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# Positive Behavior from Competitive Games

## Self-Determination theory

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore what positive impacts competitive games can provide on player's behavior. Precisely, this research demonstrates the theory of self-development and what key factors it includes for a positive outcome from players' side.

Self-determination theory (SDT), the theory that was selected for this study, helps to describe the process of competing in terms of motivational aspects. More specifically, according to SDT, video games may offer opportunities to meet psychological needs like autonomy, competence, and relatedness, all of which are important drivers of motivation, engagement, and well-being.

This research is aimed at game designers and gamers in general, especially for those who are interested in competitive games. Additionally, this will help to understand the best aspects of the gameplay, as well as provide players with a positive impact that is the basis of the theory of self-development.

In conclusion, this study provides examples of how it can be beneficial in the industry to have acquired skills from competitive gaming, such as making the effective decision in challenged situations, or striving to be more motivated to achieve goals, which in turn can lead to huge success.

## Introduction

In recent years, competitive gaming has experienced a surge in popularity, becoming increasingly prevalent within the gaming community (Howarth, 2023). While the rising popularity of competitive games has sparked considerable enthusiasm among gamers, it is important to acknowledge that this trend comes with both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, competitive gaming has been associated with various benefits, including enhanced cognitive skills and improved social interaction among players (Cherry, 2022). On the other hand, there are negative effects that have been linked to competitive gaming, such as addiction to gaming (Kabir, 2020).

The research question of this study: what is the positive impact of competitive games on players' behavior? Specifically, this study looked at social skills, strategic thinking, motivation, and problem-solving abilities. There has been significant debate surrounding the effects of competitive gaming. While some argue that gaming may have negative impacts, recent research suggests that playing competitively can have a positive influence on players' behavior (Uysal et al., 2016).

The chosen theory for this research was self-determination theory (SDT) helps to describe the process of participating in competition in regards to motivational aspects. To be more precise, SDT states that video games can have the potential to provide opportunities to satisfy psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are key factors for increasing motivation, engagement and well-being.

The current study uses structured in-depth interview questions to obtain information about how often players aged 16-25 interact with competitive games and what impacts them the most. This interview will be closely related to our research question: what is the positive impact of competitive games on players' behavior? In the second part of the interview, we asked experience-based questions that were aimed to obtain information about potential effects outside of the game. By eliciting responses from participants regarding the beneficial effects of competitive games, the chosen interview questions are closely related to the self-determination theory.

When reading through different pieces of research available online, it was discovered that most of them highlight the negative sides of competitive gaming such as aggression and workaholism (Griffiths, 2017). In contrast, this study tries to point out how gaming can bring positive sides such as a sense of purpose, quick decision-making in hard situations, leadership, logical and tactical thinking that can be used by individuals on a daily basis and

help them achieve great results. On the other hand, this research aims to shed light on positive sides that were not discussed before. For example, Badatala et al., (2016) mentioned that cooperative gaming brings more value than competitive gaming when talking about communication skills. On the other hand, by interviewing a number of participants, most of them highlighted that their communication improvements come directly from competitive gaming since players have to interact with each other in order to win. Last, this study can demonstrate to all readers that competitive gaming can be beneficial today and be incorporated into training programs.

## Background

Cherry (2022) writes in their paper “In competitive settings, such as sports and athletics, fostering a sense of self-determination can motivate people to excel”, highlighting the importance of self-improvement contributing to self-well-being. According to self-determination theory, people are naturally inclined towards personal growth and development. This motivation for growth drives their behavior, as they seek to gain mastery over challenges and expand their experiences. These experiences and challenges are crucial for developing a coherent sense of self, as individuals strive towards achieving their full potential.

Self-determination theory highlights the significance of autonomous motivation, which is driven by internal sources rather than external rewards like money, prizes, and recognition (Cherry, 2022). While external factors can motivate people to act (known as extrinsic motivation), the theory emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, which arises from an individual's inherent desire to gain knowledge and independence.

