority of problem gamers, when properly motivated, will moderate their gaming. They will quit problematic games and limit play time, as necessary to take care of their real life needs.

- ❖ Among problem gamers are a minority whose gaming intensifies and increases over time, creating mounting problems month by month, year by year, at work, home, or school, in physical health, mental health, relationships and self-esteem. Those who find themselves in that situation are obsessed with gaming, using it to cope with stress and pain, using it as a substitute for a social life and relationship, even forming their real identities around self-created in-game identities. When problems occurred that motivated a moderation of gaming behaviors, problem gamers instead usually continued to play just as much, if not more, all the while lying to themselves and to their friends and family about the gaming. Many uninstalled problematic games, only to find themselves soon reinstalling them, growing angry about the behavior and frustrated with the grind of compulsive game play yet enduring an inability to stop playing. This continued hour after hour, day after day as a compulsion and an obsession, and for the brief periods of game-free time managed, the withdrawal symptoms suffered during those times drives compulsive gamers right back to the games. Most of those who have escaped this vicious cycle through supports such as the G.A.A program and fellowship, have come to call themselves “**gaming addicts.**”
- ❖ The G.A.A. program, fellowship and service organization exists to support gaming addicts in recovery from their compulsive gaming. The sole purpose of this support group is to carry the message of hope and recovery, and to support fellow gaming addicts. Any other activities that distract from that purpose do not properly belong in G.A.A.

A note to non-addicted problem gamers interested in the GAA fellowship:

- ❖ Since the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop computer gaming, **non-addicted problem gamers may join if interested.** You might find our fellowship, support and positive attitudes helpful to your personal path in life.
- ❖ Please take the time to understand what GAA is and who it is intended to help. We help addicts, people who have a very serious problem with gaming that most problem gamers do not suffer: an addiction. Addiction is a powerful and baffling mental condition requiring treatment, including complete abstinence from the problem behavior and a recovery program that addresses all aspects of the problem—mental, physical, spiritual and social.
- ❖ **If you have successfully moderated your gaming or easily walked away from it, if you are clear that you have not suffered the obsession, compulsion, withdrawal symptoms, denial, lack of control, and repeated relapses that we addicts have suffered, then please refrain from sharing in our meetings, except perhaps to briefly offer encouragement.** Our newer members are in desperate need of focusing on solutions that have proven themselves workable for those suffering from addiction.

GAA's Self-Test to Assess Video Gaming Behaviors:

- ❖ GAA offers those who are unsure if they are a video game addict the following self-test as a guide to assess video game addiction:
 - ☐ Do you set rules or limits with gaming and then break them, playing longer or more frequently than intended?
 - ☐ Do you lose hours of sleep to gaming?
 - ☐ Do you skip or neglect self-care (cooking, eating, bathing, cleaning, shopping, exercise, etc) when gaming?
 - ☐ Do you find yourself gaming whenever you have free time?
 - ☐ Have you ever sworn off a game, uninstalled it, and later returned to it?
 - ☐ Do you often re-live gaming experiences or think about future ones?
 - ☐ Have you ever used sick days or vacation days or skipped work or class just for gaming?
 - ☐ Has gaming taken the place of any hobbies or sports you used to enjoy?
 - ☐ Has your contact with in-person friends and family declined significantly since gaming?
 - ☐ Have you ever taken a break from gaming and binged uncontrollably upon your return?
 - ☐ Do you feel irritable and restless when away from games for some time?
 - ☐ Do you forget or neglect appointments, responsibilities or deadlines in work, school, or family when gaming?
 - ☐ When anxious, upset, or depressed, do you soothe yourself with games or plans to game?
 - ☐ Have you ever skipped real-world social plans that you were looking forward to in order to game more?
 - ☐ Have you ever gamed in inappropriate or unsafe situations (in class, at work, while driving)?
 - ☐ Do you get very angry when someone or something interrupts a game?
 - ☐ Have you ever felt regret after a gaming binge?
 - ☐ Do you hide or lie about your gaming?
 - ☐ Have you ever had a moment when you really wanted to stop gaming to do something else, but just could not?
 - ☐ Do you feel guilt and shame around your gaming?
- ❖ *Most of those who now identify as gaming addicts answer yes to many of these questions. If you answered yes to several of them, consider listening to GAA member stories available on their website to see how much you likely have in common with them, and experimenting with various methods they have used to turn their lives around.*

