

Book Review for The River Current Newspaper by David Eaton Mauk  
*Video Games & Your Kids: How Parents Stay in Control*  
Hilarie Cash, PhD & Kim McDaniel, MA, 183 pgs (2008)

This slim, new book written by two women with local ties, provides compelling cases for “parents beware” followed by, “assertive action recommended.” Readers are challenged to deal with the pitfalls of a society relying more on video games as an entertainment staple for today’s youth. They dive right into the dangers of gaming addiction, where children in preschool through college slip into a spiral of addictive behavior around their gaming habits. It’s fair to state that the authors are onto something, with gaming being a billion-dollar growth industry.

Actual circumstances are used as examples throughout the book. These are presented as case studies, describing how gaming alters behavior, and what happens as a result of this. In its own way, *Video Games & Your Kids* is a twelve-step program for video game addiction. There are some sad stories and successes, too. “*Casey was a sixteen-year-old boy who loved to play on-line Halo. He had no interests outside of gaming. He maintained good grades in school, but during the summer he played Halo up to ten hours a day. All of his social life happened on-line.*” This case study was similar to many where gaming overtook a young person’s life right before the eyes of their parents. The lesson of this particular case was that parent education was required to more fully realize the son’s situation to more effectively deal with it.

The authors present their arguments in an easy-to-read, organized fashion, exploring many of the facets involved by excessive gaming. Characteristics such as low self-esteem, poor social skills, anti-social behavior, inadequate fitness and diet, and a confused sense of morality are among the topics. The authors discuss several ways to identify and deal with inappropriate gaming, like being watchful and open in talking as a family, setting limits, promoting other activities, or enrolling kids in summer camps, counseling and finally intervention. For those familiar with alcohol, drug or gambling treatments, this has a similar ring. The authors assert that video gaming, along with the increasingly popular on-line versions, have a risk to participants that is newly emerging, much as the dark side of gambling is now being treated as an addiction.

The adverse effects of the computer screen as a substitute caretaker, like a television of the past, are presented in a chapter dealing with infants and toddlers. “*Bonding is the most meaningful psychosocial process known to humans. No single factor has a more far-reaching influence in the development of our psyches.*” Essentially this quote is at the core of the entire book. The belief is that nurturing youth, as they learn and adapt to the technology available to them, is the answer to healthy relationships with society and the technology itself. This book is for parents who have children of any age who are exposed to video games and the possibility of overindulging in them.