The main difference between self-determined and non-self-determined behavior is that self-determined behavior makes a person driven by enjoyment, as opposed to driven by responsibility (Cherry, 2022). In other words, self-determined behavior may result in individuals striving to work in areas that they have an internally motivated interest in. The outcomes of this are often positive, as it brings a sense of satisfaction over the things that have been achieved throughout the process, because it can provide a greater sense of control. In contrast, when actions are performed because they ‘must’ be done, or extrinsically motivated, this can lead to a sense of dissatisfaction.

Competitive gaming involves skill and strategic thinking that individuals need to acquire in order to outplay their opponents. In competitive gaming setting it is kind of similar. Individuals that strive to gain mastery over thousands of skill points will eventually become better. Gradual development allows them to gain a sense of competence and build mastery skills that are enjoyable and important to them (Cherry, 2022). Researchers have discovered that a sense of control usually leads to healthy habits and positive impacts on an individual’s behavior.

Extrinsic motivation occurs when an individual participates in an activity not because of the inherent enjoyment or satisfaction derived from the activity, but rather to obtain rewards or avoid punishment. In this case, the individual sees the rewards or punishment as separate from the activity and uses it to achieve a desired outcome.

While autonomy and competence dive into the importance of feeling active, relatedness promotes intrinsic motivation and enhances the overall player experience by facilitating connections and social interactions. In certain occasions, relatedness can be linked to single player games, in contrast to that individuals feel complete satisfaction of relatedness when they feel a sense of belongingness and connection to others. This part can be mostly achieved through multiplayer games, where individuals must improve themselves to become better at specific areas. One study examined the connections between relatedness, autonomy, and competence with respect to massive multiplayer online games (MMOs). In MMOs, players interact with each other by communication, which can promote the fulfilment of related needs. The study found that relatedness, in addition to autonomy and competence, had a positive correlation with the player's sense of presence, enjoyment, and likelihood of playing the game in the future (Uysal & Yildirim, 2016).

Competence needs can vary for different individuals depending on their skill base. Let us say that an individual who has not acquired mechanics of the game yet is required to play against people that have a higher skill base. As a result, an overwhelming number of choices leads the unexperienced player to unsatisfying experiences, which will lessen any positive impacts such as feeling of being useful to other teammates. In games such as DOTA 2, players must deal with a changing meta and understand a large number of different mechanics which continuously change with game updates. Beginners that are placed into stressful positions will not be able to feel their impact on the game state, because it requires a specific skill base to get out from certain situations. In contrast, experienced players will adapt to different situations and constantly developing meta will provide those individuals with their own methods that work the best for them.

In general, self-determination in competitive games helps explain the motivational aspects of gamers psychology (Uysal & Yildirim, 2016). To promote the development of autonomy and competence in players, the choices presented to them should be equally valid. This allows players to confidently endorse their decisions without doubting their ability to make a sound choice.

There are three basic psychological needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness – the each influence a players' motivation to continue playing games (Ryan et al., 2006).

It involved 136 participants, who were recruited from a university campus and online gaming forums. The survey used in the study asked participants to indicate the types of video games they played most often, with options including action, adventure, role-playing,

strategy, sports, and other genres. The study did not limit participation to individuals who played only certain genres of video games, and instead sought to include a diverse range of players. Moreover, the survey included questions about their gaming habits and preferences, as well as measures of their motivation, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The survey also included a scale that assessed the degree to which participants felt their basic psychological needs were met during gameplay.

The results of the study indicated that the degree to which participants felt their basic psychological needs were met during gameplay predicted their motivation to continue playing video games. “Specifically, autonomy and competence continue to provide significant accounts of player motivation and enjoyment” (Ryan et al., 2006, p 14). This suggests that players are most motivated to continue playing video games when they feel they have a sense of control over their actions within the game (autonomy), when they feel they are good at the game (competence), and when they feel connected to other players or the game world (relatedness) (Ryan et al., 2006, p 4-5). The study provides insight into the factors that motivate people to play video games and highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting sustained engagement with video games.

