Do you think games are “escapist”?  

**VOTE NOW!*  

**YES**  @avantgame games are escapist! #GDC  

**NO**  @avantgame there is no escape #GDC  

*there will be prizes
There is NO ESCAPE

Jane McGonigal, PhD  @avantgame  #GDC
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

REALITY IS BROKEN

Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change The World

"A fascinating and provocative...manifesto that adds to our understanding of the appeal and potential power of digital games."—The Boston Globe

JANE McGONIGAL

My Data
REALITY IS BROKEN
Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change The World

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

My Data
250,000+ people in person
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150+ public Q & A’s
5 million+ online views
10,000+ heartfelt letters
The top 3 challenges we face
The top 3 challenges we face

3. Violence
The top 3 challenges we face

3. Violence
2. Obesity
The top 3 challenges we face

3. Violence
2. Obesity
1. Escapism
We don't have to justify music or stories or images by demonstrating that they improve people. We shouldn't have to justify games.
“Everything rewires your brain. Reading this sentence rewires your brain. I hope it was worth it.”

- Clive Thompson, *Smarter Than You Think*
“Everything rewires your brain.

- Clive Thompson, Smarter Than You Think
“Everything rewires your brain. Reading this sentence rewires your brain.

- Clive Thompson,
  Smarter Than You Think
“Everything rewires your brain. Reading this sentence rewires your brain. I hope it was worth it.”

- Clive Thompson, 
  Smarter Than You Think
What we’re talking about today:

1. Secret History
What we’re talking about today:

1. Secret History
2. Strange Science
What we’re talking about today:

1. Secret History
2. Strange Science
3. Awesome Future
PART ONE

The Secret History
ESCAPIST

1. One who escapes, or who tries to escape, from captivity, prison, etc. Cf. ESCAPEE n.

Escapes from prison!
Escapes from Drowning!
Escapes from a straightjacket!
BILLIONS LOST AS STOCKS CRASH
Pantages In Jail Awaits Sentence To State Prison

GUilty SAYS JURY AFTER MANY HOURS

Senate "FARM BLOC" STARTS BATTLE FOR HIGHER TARIFFS

Mainstays Of Market In Plunge

State Plans To Round Up Tax Dodgers

Friend Brings Man To Jail On Rum Charge

Bingham Takes Exception To Senate Lobby

Alliance Of Two Factions May Win Out

Three U.S. C. Students Are Crash Victims

Christianity Must Destroy War Or War Will Overthrow Church, Say's Pastor Schrock
ESCAPIST

1. one who seeks distraction from reality or from routine activities Cf. ESCAPISM n.
ESCAPIST

1. one who seeks distraction from reality or from routine activities Cf. ESCAPISM n.

1933 C. S. Lewis Pilgrim’s Regress vi. iii. 125
‘I never!... Do you take me for an escapist?’
Depressed
+
Desperate
“For the first time in man’s history, man is desperate to escape the present...”

- I’m Scared, 1948
“... It seems too bad - this universal craving to escape what could be a rich, productive, happy world.”
300 million minutes a day

400,000 years
170 hours a year per player...

Or 1 month of full-time work every year.
1 in 4 players called in sick to stay home and play on launch day.
Imprisoned
Drowning
Insane
ESCAPISM
ESCAPISM

1. An addiction to doing things that make you forget the world.
ESCAPISM

1. An addiction to doing things that make you forget the world. Someone that is a victim of escapism is often found in self denial about things in life, because they find it unbearable to face the world.
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ESCAPISM

1. An addiction to doing things that make you forget the world. Someone that is a victim of escapism is often found in self-denial about things in life, because they find it unbearable to face the world. They usually have bad grades, daydreams way too often and has major mood swings. They also have trust issues and are secretly wishing they were dead.
ESCAPISM

1. An addiction to doing things that make you forget the world. Someone that is a victim of escapism is often found in self denial about things in life, because they find it unbearable to face the world. They usually have bad grades, daydreams way too often and has major mood swings. They also have trust issues and are secretly wishing they were dead. escape suicide suicidal lonely sad emo alone
The psychology literature links escapism to:

- Suicide
- Anxiety
- Eating disorders
- Alcoholism
- Addiction
- Masochism
“Closing your eyes isn't going to change anything.”

