

Real People Game

The benefits of RPG

So Here is your Situation

There are numerous times with events both great and small that we wish we could have handled differently. We see people in life handle things in a manner that we never thought of and sometimes aspire to react like they do. Yet when many people think of role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons or video games there is still a negative connotation tied to it that all they are for trying to escape. Their lives by going to a land of make-believe or just a distraction the keeps people from being productive. However, there are many cases that prove that there is more to role-playing games than just casting spells or entering hyper drive with your spaceship. Just like doctors practiced with their classmates when people are diagnosed with terminal diseases there are situations that many who play role playing games learn so that they would have otherwise never experienced.



Now imagine that you are an elf who has been living with humans for some time now. Yes there are those who treat you normally yet there are those who fear and chastise you for trying to mix in their village. Some call you undesirable names or

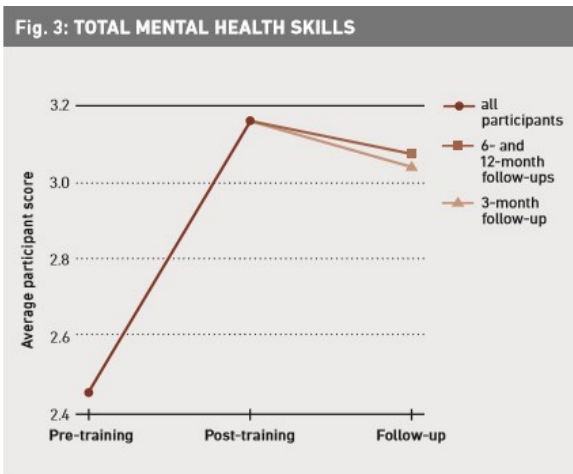
use the name elf like it is a derogatory term. How would you react to this? Would you hold onto a high sense of morals to prove wrong those who judge you biased on who you are, leave the village and try to find your own kind, or prove to be everything that these people fear from you and more? There are many role-playing games that offer scenarios where there is more than just black and white answers. Where even if you choose what in the short-term seems like the right choice, you create more harm down the line.

A Serious Approach

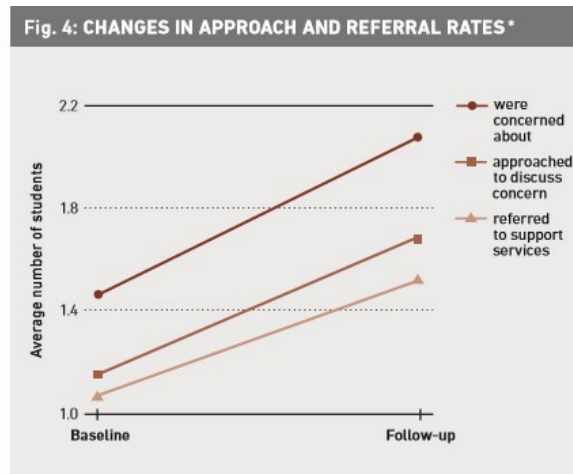
Companies like Kognito (http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/01/21/510285728/can-an-online-game-help-you-learn-to-help-struggling-friends?utm_campaign=storyshare&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social) have use the aspect of role-playing games to create scenarios where you are encountering a friend who is thinking of committing suicide and much more. Through these role play games people have learned ways to approach and help people in ways that they never have before. During their study for their program *At-Risk for University and College Faculty and Staff* they found notable changes in those who participated.



Not only was their knowledge of mental health improved but they showed drastic improvements in their approach and referral rates as shown by these graphs showing the difference of before and after the study. (https://resources.kognito.com//uf/atrisk_universityfaculty_followupstudy.pdf) Many with this newfound knowledge looked back at past events with friends who were at a similar point and wish that they knew about how to handle it even when the worst outcome did not occur.



Changes in total mental health skills from pre- to post-simulation to 3-, 6-, and 12-month follow-up points



Changes in the average number of students that participants were concerned about, approached, and referred in the prior two academic months

Average number of students that participants...	Baseline	Follow-up survey	Percent change
Were concerned about	1.46	2.08	42%
Approached to discuss concern	1.15	1.69	47%
Referred to support services	1.07	1.52	42%

*n=115 as we only included answers by participants who completed the pre- and follow-up surveys at least two months into the academic year.

While this study shows how role-playing games can be used for the purpose of educating there are many role-playing games whose main focus is different from placing you in a single scenario.

When most people think of a generic role-playing game, it usually means it is in a fictional universe where rules differ from that of ours. It could be in outer space or a fictional land of fantasy, there are life skills that they teach us.

All for One

When you pick up a role-playing game you will most likely meet up with somewhere or encounter people online. And while in some cases you do not always have to interact with them, most of the time you will in order to complete goals in the game. Let us return to the elf, you learn that they village is going to be attacked by bandits and have decided to stand and defend your town. While that is an admirable choice it will most likely end in failure if you act alone. You could try to rally the townspeople to action or see if some wandering warrior will come to aid. Overall this situation tells us something that most of us are told quite often, you can not do everything alone.



