

'Video Gaming Disorder' Is Just Like 'Dinosaur Obsession Disorder'



By Alex Berezow, PhD — January 2, 2018



Dinosaur Obsession Disorder is a serious mental illness in children.

(Source: Storyblocks) [1]

Some kids really get into dinosaurs.

They carry around books filled with pictures. They have dinosaur action figures. They've watched *The Land Before Time* eight million times. They wear *T. rex* pajamas. And all they ever want to talk about are *Brontosaurus* and *Triceratops*. These kids are just like that [little twerp from Jurassic Park](#) [2] that we all hoped was going to get eaten but somehow survived, instead.

Unfortunately, society has been blind to the secret suffering of these children. What appears to the rest of us as a cute albeit slightly annoying phase is actually a serious mental illness: Dinosaur Obsession Disorder.

The World Health Organization has even drawn up diagnostic criteria:



Dinosaur obsession disorder is characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent dinosaur obsessive behavior... manifested by: 1) impaired control over dinosaur obsessions (e.g., onset, frequency, intensity, duration, termination, context); 2) increasing priority given to dinosaurs to the extent that dinosaurs take precedence over other life interests and daily activities; and 3) continuation or escalation of dinosaur obsessions despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

Kids who suffer from Dinosaur Obsession Disorder (a.k.a., DODards) should seek professional help.

Book Learnin' Disorder

Alright, the jig is up. There is no Dinosaur Obsession Disorder. However, the WHO description shown above is quite real. Instead of dinosaur obsession, though, the diagnosis is for "[gaming disorder](#) [3]." (All I did was swap out the word "gaming" for "dinosaurs" or "dinosaur obsession.")

Are there kids (or maybe even some adults) who play video games too much? Absolutely. But consider this: At multiple points throughout history, society thought that reading was bad.

The great philosopher [Socrates warned against the dangers of reading and writing](#) [4]. He said that they would "create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves."

Until at least the 1800's, [men were not fond of letting women read books, particularly novels](#) [5], which were "associated with inflaming of sexual passions; with liberal, radical ideas; with uppityness; with the attempt to overturn the status quo."

The Pathologization of Normal Behavior

We are watching history repeat itself. We are obsessed with our children's obsessions. Today, hardly any parent would worry if their kids spent too much time indoors reading books; but they would be concerned if they spent the same amount of time playing video games. We have simply swapped one irrational fear for another.

It is possible to overdo anything in life. Some people watch too much TV, while others talk too much. However, as I wrote in [Little Black Book of Junk Science](#) [6], psychologists and psychiatrists need to stop pathologizing normal but quirky behavior. If every person can be diagnosed with a mental illness, it takes away attention and resources from those people who really do suffer from very serious disorders, like depression, OCD, bipolar, and schizophrenia.

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Links

- [1] https://www.storyblocks.com/stock-image/dinosaur-r9mcdku7_zj6gpjn8r
- [2] https://img.buzzfeed.com/buzzfeed-static/static/campaign_images/webdr01/2013/4/5/12/the-little-boy-from-jurassic-park-is-all-grown-up-1-13929-1365178780-0_big.jpg
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- [5] <https://op-talk.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/when-novels-were-bad-for-you/>
- [6] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/06/29/little-black-book-junk-science-11507>