— Haruki Murakami, 
Kafka on the Shore
“Keep your eyes wide open. Only a coward closes his eyes.”
BUT
“No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality.”

— Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*
PART TWO

The Strange Science
Self-Suppression

Self-Expansión
Self-Suppression

Running away from unpleasant thoughts, perceptions, emotions
Self-Expansion

Actively seeking new skills, stronger relationships, + more positive experiences
Self-Suppression

“Augh. Everything sucks. I’m going to go play my favorite game.”
Self-Expansion

“My life is so much better when I have time to play my favorite games.”
Self-Suppression vs. Self-Expansion
Self-Suppression vs. Self-Expansion

There is no difference!!!
Self-Suppression

The more challenging my life becomes, the MORE I play games.
Self-Expansion

The more challenging my life becomes, the LESS I play games.
Self-Suppression

More depression
More anxiety
More social isolation
Self-Expansion

- More ambition
- More happiness
- More social support
“Study shows videogaming increases depression”

REAL HEADLINES!

“Study shows gamers experience greater levels of life satisfaction and happiness”
“Gaming linked to bad grades, drug use in teenagers and college students”

REAL HEADLINES!

“Video gameplay linked to higher grades, less drug use in high school students”
“Video Games Linked To Poor Relationships With Friends, Family”

“Not All Gamers Are Low Scorers On Friendships, Relationships”
Self-Suppression
physical
Self-Expansion
Fight or Flight

Calm + Connect
Self-Suppression

Worse than smoking a pack of cigarettes a day
Self-Expansion

Better than losing a ton of weight.
Self-Suppression vs. Self-Expansion
Self-Suppression

Your real life gets WORSE.
Your real life gets BETTER.

Self-Expansion
“Snow World”
Reduces pain in burn victims during the cleaning of wounds by 30-50%... which is more effective than MORPHINE.
PART THREE

The Awesome Future
PRIZE TIME!

Room 303, South Moscone Hall
You are standing by the podium in a large conference room. A rather old-looking key is on the floor.

>
PRIZE TIME!

Room 303, South Moscone Hall
You are standing by the podium in a large conference room. A rather old-looking key is on the floor.

> Get key
Back to

The Awesome Future
Do No Harm
Do No Harm

aggression + sitting
Search: Kotaku research
Competitive, violent gameplay makes you more aggressive.
Competing against strangers is worse than against real-life friends + family.
1. Introduce an element of luck into competitive games.
2. Minimize rich communication channels after defeat to reduce displays of domination.
Teabag
The only thing to do when you can't brag about a kill.
3. Make co-op, not competitive.
Make love, not war.
“Sitting Disease” by the numbers

Our modern sedentary lifestyles, both at home and in the workplace, are costly for us and for our employers.

Average hours of seated commute + average hours of seated homelife = too much sitting!
94% more likely to die

The 2010 American Cancer Society study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology followed 123,216 individuals (69,776 women and 53,440 men) from 1993–2006. The alarming results:

- Women who were inactive and sat over 6 hours a day were 94% more likely to die during the time period studied than those who were physically active and sat less than 3 hours a day.
- Men who were inactive and sat over 6 hours daily were 48% more likely to die than their standing counterparts.

Findings were independent of physical activity levels (the negative effects of sitting were just as strong in people who exercised regularly).

A January 2010 British Journal of Sports Medicine article suggests that people who sit for long periods of time have an increased risk of disease.

In 2010 the University of Queensland, Australia, School of Population Health reported, “Even when adults meet physical activity guidelines, sitting for prolonged periods can compromise metabolic health.”

