



## Games, Geeks and the Parent's Dilemma - Audio

*Parents*

### Key:

**AS:** Angela Saini  
B: Boy  
G: Girl  
F: Female  
VC: Victoria Cooper  
KS: Kieron Sheehy  
PS: Phil Stuart  
TF: Tia Fisher  
J: James  
C: Caroline  
V: Vicky  
Fel: Felicity  
Ba: Barney  
DH: Dawn Hallybone  
Mi: Miranda  
Ma: Martha  
H: Hamish  
JPG: John-Paul Gayford

**AS:** For parents whose own useful experience of video games was in the heyday of Space Invaders and Pac-Man, the sheer extent of gaming in the lives of their children could seem bewildering. Seeing your child immersed in the parallel world of a battle zone or car chase, perhaps talking to their friends over a headset, faces illuminated by the flickering screens, their lightning fast reactions at the controls, can be an unsettling experience. And one of the most common concerns is how addictive games appear to be and that they can often alter mood and behaviour.

C: The girls, what I find is that it's much easier monitoring them on the computer games because they stop much more easily.

**AS:** Caroline has two daughters and a six-year-old son.

C: What I find with my son, and talking to other parents of sons, find this too, with boys it's really, really difficult to get them to stop. When they do stop, they are quite aggressive and actually we have also temper tantrums and I find that actually what it does to me is it makes me feel incredibly negative towards the whole area of computer games because, actually, it just becomes a family crisis.

I had a really revelatory experience. He had had an operation and he was plugged into one of those machines that monitor his heartbeat and there I watched his heartbeat just racing when he was playing the game and it made

me understand so much why he was so ghastly, basically, when I got him to stop. He's obviously completely pumped up with adrenalin. When I say 'stop' to him, of course, why would he stop nice and calmly and quietly? I don't know whether that affects boys more than it affects girls or whether the same thing is happening with girls but they deal with it better, I don't know.

J: I do notice that they can take the games into their free play.

**AS: James is a father of two sons, aged 7 and 4.**

J: The boys will sometimes play Mario Kart games or Pokemon battles and fights with each other which is away from the gaming but they are playing that with themselves. But all too often, I find that it almost reflects the anxiety and the anger that the games creates, also creates that in the free play as well. The free play very quickly does degenerate into a fight.

**AS: Video games can be seen as passive activities. They don't engage the imagination in the same way that, say, reading a book can.**

C: I think it's to do with the fact that 1) I think that they are using their own imagination and creating their own world with a book but with a computer game, the world is created for them. They are making choices within that world but it's a different kind of imagination. Everything is leading on to you getting onto another level of something so you can't ever think, yes, I've finished, like you can with a book – you can actually shut the books, stop, move onto something new but with a computer you don't have that.

**AS: It's not always easy to do but parents realise they need to guide their children's gaming habits, to police their screen time and try to strike a balance.**

V: We started off with a Wii and they loved it. Probably at the age of 10, I think we got the Xbox which brought a whole load of games that I wasn't very keen on into the house.

**AS: This is Vicky who has two boys, aged 11 and 13.**

V: We've always restricted the time that they have had on any games because I think it can kill creativity. I think it can make them quite argumentative afterwards but I think that's because they are concentrating so hard on it and you have interrupted their concentration. But if you say to them, "Right, at the next break or at the next end of game, it's off," and the boys know that they have got an hour on it, which they always complain about because their friends apparently have a lot longer, but it's important that they are able to treat it with respect that it needs, you know, have fun with it but there are other things to do in life. And it's important that they are out playing sport and running round the park with their friends as well.

[Music]

**AS: Even under a watchful parental eye, gaming can get out of hand.**

Fel: Yes, I should say you have probably been playing on them for about eleven, twelve years.

Ba: Yes, I agree with that.

**AS: Felicity is the mother of Barney, aged 19.**

Fel: I didn't really have to police at that time. It was a bit of a novelty, wasn't it, when you have got your first PlayStation.

Ba: You could suddenly socialise with people online with a headset and microphone.

Fel: Yeah. And then you can hear the other people's voices as well.

Ba: Yes. I still got good grades from GCSEs, however, that's when I started becoming more and more engrossed in online gaming.

Fel: That's when Call of Duty really came into the fore, didn't it, with online gamers and your friends at school?

Ba: Yes. Everybody was playing on Call of Duty. It's a cult, it really is, you know, being completely absorbed in these fantastic games that have been created and you are playing on them and it's just they draw you in.

**AS: For Barney, gaming became a problem when it got in the way of his A Level work.**

Fel: You spent a colossal amount of time on, particularly Call of Duty.

Ba: The thing is, on the games, you can see how much time you have spent just online and in one particular game, I've spent accumulative of three weeks' worth of hours on a game.

Fel: And it would go on into the night as well, wouldn't it?

Ba: Hmm. I knew that it was going to have adverse effects after a while.

Fel: And that's what I was concerned about but then at that time, because of your age, I felt a little bit powerless, I suppose.

Ba: Hmm.

Fel: We were really at, well, literally, excuse the pun, at war with each other, weren't we, because we were just constantly arguing. And it wasn't as if I was turning a blind eye.

**AS: Call of Duty Modern Warfare 3, is something of a gaming phenomenon. It's an FPS or First Person Shooter game. Played online, it links players around the world in battle. The vast majority of those players are male and aged between 13 and 30.**

Fel: From what I have seen, there's a lot of bloodshed, there's a lot of weaponry.

Ba: With the game about warfare, you have the opportunity to be in a similar situation with absolutely no danger to your life and it's something that I think intrigues a lot of people and that's the closest you can get.

**AS: Even with these anxieties, parents do recognise the positive aspects of gaming.**

V: The other thing about the Xbox or consoles like that is that they can hook up and play with their friends and you can talk to friends. Again, it's not the same as going out to the park and playing with them but it is another way of communicating, for boys particularly.

PS: The thing about games is that they can be very absorbing and I think this is the thing that parents maybe get most concerned about.

**AS: Phil Stuart of games studio, Preloaded.**

PS: It's also credit to the power of the medium itself. I think my approach is like someone who is like a new dad, it's just really about editing and moderating the amount of games that my kid will play. So it's just about sensible parenting really. Games should be supplementary and not an exclusive activity.

**AS: Perhaps parents are just on the wrong side of the generational, digital divide.**

PS: And many adults have come to games later in their lives, whereas kids have actually grown up with it being part of their lives. From the minute they've been born, there has been computers sitting there and games that they can play.

DH: And nobody would recommend doing one thing constantly.

**AS: Primary school teacher, Dawn Hallybone, has her opinion on why parents might be naturally suspicious of video games.**

DH: Yes, I can understand the trepidation of parents if their children are always playing computer games. Sometimes we can read the headlines in papers and be tied into that and looking back, sort of, thirty years, it was rock music. So I think there's always been something with society that we are always worried about our children having and it's as parents, just being parents and thinking responsibly, the attitudes that they want their children to have. Games are part of that, playing games are part of that.

[Music]

**AS: Tantrums and battles over screen time are just some of the points raised by parents that will be discussed in the final track. In the next track, it's time to hear from the people who play the games – children.**