Despite all the above positive qualities, the same cannot be said about teamwork and team performance in competitive games compared to cooperative games. Another study examined the effects of playing cooperative and competitive video games on teamwork and team performance (Badatala et al., 2016). The study was conducted with a sample of 60 participants, “randomly assigned to pairs and to one of the three experimental conditions: control, competitive, and cooperative” (Badatala et al., 2016, p 4). Groups played the game for two hours and then completed a teamwork task, which was evaluated by independent raters. The study found that the cooperative gaming group performed better in the teamwork task than the competitive gaming group. This study suggests that cooperative gaming can enhance teamwork skills and improve team performance. However, it should be noted that the study was conducted with a relatively small sample size and in a controlled laboratory setting, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to real-world settings.

This study by Badatala et al., (2016) highlights the potential benefits of cooperative gaming for promoting teamwork and collaborative skills, while also suggesting that competitive gaming may not be as effective in improving teamwork and team performance. However, the study did not examine other potential benefits or positive impacts of competitive gaming, such as strategic thinking, increased motivation, or increase in skillsets.

In the study by Faust et al., (2013) the authors discuss the potential benefits of competitive gaming as a promising avenue for future research, as it has not received much attention in the scientific and professional literature on video games compared to professional chess players. According to the authors, the positive qualities exhibited by successful professional competitive gamers, including dedication, persistence, discipline, intelligence and teamwork are emphasized. However, the article acknowledges the dearth of empirical inquiry into competitive gaming, despite its worldwide growth over three decades and the wide range of games played competitively.

Other studies have suggested that many competitive games require advanced abilities in strategizing, planning, multitasking, and timing to master, as seen in research on games like *Counter-Strike* (Reeves et al., 2009). In addition, it is likely that professional competitive gamers must develop a diverse set of skills, including quick reflexes, precise hand-eye coordination, and fluent game control, to excel in professional circles. Competitive gaming has significant potential for providing benefits, however there is a large gap in research in this area.

While video gaming has traditionally been viewed as a leisure activity, the rise of esports has transformed it into a professional sport (Griffiths, 2017). Players of esports have been shown to demonstrate psychological benefits such as improved hand-eye coordination, increased problem-solving skills, and enhanced social connections through online communities. However, there are also potentially negative psychological impacts in esports professional players. Esports athletes are at an increased risk of burnout due to the intense training and competition schedules, and that they may also experience social isolation and anxiety due to the demanding nature of their profession.

While many discussions of video gaming and esports focus on the potential negative impacts, Griffiths offers a more balanced perspective by highlighting the benefits of these activities. This approach is particularly important given the growing popularity of esports and the increasing number of young people pursuing careers in this field. However, the study has a relatively narrow focus on the psychological impact of professional video gaming and esports. While these activities are undoubtedly important, there are many other activities that could also benefit from a psychological analysis, particularly among non-professional players.

In recent years, there has been a lot of debate about whether video games are good or bad for people, especially children. However, there has been an increasing amount of

research that shows that playing video games can have many benefits. In their article, "The Benefits of Playing Video Games" Granic et al., (2014) review the literature on the topic and provide an in-depth analysis of the many benefits of playing video games.

One of the main benefits of playing video games is that they can have a positive impact on cognitive skills. Video games require players to use a wide range of cognitive skills, including attention, spatial visualization, and problem-solving. Research has shown that playing video games can improve these skills and can even lead to increases in intelligence. For example, a study by Green and Bavelier (2003) found that playing action video games can improve visual attention and spatial cognition.

Another benefit of playing video games is that they can improve social skills. Video games can provide opportunities for socialization, especially for those who may be socially isolated or have difficulty making friends in real life. Video games can also help improve communication skills, as players often need to communicate with each other in order to work together and achieve common goals. In addition, video games can help build empathy and understanding of different perspectives and cultures (Granic et al., 2014).