GAA's Self-Test to Assess Online Gaming or Gambling Behaviors:

- ❖ GAA offers these additional questions to consider, while thinking about any obsessive or compulsive behaviors surrounding online gaming or gambling participation through computer, mobile, or other electronic means, and its effects on your life. Most GAA members have answered “yes” to many of the questions in this quiz:
 - ☐ Do you push your friends to play more than they want to?
 - ☐ Do you make sure you have a mobile gaming device for trips away from home- either long vacations or grocery runs?
 - ☐ Have you ever regretted the amount of money you spent on a game?
 - ☐ Have you stolen anything for gaming?
 - ☐ Do you eat while gaming or forget to eat while gaming?
 - ☐ Are most of your friends gamers?
 - ☐ Are gaming stories the most exciting topics of conversation for you?
 - ☐ Do you read or watch many game-related guides, articles, and videos?
 - ☐ Do you fear a life without gaming?
 - ☐ Do you envy people who can game in moderation?
 - ☐ Do you prefer your game character identity to your own?
 - ☐ Have you stolen money for gaming?
 - ☐ Do you find yourself bored with most everything else in life?
 - ☐ Have you put spending on games ahead of your financial responsibilities?
 - ☐ Have you gained weight since becoming a gamer?
 - ☐ Have you suffered any physical pains from intense gaming?
 - ☐ Have you suffered more financial problems since obsessively gaming?
 - ☐ When you want to spend time with friends, do you invite them to game?
 - ☐ Do you get angry and insulting with other players who make mistakes?
 - ☐ Have you tried limiting game time by switching games?
 - ☐ Are the people in your life worried by your gaming?
- ❖ *Compulsive gaming is a condition that strikes both adults and children, sometimes at a young age and sometimes later in life. Like other addictions, it does not discriminate based on age, gender, educational level, ethnicity, or nationality.*

ONLINE GAA MEETING'S

- ❖ The Original Online Meeting Group and European Group of Gaming Addicts of GAA hold daily meetings for recovery from video game addiction via Zoom. We discuss many topics, including dealing with withdrawal symptoms, how to stop gaming one day at a time, aspects of our recovery program and many other topics related to computer game addiction. We share our experience, strength and hope with one another. Meetings are led by fellow gaming addicts who have volunteered. All of our meetings are open to everyone. Anyone who thinks he or she might have a gaming problem can speak during the meeting.
- ❖ **WHEN? Every day at 1:30pm and 10pm EDT** with additional times below. All times in EDT (Eastern U.S. UTC-4). GAA's online calendar can be checked here to confirm meeting times and specifics: <https://www.gamingaddictsanonymous.org/online-meetings/>

ADDITIONAL ONLINE MEETING TIMES:

- ❖ **SUNDAY** 8:30pm (CLOSED)
- ❖ **MONDAY** 2:30pm (BEGINNERS), 5:00pm, 6:00pm (SPANISH), 8:00pm, 8:30pm (CLOSED)
- ❖ **TUESDAY** 3:00pm, 7:30pm (12 STEP), 8:30pm (WOMEN'S)
- ❖ **WEDNESDAY** 12:00pm (WOMEN'S), 7:00pm (CLOSED), 8:30pm (MEN'S), 8:30pm (SPANISH)
- ❖ **THURSDAY** 6:00pm (SPANISH), 8:00pm, 11:00pm
- ❖ **FRIDAY** 8:30pm
- ❖ **SATURDAY** 6:00pm (CLOSED)
- ❖ **WHERE?** The Original Online Meeting Group (OOMG), European Group of Gaming Addicts, and other regional groups hold meetings on Zoom.
- ❖ **WHO?** Most meetings have a scheduled leader. For ones that don't, usually someone present will lead the meeting.
- ❖ **HOW?** Directions are provided below.

