Online gaming with Max Toper

Part two: Risks of online gaming

Hello again, welcome back. My name is Max Toper, author of "Why is He Still Here?". Today I will be talking about the darker side of online gaming, and its communities. Before I begin, I'd like to remind you, that though there are risks involved, online communities have real potential beyond just recreation. If you want more detail on this, please see the first video in this series.

Unfortunately, in this world, there are those who want to cause harm to a young person. The same is true on the internet, which like the real world has its dangers.

A core problem is, that unless you're in that particular online community. As an adult or outsider, it's hard to decipher what exactly is going on. And a core problem I have with this video is, that it isn't an in-depth guide. There are many aspects to online harms, including but not limited to too much screen time, online predators, cyberbullying the list sadly goes on.

Therefore, I've decided to focus on insight into how online abuse can often work. Much of it is universal, and the issues do feed into each other rather than being separate. Previously, I discussed how easy it is to access an online community. Nobody sees you, you don't have to make eye contact, and the consequences for bad behaviour are few to non-existent.

Note the last part, consequences are few to non-existent. For example, you can block an internet troll, or they may be banned from the site. But there is no mechanism preventing said troll from making a new account and circumventing these protections.

Indeed, truly experienced bullies or trolls can force someone out of a community. Or in worst case scenarios, find personal information and exploit it to cause real-life harm. Now understand, this is a complicated discussion, and too vast to fit in this video. So I've once again chosen a particular area to focus on.

It may surprise you to know that often, cyberbullying is the result of a dispute between two users in a community. Or someone higher up in an online community abusing their power and using it to target another user. As for dedicated trolls, while they do exist. They mostly target larger communities with no individual target, or influential celebrities.

I'd like to circle back to abuse of power. What's important to understand is that most online communities are put together by volunteers. These volunteers can decide who is and isn't allowed in an online community. Thus, if they decide they don't like someone, that's when the bullying starts.

 A lot of these volunteers with power tend to themselves be young people. For some of them, it may be their first taste of proper control. Which is a major factor for corruption and abuse of power in online communities.

However, in some cases these volunteers do run their communities well. They can resolve disputes, ban trolls, and keep their users safe. In light of this, I'm going to draw an analogy. In the real world we have good and bad neighbourhoods.

It's similar on the internet, there are well-maintained communities and badly managed communities. In the latter, a young person is more likely to be harmed. So to end off this video I'd like to make some key points for how to spot an unsafe community, drawn directly from my personal experience:

- The people running the community may act in an improper manner.
- The people running the community may also favour certain users, and not present them with consequences when they do something objectively wrong.
- The community might have rules, but they could only exist to give those in power unnecessary control or they might not be enforced at all, or they just simply don't seem to apply to some people.
- And lastly, if the community is causing a young-person distress then that's when I would step in.

Its important to remember that these are guidelines. And that this video is a mere overview of some of the dangers. At the end of the day, if people are in a well-run and fairly managed online community where they are valued, they are far less likely to become victims. So, I'd like to conclude by saying, relationships are everything, especially online.

That is all for today, join me next time, as I explore managing screen time.