Lesson 25
Video Games: Good and Bad

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

Playing video games can have a positive or negative effect in the lives of students.

It is important adults help guide decisions being made about playing video games.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:
1. realize there are consequences for every action.
2. recognize positive and negative consequences from playing video games.

KEY TERMS

Consequence: what happens because of a behavior.
Saturated: soaked.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Are video games good or bad for our students? They can be both. There are both positive and negative effects from playing video games. Like many decisions in life, as a teacher, you can guide conversations to help your students and their parents make wise choices about video gaming.

Positive-learning aspects of video gaming are:
1. multi-tasking and mentally handling simultaneous tracking of objects
2. problem solving
3. hand-eye coordination
4. quick thinking
5. strategy planning and adapting to situations

Negative aspects of video gaming are:
1. desensitizes children to violence

2. violence is rewarded
3. isolates the user
4. inactivity promotes weight gain
5. can become addicting
6. can create attention issues

MATERIALS/PREPARATION
1. In **Exploring the Lesson**, you will need a sponge, a jar big enough to lay the sponge across the top of the jar and a cup of water (with food coloring in it, if possible).
2. In **Applying the Lesson**, the students will need paper and pencils.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON
[Say to the students:] **This week, we are talking about video games. How many of you play video games? It's a lot of fun, isn't it? Have you ever thought about the possibility playing video games can sometimes be dangerous for your body, heart and mind? I wonder if Hector, Trish and Dugan play video games?**

READINESS (5 minutes)
[Read to the students:] ***Chapter 25 – Is it Okay to Pretend?***

"Books are okay, but do you know what I like most about the library? asked Dugan.

"The fact that we are here?" guessed Hector with a smile and a wink at Trish.

"I'm sure that's exactly what Dugan meant. After all, imagine how lonely and lost he would be without us," Trish added.

"Well, of course, that has to be the answer," laughed Dugan. But after you two, and the Librarian, do you know what I like best?"

"The Map of Wonders," said Hector.

"Okay, maybe what I was thinking of isn't like the best thing in the library, but it sure is a lot of fun," said Dugan.

"Edgar! You're thinking about Edgar," interrupted Hector still laughing at Dugan's inability to get to whatever he was trying to say.

"Stop it!" laughed Dugan. "Games! I was thinking of games! I saw a board game that was like chess, only it wasn't. It was part online, part

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multiplayer, and if I read the instructions correctly, you could do or become anything your heart desires."

"That is quite a leap," said the Librarian shaking her head. "Are you sure you are ready for such a game?"

"Only one way to find out!" smiled Dugan.

"What do you want to do and who do you want to become?" asked Trish.

"I want to fight battles, conquer kingdoms and win the beautiful girl," said Dugan.

"Is that all?" laughed Hector. "Sounds rather ambitious to me."

"Hey, it's only a game," said Dugan. "It's not like it is real or anything."

"Don't be so sure," warned the Librarian. "Do you think it is okay to do something in a game you would never consider doing in real life?"

"Sure, that's the whole point of gaming," said Dugan a bit stronger than he intended. "In an Internet game I can fly, be killed and live to fight another day, kiss the pretty girl and never have to meet her parents."

"Hmmm?" said the Librarian. "I think there may be more real danger here than you know. It is easy to get lost in a game and to lose more than just some of your time along the way."

"No way!" objected Dugan. "It is only pretend and I can stop anytime I want!"

"'Methinks thou doth protest too much' – to quote one all too familiar with getting in over his head," stated the Librarian.

EXPLORE (15 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **Dugan had high expectations for his "video game life!" There are good video games which are pro-social and there are video games presenting violent situations where the user has to kill people and steal objects, etc. We will be learning more about possible good and bad effects of playing video games in this lesson. The Librarian asked a good question … "Do you think it is okay to do something in a game you would never consider doing in real life?" I wonder if the Librarian was concerned about Dugan possibly playing some violent video games and if it would affect his mind and heart.**

Today, we are going to do a science experiment. I am going to put this sponge over the open mouth of this jar. I will ask one of you to come up

to help me. I want you to slowly pour the water from this cup onto the sponge. *[It is important your helper pours the water slowly, so at first, the sponge absorbs the water. As the sponge gets saturated, it will start leaking water into the jar.]* **Did you notice when we first poured water onto the sponge, it absorbed it and no water came through? Eventually, the sponge became so wet, it couldn't absorb it anymore and it began to let water come through it. I am wondering how this experiment might help us think about violent video games? What would the sponge represent?** *[student's mind]* **What would the water represent?** *[violence]* **There is a real concern that playing violent video games allows the thought of violence to creep into your mind and heart. You must guard your heart. If you begin to feel an increase of violent tendencies, make a decision to stop playing those kinds of games.**

DISCOVER (15 minutes)
[Say to the students:] **When you woke up this morning, what did you have to eat? If you ate something healthy, good for you! Have you ever heard the expression 'You are what you eat?' What do you think it means?** *[You should hear answers like 'If you eat healthy food, you will be healthy; if you eat unhealthy food, you will be unhealthy.']*

There are consequences for every action. Some consequences are positive and some are negative. Let's think about that for a minute. What if you eat only sugary food all day long for a week? Tell me one positive and one negative consequence to that situation. *[Possible answers: Positive — You may enjoy the sugar for the first day. Negative — After a few days, you feel sick because you only have sugar in your system.]*

