

# Promising Directions for Mental Health and Serious Games

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## Introduction

Computer games are pervasive and can be used for important objectives like health and education. Three processes have the potential to boost the effectiveness of online therapies for mental health, including gamification (gaming aspects outside of games), serious games, and other "applied games," such as serious games. First, by making online programmers more accessible to people who might not otherwise utilise them. Second, through enhancing engagement through "serious" motivational dynamics and game based incentive. Thirdly, through applying a variety of change mechanisms, such as gaming elements and therapeutic procedures. By investigating the potential and opportunities present in this area, we hope to progress the field. We examine engagement criteria that could be used and show that recent systematic studies have found encouraging evidence of the usefulness of serious games for depression. Exergames, virtual reality, games based on cognitive behaviour therapy, entertainment games, biofeedback, and cognitive training games are six major categories of tested applied games for mental health that we illustrate. This shows that it is possible to translate conventional evidence based interventions into computer game formats and to utilise features of computer games for therapeutic change. Applied games have a great deal of potential to improve the effectiveness of online mental health interventions. However, there aren't many independent studies, and there aren't any comparisons made between game based and non-game based interventions. To respond to a variety of user demands and preferences in quickly changing situations, more research, quicker iterations, rapid testing, unconventional collaborations, and user-centered techniques are required.

## Description

Around the world, millions of children and adults enjoy playing video games. Computer games differ greatly in terms of objectives, player involvement, and technologies used. They range from quick mini games like putting up dots in a row to complex shared worlds like Augmented Reality (AR). High quality video games have been demonstrated to increase learning outcomes in terms of behaviour modification, information retention and concentration. In recent years, "serious games" and "gamification," computerised game based methods that teach, inspire, and/or persuade users in educational, health, and other settings, have been developed. There are numerous definitions for "gamification" and "serious gaming." However, both aim to use games (or significant game aspects) in order to educate and alter experience or behaviour patterns. Gaming serves as the main and central medium in serious games. Gamification, in contrast, describes the adding of game aspects to environments that are not games. While a gamified intervention may not function as a full game experience, it does include game mechanics like point scoring, in-game awards, and questing.

The use of games in mental health interventions is still in its infancy. Initial research, primarily focused on serious games, however, points to possible advantages for symptom treatment or behavioural and psychological changes. The number of smartphone apps for mental health has increased significantly in tandem with these scientific advancements. Many of them haven't undergone scientific testing, although some of them involve gaming or gamification.

The potential of serious games and gamification collectively known as "applied games" or "applied gaming" in mental health has received little research up to this point. Where applied games have been studied, treatments are frequently poorly characterised and several methods are viewed as being equivalent. We take into account the potential for applied gaming and prospective applications for motivational aspects. We evaluate systematic review data on effectiveness and present the main categories of tried and true games for mental health. Finally, we point some possible development directions.

## Conclusion

We have shown how serious games and gamification can benefit mental health while also emphasizing that there is still a lot of hard work to be done. Given the demonstrated viability of a variety of potential treatments and the urgent need for engaging, alluring, and highly effective mental health interventions that can reach a sizable population, the field is ripe for further development. Independent tests and direct comparisons of game and non-game based choices for various user groups should be part of future study.

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