Groups who get together and play Dungeons & Dragons have to create a character that they will play throughout the game that was created by their friend the Dungeon Master (DM). They will be a rag-tag group of various races and social class with a common goal that threads them together. Some may be evil, good, or neutral when it comes to their morals so conflicts are expected to surface between them. Yet they will have to work as a team in order to “win” the game or argue with one another and risk having to start over with new characters and try again. Through various challenges and struggles the group will overcome their weakness by the help of the rest of the group.

Teamwork is often a skill that is pushed aside since the world makes it seem like you have to look out for yourself or be stomped on by others. Yet many role-playing games do not focus on the win or lose situation and instead look at the choices that you or your group makes and has the story change around these choices.

Your character may be a stealthy rogue but when you are out in the open you are at a disadvantage. Luckily, one of your group members is a knight who can keep you safe while you break into prison to stop the execution of one of the players in your group. Though saving a friend from death’s rope and working on a group project are as different as day and night the basics still remain the same.

You find that one of your group members knows how to use Adobe Illustrator so that your graphs are made from scratch and have a flair that complements the presentation you have to give. They need help with their math and you are pretty good at crunching numbers. In both the real world and in role-playing games you will often have your job and by learning how to be a team player you can all save the world and have your project submitted by its deadline.

Being Creative

Whether it is a video game, tabletop, or live action role play you often are faced with a different mindset than the real world. When playing the elf you can not just call the police because they do not exist nor do most common things we have. Instead you must tell a story which means creating a character with flaws, strengths, insecurities, and more like a real person does.

When playing the part of the Dungeon Master you have to add personality to all of the people the group meets throughout their journey. Some video games will guide you though the story where your choices shape you character into a saint who always looks out for the little guy or the personification of greed who makes dark deals to end up on top.

Role playing games will often draw from you knowledge and turn it into something that many including yourself will enjoy. It also allows you to try something new, play a dark rouge rather than the noble paladin or a wizard who uses his mind to overcome obstacles with spells like fire or lightning rather than the warrior who lets his blade do most of the talking. Through role-playing games you will be able to do things and discover the consequences of your characters actions and behaviors.



Say you encounter a dragon who holds the medicine that you need to cure the kings terminal illness. The most common thought is to attack the dragon and claim

the riches after it's defeat. But then before launching your surprise onslaught the wizard walks towards the dragon and start to talk with it. After a long discussion the dragon relinquished the medicine to the party without any fighting. If we go back there are multitudes of ways to complete the task and often playing role-playing games will start making you surprised at the ideas you try and sometimes succeed with.

+4 to Social Skills

Even in most video games the character will talk and role-playing games are no exception. You will be talking to multitudes of people and depending on the game it will be with other people. They may be rich and snobby or poor and humble but overall the variety of conversations that you will have will have will make you think of what to say next at some point.

When the wizard talked to the dragon, he did it with the possibility he would not get past saying hello. Yet he took the chance and it turned out in his favor. The player after sometime playing might catch up with his friends to see how they have been. Before they could have been very shy, but through their character became more open with the group and soon after were starting conversation and telling jokes.



For many who have trouble being social, role-playing games are a bridge that can help ease what otherwise would be a difficult endeavor for some. Like most things getting involved in something there will often be a community behind it.

Solving Problems

The world itself is host to a grand multitude of problems big, small, and sometimes a bit redundant. This easily translates into role-playing games where your party will have to navigate dungeons, solve puzzles, avoid traps, and much more. In some cases you only get but a second to react before something happens.

What other options did we have when getting the medicine from the dragon besides brute force and conversation? Maybe there was a loose stalactite in the cave to knock and hit the dragon. Or a vantage point where a nimble archer could release a lethal blow. Maybe the rouge could have just crept in and snatch it without so much as a whisper.



Over time you begin to rely on split second thinking and your critical thinking skills. Of course this sort of thinking is great for when you have to tackle problems outside of role-playing games. Because once you see a problem from multiple angles a maze filled with skeletons is no harder than working on the next project.

Plus it is Fun

While writing out character sheets, creating dungeons and worlds for people to explore, or playing a game that may take you more than 40 hours to complete

sounds anything but pleasant, it actually is. Being able to set aside the issues the world has given you even for a brief period of time and playing with a child like wonder is a great. Reliving the days were you ran around outside of your house with your friends fighting monsters and saving the day. Why does something like that have to end just because you have outgrown the slide on the jungle gym?

Give it a Try

Like learning how to play an instrument, starting is never an easy thing to do. You could search the internet for eons looking at all of the role-playing games that you can try and never see an end to the list. One way to narrow down the list into something manageable is to be exact with what kind of role playing game you want to play. Want to fly spaceships? There are many science fiction biased role playing games biased on popular franchises like Star Wars. Favor a post apocalyptic scenario? The video game series Fallout will place you as a person who is thrown into a world ravaged by nuclear war. And if you want to go for fantasy, Dungeons & Dragons or video games like Dragon Age are waiting to be explored. If none of these options draw your appeal then head to a comic or game store where you will have to slowly process the amount of options that you have.

