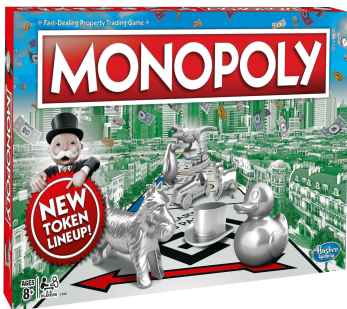


# From Monopoly to Murder

by Gail Castle, LMHC

I just read a news clip that spoke of Junaid Hussain and how he was priming to be the world's most deadly terrorist from the age of 11. His downward spiral was quick and sure. I skimmed most of the article - this is not typically an article that I would read. At one point I saw the phrase ". . . you could stay at home and play Call of Duty on the computer or you can come and do the real thing. . . ."



Again I am reminded of my stance on the importance of monitoring kids and their computer gaming. I continue to be shocked and saddened to hear parents speak of the games their kids are playing - Call to Duty, Grand Theft Auto, Fortnite. These mothers and fathers speak of their children's love of the games along with the expression "they are good kids, so I'm not worried about their interaction with violent games." They go on to explain that they believe their children shouldn't be sheltered from the "real world" and that while living under their roofs is the best time to explore these things.

When did we go from playing Monopoly to killing people in our game playing? How is killing people a real world action in which our children need to become adept?

Some parents will present the argument that with these games, violent or not, their kids are socializing with other kids. They believe the connection that is made through the internet is as valid as those made in person. The reality of internet socialization is that kids are losing the skills of face-to-face conversation, exchanging ideas and opinions, exploring different avenues of thought. Sleep deprivation comes to the forefront quickly as well. The allure and addictive nature of these types of games results in long hours of playing, deep into the night, with constant exposure not only to violence, but also the effects of blue light, decreasing the ability to have a restful and deep sleep.

As the season for gift giving rapidly approaches, please give serious consideration to those gifts you place in front of your kids. Do you want them to learn how to be independent, giving, compassionate, purposeful, empathetic, peace-loving, kind, resourceful, caring? Are violent video games the source for this type of growth? It's important for parents to make these kind of decisions while they are yours to make.

Monopoly or killing games? Which lesson is more important, more relevant to your child's future?