Each hour of evening sitting = 3 cigarettes
NEW YORK (Reuters Health) – Cutting back kids' time watching TV and playing video games may not encourage them to spend more of the day running around outside, a new study suggests.
1. Make the player move by any means necessary.
2. Standing is more immersive!
3. PSA ît: Just stand the last 10 minutes of every hour.
Give More
Good
NOT THIS! → THIS!

← THIS!
Stephanie Hendrick @cutecattheory
My sons therapist rocks. She prescribed more gaming to help son w/ coping and problem solving skills. Ping @avantgame

Stephanie Hendrick @cutecattheory
@avantgame oops. Accidental retweet! Games we talked about were skyrim and Battlefield 3 (this 1 b/c friends are online playing too)
Call of Duty
Mario Kart
Rayman Raving Rabbids
Peggle
World of Warcraft
Words with Friends
Minecraft
Batman: Arkham Asylum
Dance Central
Silent Hill
Halo 3
Bejeweled
Plants vs. Zombies
Do you know this guy?
1. Age gracefully
“U.S. seniors who play video games are happier, less depressed”

“Video Games Requiring Physical Activity Alleviate Depression in Older Adults”

“Seniors who play videogames feel more connected, less lonely”
2. Have a closer-knit Family
“Video games can strengthen adult-child relationships”

“Playing video games together leads to better communication skills between adults and children”

“Girls who played video games with a parent felt more connected to their families and had stronger mental health.”
3. Be Brilliant
“Fast-paced action games improve attention, multi-tasking and focus”

“10 hours of action videogaming significantly improves spatial intelligence skills”

“Action videogamers solve complex problems faster, without any loss in accuracy”
4. Be Able
“Multi-player videogames enhance social skills, social intelligence for autistic youth”

“ADHD symptoms diminished; players show improved motivation, long-term goal acquisition when playing videogames”

“12 hours of Wii games improved reading skills in children with dyslexia more than one year’s worth of traditional remedial instruction”
5. Be Brave
“Kids learn to manage difficult emotions like fear and anger by playing scary videogames”

“Gamers better able to control dreams, halt nightmares”

“Attractive avatars improve our real-world confidence and commitment to goals”
6. Become Heroic
“Having a superpower in a virtual world increases helping behavior in real-life”

“Co-op gaming linked to more helpful behavior later, outside of the games”

“Gamers are twice as likely as non-gamers to come to the rescue when someone is being physically harmed in real life”
7. Build Character
“Videogames promote positive youth development by requiring focus and cumulative effort over time to achieve a goal”

“Videogamers are less embarrassed by, and learn more from, failure”

“Videogames strengthen neural circuitry associated with strong work ethic”
8. Be Happier
“30 minutes a day of casual gaming improves mood, decreases depression more effectively than pharmaceuticals”
9. Stress Less
“Casual games reduce anger, encourage calmness”

“Physical stress measures cut in half by casual videogames”
8 Awe-Inspiring Game Infographics

GAME CHANGERS

LEVELING UP THE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF VIDEO GAMES

HOW VIDEO GAMES IMPROVE HEALTH IN ALL LIFE STAGES

PARKINSON’S DISEASE

- gait velocity
- stride
- balance
• 30-minute play sessions ➔ happiness, well-being, stress reduction
• Co-op ➔ relationships, social intelligence
• Fast-paced, complex action ➔ cognitive skills
• Long-term goals and challenging gameplay ➔ build character, attention
• Age-appropriate intensity ➔ emotion control
• Diverse avatars ➔ confidence, ambition
• First-person flying? Why not! ➔ real-life heroism
Connect Games to Life.
“It seems too bad - this universal craving to escape what could be a rich, productive, happy world. “
Sorry, Harry.
REALITY IS BROKEN
Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change The World

JANE McGONIGAL

http://tinyurl.com/thereisnoescape

Jane McGonigal @avantgame