Trying to figure out how to play a role-playing game can sometimes be confusing. But YouTube is your friend when seeking explanations and examples of how things work. If none of your friends play, your local game shop or sites like [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com/) (<https://www.meetup.com/>) can help you find groups who are interested in playing games that you want to play.

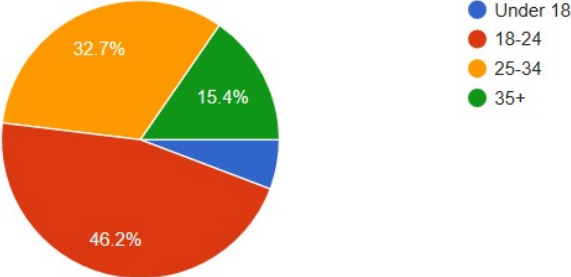
Role playing games offer more than just an escape. They offer fun experiences while teaching you things. So grab a controller or find a group because you never know the next adventure that waits for you.

Please take this [survey](https://goo.gl/forms/AYkTIhFoMkrCpfpwP2) (<https://goo.gl/forms/AYkTIhFoMkrCpfpwP2>) now that you have finished reading.

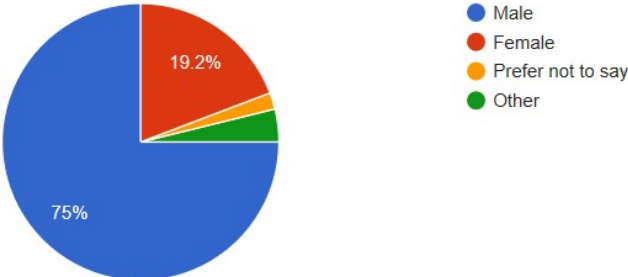
After a Week

Now that this article has been up for a week and we have reached past 50 people who have taken the survey, I would like to post the results as of 4/3/17.

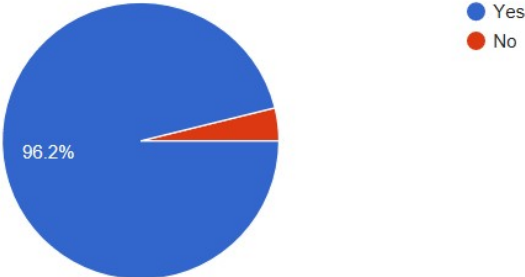
How old are you? (52 responses)



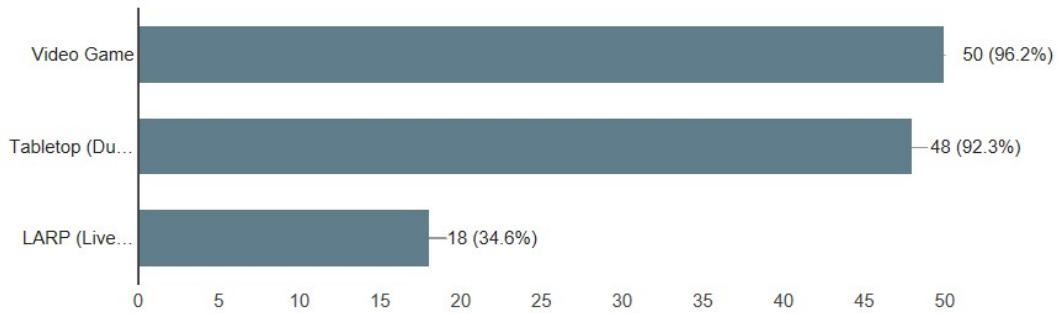
Male or Female? (52 responses)



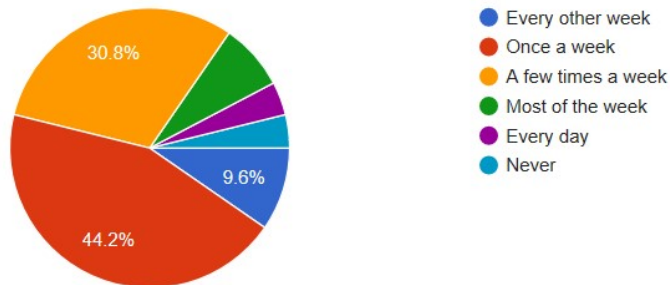
Have you played a role play game before? (52 responses)



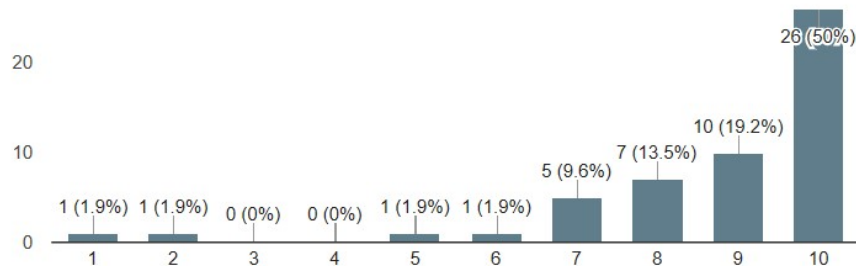
If yes, what type of role play games have you played? (52 responses)



How often do you play role play games a week? (52 responses)



How likely are you to recommend a role playing game to friend? (52 responses)



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