When you think about or see reactions and consequences from situations, it can help you make good decisions for the future. What would be a good decision you could make from knowing those consequences to this situation? *[Eating healthy is best for me to do.]*

Now, let's think about some possible consequences of playing video games. I am going to divide you into small groups. In your small group, I want you to decide one positive and one negative consequence to playing video games. *[Give the students time to discuss this question in their groups. Teachers of **younger elementary students,** you may choose to do*

this as a whole class.] **Now, I would like one person from each small group to give me a positive and a negative consequence of playing video games.**

[You may want to list these on the board. Use the list of positives and negatives in the **Background Information** *to help students from each group come up with different answers. If they do not cover all of the reasons mentioned, you can direct the discussion until you cover all of the positive and negative consequences.]*

APPLY (10 minutes)

[Guide your students into making a chart to help them monitor their video game usage. For **younger elementary students**, *you may need to draw a simple chart for them with sections for breakfast, school, dinner, play, video games, sleep. For* **older elementary students**, *they could make their own chart with different sections for each main activity in their lives. Ask them to keep track of how much time they are spending on playing video games. Encourage them to consider what they have learned about video gaming and plan to monitor their time. (This chart is mentioned in the* **Parent-Teacher Connection** *so parents can help their child monitor their time.)]*

SHARE (10 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **Now, let's think about all of these positive and negative reactions to playing video games. I want you to Think/Pair/Share with your neighbor about which positive reaction and which negative reaction most applies to your life.**

ENDING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] **We have learned video games can affect us negatively and positively. We talked about positive aspects of playing video games. We also talked about negative aspects. An important trait of maturity is learning to change the situation when something is affecting you negatively. If you realize you are addicted to video games or you are being affected emotionally by playing violent games, I hope you will learn to just say "no" to participating in video games.**

GOING DEEPER (optional)

[In this activity, your students will be asked to answer several questions. If possible, arrange your classroom to give space for all the students to stand together in two separate places. If you don't have room in your classroom, you might consider taking this activity outside. Another option would be to ask your students to raise their hands, instead of standing and moving, to answer the questions.]

[Say to the students:] **The Librarian asked Dugan: "Do you think it is okay to do something in a game you would never consider doing in real life?"** *[Have all the students stand, then say to the students:]* **I'm going to ask several questions about something you might have a chance to do in a game. If your answer is "yes," move to this side of the room. If your answer is "no," go to the other side.** *[Note: Choose the questions appropriate for the ages of your students or substitute your own questions.]*

1. You're playing a character who has flying superpower. In the game, you need to fly to catch the bad guy. Would you have your character fly? *[Likely, everyone will go to the "yes" location. If anyone goes to "no," you may want to ask them why.]*

2. Your character is a part of a team. At one point in the game, your character has to sacrifice himself to save the rest of the team. Would you let your character die to save the rest of the team, even if it meant you would be out of the game? *[This will probably split the class, with some in the "no" spot and others, "yes." Ask one or two from each group why they chose their answer.]*

3. You are playing a game and can choose to play a good character or a nasty, evil character. Would you ever choose to play an evil character? *[Ask one or two from each group why they chose their answer.]*

4. You are playing a character who is a spy. To maintain your "cover" you have to do things like taking drugs, drinking alcohol or pretending to be attracted to someone who is very bad. Would you have your character do those things? *[Ask one or two from each group why they chose their answer.]*

In our activity, we had to decide if doing something in our imagination or in an Internet game was okay or not okay. Some things, such as being able to fly, are fun and don't tempt us to do anything harmful in real life. But other things, like mistreating or harming someone for pretend (or in your imagination), are not as clear. It is easy to think "no one gets hurt" if we do something in our heads or in a fantasy game. But is that really true? The game may be imaginary, but you are not. Let's see if we can make a general rule. What is the connection between imagining a bad thing and actually doing it? Imagining something can't be good or okay, if actually doing the same thing would be wrong or evil. Can fantasy become a reality?

There is a verse in the Bible that says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" *(Proverbs 4:23, New International Version).*

How would this verse apply to some video games or games on the Internet? It reminds us what we allow into our hearts and minds can affect our lives. Be mindful of how video games affect you. Don't let them become *DreamBreakers*.

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

This week, we discussed the topic of video games and how they can affect your child both positively and negatively. Some of the positive aspects we named were learning to multi-task, developing hand-eye coordination, problem solving, quick thinking and learning to create strategies and adapt to situations. Some of the negative aspects were desensitizing children to violence, addiction, social isolation and inactivity.

We encourage you, as parents, to:
- monitor your child's use of video games, especially which games they are playing.
- limit their time on video games.
- give your child a variety of experiences to enjoy in addition to video games by encouraging outdoor activities.

If you see your child reacting violently in everyday life, consider the possibility this might be reinforced by violent video games. Your child made a chart at school to help keep track of how much time is being spent on daily activities. This might help guide your discussion about video games with your child. There are varying opinions on how video games affect children. We encourage you to let your heart help you know how to guide your child to make wise decisions about the use of video games.

Questions you might ask your child:
1. Can you tell me the story your teacher read? Do you remember the question the Librarian asked Dugan? (She asked him, "Do you think it is okay to do something in a game you would never consider doing in real life?")
2. How would you answer that question? (Discuss with your child how games, especially video games, might change your child's life positively.)

Parents, share with your child if video games or apps have affected your life or the life of someone you know.