

Internet gaming addiction and the effects on mental health

Jack is a 15 year old who lives with his mum, dad and two sisters, Olivia (17) and Zoe (13).

Jack has always been very social and sporty, playing football in the winter and cricket in the summer. At the beginning of this football season he told his mum that he didn't want to play sports anymore because he wanted to focus on gaming.

Jack is a serious gamer who uses the gamer tag "Jackgama" and mostly plays the game *Overwatch*.

Over the past two months, Jack has randomly teamed up with other players, and met five like-minded gamers. These players, two female and three male, are aged in their late 20s and early 30s. They live in different locations across Australia.

Jack currently streams his videos online. However, he only gets an average of five viewers per stream and only has 35 subscribers. Jack believes that if he is in the top 500 that he will get more viewers and subscriptions which will allow him to make money, and eventually fulfil his dream of being a professional gamer like his idol "Muselk".

Jack spends at least eight hours per day gaming, sometimes into the early morning or all night if he stays quiet and his parents don't catch him. A couple of months ago his mum and dad sat him down for the third time in twelve months and asked him to reduce his gaming time. They felt it was interfering with his schooling and family life. His teachers reported that his grades were declining, and that Jack seemed very tired and unfocused in class. Jack was also not spending time with his family. He regularly refused to eat at the dinner table with everyone, and demanded that his mum bring his meals to his room so he could continue gaming. If she refused to bring his meals, Jack would not eat at all.

After the last discussion with his parents, Jack reluctantly agreed to try and limit his gaming time. However, lately he has been feeling extremely irritable and snappy around his family when trying to meet this commitment. He also feels guilty that he has been lying to his parents about how much time he spends on the computer, and despite repeated attempts to limit his gaming, he is really struggling.

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This is a de-identified vignette.

Jack constantly thinks about gaming, fantasising about what strategy he will use. Even when he is with his friends at school, he finds that it is the only thing he enjoys talking about. Since Jack has become so consumed by gaming, some of his school friends have started calling him a geek and bullying him. On Facebook, all of his posts are about gaming, and he receives many bullying type remarks which have been making him feel quite low.

Jack perceives that he is a good player and posted some gameplay on an Overwatch Facebook group. Although some of the feedback was positive, there were hundreds of critical comments about his gameplay and some players started trolling him.

Jack's parents are concerned that he is showing signs of depression and have insisted that he sees the family GP.