Playing video games can also have psychological benefits, such as reducing stress and improving mood. Video games can provide an escape from real-world problems and can help players feel more relaxed and content. They can also provide a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when players achieve goals or complete difficult tasks. Additionally, playing video games can improve self-esteem, as players can feel a sense of mastery and control over their virtual environments (Granic et al., 2014).

Finally, video games can have educational benefits, as they can teach players a wide range of skills and knowledge. For example, video games can teach players history, science, and other subjects through their gameplay and narratives. They can also teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as players need to use these skills to progress through the game. Additionally, video games can help improve literacy skills, as many games require players to read and understand complex instructions and dialogue (Granic et al., 2014).

Overall, playing video games can have many benefits, including cognitive, social, psychological, and educational benefits (Granic, 2014). While there may be some negative effects associated with playing video games, such as addiction and aggression, these effects are generally small and can be mitigated by setting appropriate limits and ensuring that players engage in a variety of activities. Therefore, video games can be a valuable and enjoyable form of entertainment and can even provide a range of important benefits for players of all ages.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

Video games, especially in our situation competitive games, can have the potential to provide opportunities to satisfy psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are key factors for increasing motivation, engagement, and well-being (Cherry, 2022). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theoretical framework that explains human motivation and personality development. SDT proposes that there are two types of motivation: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing an activity because it is inherently enjoyable or satisfying, while extrinsic motivation refers to doing an activity because of external rewards or pressures (Cherry, 2023).

Video games, and in particular competitive games, offer an interesting mix of player motivations that have yet to be examined. It may be that for some, competitive games are part of a hobby or entertainment in their free time, while for others it is an income, earnings, or a professional career. Through the lens of SDT, competitive games show varying importance of self-development for all players taking part in the competitive game process.

Competitive games rely on the concept of self-development, as it is a crucial element for players to take control of the situation, devise strategies, and maintain a clear focus on their objectives to attain their desired outcome. This outcome has both outward and inward consequences. As such, SDT provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation and personality development and offers insights into how individuals can cultivate their intrinsic motivation and well-being through satisfying their psychological needs and engaging in supportive social contexts. According to all sources presented above, there were a number negative and positive qualities. To be more precise, those papers shared issues such as emotional exhaustion, being isolated and lack of physical activity. On the other hand, positive impacts were also included which have a connection to our theory of Self-Determination. Moreover, studies presented above have shown a common occurrence of positive impacts related to SDT. According to that, the research question was focused on positive behavior from competitive games. To answer this question, a qualitative methodology with structured list of in-depth questions was created in relation to our study. This kind of specific methodology will have a positive impact on games research, since it will shed light on positive qualities from competitive games, such as motivation, strategic thinking, cognitive qualities and even some impact connected to social activities.

## Methods

### Participants

We conducted semi-structured interviews with six individuals. Based on some sources, especially Badatala et al., (2016), Cherry (2022), Granic et al., (2014), that were reviewed previously related to competitive gaming; the decision was made to take interviewees in the range from 16 to 25 years old. All individuals did not have any specific criteria for interaction with competitive gaming, some of them play this type of games mostly to spend their free time. Other players tend to use competitive gaming in more professional way, namely, they are more likely to maintain their ranking as the best in the game and constantly polish their skills with regular training. The recruitment process involved reaching out to potential participants through various social networks and providing a detailed explanation of the interview's conditions. The interviews were conducted via *Discord*.

### Materials

#### Semi-structured interviews

The primary method employed for data collection in this study involved the use of online semi-structured interviews. This approach was characterized using a total of 13 structured questions, which were included in the interview protocol. These questions were designed to progressively explore the participants' experiences with competitive games, starting with basic inquiries, including the frequency of engagement and the emotional reactions elicited before and after gameplay. The interview examined the extent to which competitive games impacted participants' development and improvement, and whether these effects translated to real-life scenarios.