DIRECTIONS FOR MEETINGS ON ZOOM:

- All GAA meetings are held over Zoom, accessible by any phone or by computer. Meetings are held in Zoom Room #1 or Zoom Room #2:
 - **Zoom Room #1:**
 - Zoom Link: <https://gaais.org/zoom>
 - Zoom ID: 871 1827 4282
 - Password: 675419
 - Dial-In Number: (646) 558-8656
 - **Zoom Room #2:**
 - Zoom Link: <https://gaais.org/zoom2>
 - Zoom ID: 817 3349 1725
 - Password: 675419
 - Dial-In Number: (646) 558-8656
- Please keep your microphone muted once the meeting has begun.

VOICE MEETING CONVENTIONS:

- ❖ Please keep cross-talk to a minimum. Interrupting comments by voice or chat can be very distracting to the speaker and listeners.
- ❖ If people have trouble hearing you, you can switch from speaking to typing in the chat box.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT VOICE MEETINGS:

- ❖ I don't want people in my house to hear the meeting. You can use headphones to listen and use the chat box instead of speaking if there are people nearby who shouldn't overhear.
- ❖ I worry about remaining anonymous. You can remain completely anonymous if you wish by entering a false name, such as your middle name or first two initials. We suggest not using any of your gamer names.
- ❖ I have a slow internet connection. If your connection is too slow, try lowering the quality setting. In the Configure menu, choose Audio Wizard. Press Next until the Quality & Notifications section and choose Low quality.
- ❖ I'm nervous about speaking. You can try out a meeting and just listen or share by text. Zoom has a chat box for sharing by chat. No one will pressure you to talk if you'd rather not.

FACE TO FACE LIVE GAA MEETING'S

- ❖ GAA also has several established face-to-face support groups for video gaming addiction and are eager to start more. They will post meeting times and places on their website as new groups form.

FLORIDA GAA MEETING'S

- ❖ Boca Raton, FL bocaraton@gaais.org
- ❖ Boynton Beach, FL boyntonbeach@gaais.org
- ❖ Cape Coral, FL capecoral@gaais.org
- ❖ Clearwater, FL clearwater@gaais.org
- ❖ Daytona Beach, FL daytonabeach@gaais.org
- ❖ Deltona, FL deltona@gaais.org
- ❖ Fort Lauderdale, FL fortlauderdale@gaais.org
- ❖ Fort Myers, FL fortmyers@gaais.org
- ❖ Gainesville, FL gainesville@gaais.org
- ❖ Homestead, FL homestead@gaais.org
- ❖ Jacksonville, FL jacksonville@gaais.org
- ❖ Kissimmee, FL kissimmee@gaais.org
- ❖ Lakeland, FL lakeland@gaais.org
- ❖ Melbourne, FL melbournefl@gaais.org
- ❖ Miami, FL miami@gaais.org
- ❖ North Port, FL northport@gaais.org
- ❖ Orlando, FL orlando@gaais.org
- ❖ Poinciana, FL poinciana@gaais.org
- ❖ Port St. Lucie, FL portstlucie@gaais.org
- ❖ Sarasota, FL sarasota@gaais.org

- ❖ Spring Hill, FL springhill@gaais.org
- ❖ St. Petersburg, FL stpetersburg@gaais.org
- ❖ Tallahassee, FL tallahassee@gaais.org
- ❖ Tampa, FL tampa@gaais.org
- ❖ The Villages, FL thevillages@gaais.org
- ❖ West Palm Beach, FL westpalmbeach@gaais.org

- ❖ For more information visit the GAA website at:
<https://www.gamingaddictsanonymous.org/>