

Playing 'intentionally' may be key to unlocking the benefits of video games for mental wellbeing.



Using funding from the Jingle Jam, the Mental Health Foundation conducted an exciting new study on the link between video games and mental wellbeing, drawing on players own words and experiences. We challenged 24 UK players, aged 18-60 to track their gameplay and their mental wellbeing over three weeks, and what we found surprised us (and them)!

Players told us games have lots of positives for their mental wellbeing. It helped them manage worry or anxiety, to de-stress and relax, and to connect with others (both in-person and online). It also provided an outlet for creative expression and healthy escape.

But players also told us about some downsides, like harmful behaviour from other players online, feelings of frustration or anger, and sometimes, feeling like games interfered

with other priorities. When players described these downsides, one common feeling was a lack of control. For example, playing for longer than planned, or playing "on autopilot" without knowing why.

While initially, players didn't make the connection between video games and their mental wellbeing, through tracking how they feel when they play, they became more aware of the link between video games and their mood, which helped them make the absolute best of gaming for their mental wellbeing.

Have you ever thought about how you feel when you're playing games, or how your feelings affect what you play and how you play? What about which games leave you feeling good, and which leave you feeling worse? You might be surprised by your answers.

Challenge yourself to pause, and check-in today. To get you started, we're sharing the exercise we asked the players in our study to complete.

This is just a start point – feel free to change them and get as creative as you like - the most important thing is to stay curious and see what you learn about yourself! It could be the first step toward making the best of games for your mental wellbeing.

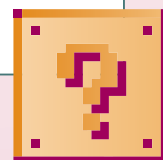


Gaming log:

You can do this on your phone, on paper, in your head... the main point is to pause and reflect...

Each time you play a game this week, record a bit about your gameplay, using the questions below as prompts. Try this for 1 month and then review it to see if you spot any patterns

Date and Time	
Game Played	
Why did you choose to play this particular game?	
How did you feel before playing?	
How did you feel while playing?	
How did you feel after playing?	
On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is 'terrible' and 10 is 'amazing' how are you feeling overall today?	
Pick an emoji or an image that best represents how you feel overall today	
Are there any other reflections, or anything else that comes to mind?	



At the end of the month

What did you notice in doing this exercise?

What did you learn about how gaming impacts your mood or mental wellbeing?

Is there anything you might do differently as a result? (think time of play, type of game, game title, choice of who you play with).

Players also told us they see a role for the games industry in supporting them to manage their wellbeing. You can see their ideas for solutions, and a more detailed summary of our research findings in our full research report.

Getting support for your mental health

If you are feeling concerned about your mental health, or feel like you could use some support, our **Getting help' webpage** has access to information about UK-based resources, helplines, and sources of mental health support.

There are also several organisations that focus on supporting good mental health and wellbeing in the gaming community. CheckPoint, Safe in Our World and Take This all provide a range of information and resources for wellbeing for gamers and the gaming community.

About the Mental Health Foundation

Since 1949, the Mental Health Foundation has been the UK's leading charity for everyone's mental health. With prevention at the heart of what we do, we aim to find and address the sources of mental health problems so that people and communities can thrive.

The Foundation aims to promote good mental health for all through research, policy, innovation, and campaigning.