#### Interview

All interviews were recorded, which enabled us to capture the participants' responses without disrupting the flow of conversation. The sound recordings were subsequently analyzed in detail providing the opportunity to refer to interviews and analyze participants' reactions to different questions. Additionally, brief notes were taken during the interviews for personal use and for analysis of the results.

The pre-set questions for the interview were as follows:

1. How do you view competitive gaming in your life or lifestyle? (e.g. is it a hobby, social activity, a job, career, or something else).
2. How often do you spend competitive gaming in a typical week?
3. How did you get to the point when you started playing competitive games?

4. Tell me about the emotions you have when competitive gaming?
5. How about after competitive gaming, when you are finished?
6. What positive impacts of competitive gaming do you think there are?
7. Have you experienced positive impacts yourself?
8. Do you agree with the term - "The more you practice, the better you get?", if yes, please explain how this applies to gaming?
9. Have you noticed individual progress from yourself? (seriously, strategically, learn from your mistakes).
10. How do you think professional gamers are similar to professional athletes? (how are they dissimilar).
11. Do these competitive games have any impact on your real life? (positive / negative).
12. Have you noticed the motivation to play further to become better?
13. Does competitive gaming teach any skill that can be useful in real life?

#### Procedure (or Data collection)

All respondents were informed one month before, so that everything would be prepared and discussed. Moreover, they were also reminded several times before the chosen date, since all researchers had to make sure that everything would go as planned. The interviews were held via *Discord* and supported by *OBS Broadcasting Software* so that all information could be reviewed precisely after. In general, all interviews took around 45 minutes each, since interviewees were allowed to take their time and think about their answer properly before speaking it out loud. As the interview progressed, the questions grew more complex, and people needed more time to respond. Last, it is important to mention emotions and discussions after every question, since interviewees had unlimited amount of time, and every piece of information played a vital role in our future process of research.

#### Methodological limitations

When discussing limitations, it was noticed that this method might not provide quality responses from individuals. Namely, there might be a lack of audience who are seriously focused on playing competitive games. Based on that the decision was made to limit the process to only six people since in-depth individual interview might take a massive amount of time and recruit people that we personally know. There was a need to feel the difference between levels of players and how responsibly they take their gaming process. Every interviewer had two players with different skill level to understand how it impacts

individuals' environment. To summarize, some of the decisions were questioned most of the time during the methodology part, especially a lack of information from players that could lead the research to a complete failure. Surprisingly, not looking at the fact that only six individuals were chosen, in-depth interviews provided the research with answers that it was aiming to get.

### Data analysis

After the survey was conducted, the interviews were transcribed. The next step was to meet up as a team to review each interview together and analyze details. In the course of this analysis, the answers of all the interviewees were structured according to the questions to which they referred. Then, they were compared for the similarity and difference of the players' opinions. In this way it was possible to divide all the answers into categories, reflecting the positive, negative or neutral position of the players on each question. According to general calculations, it was found that about 70 percent of the respondents gave the necessary positive response for our study, while the remaining 30 percent had the opposite opinion.

## Results and Discussion

Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, the present study gathered data from a sample of six players, whose levels of interest in competitive gaming varied. The ensuing section presents an analysis of the outcomes derived from pre-structured inquiries that pertained to the theme of 'positive impacts from competitive games. Elaborated information concerning the design and responses to the participants' questionnaires can be found in the "Appendix" section.

### Question analysis

#### 4.1

**Q1: How do you view competitive gaming in your life or lifestyle? (e.g. is it a hobby, social activity, a job, career, or something else).**

A1: Competitive gaming is a big part of my life as most games involve competition in one way or another, it's always nice to win. This type of entertainment for me is just a hobby or an attempt to escape from everyday problems.

A2: A couple of years ago it was my job, because I was playing in a team, but now it is just a hobby.

A3: I play competitive games only because I do better in them than in other genres. Competitive games are the best way to show off your shooting and reaction skills.

A4: 100% just a hobby. Competitive games are my most preferred genre of computer games because they evoke the very emotions, I want to get out of playing video games.

A5: Hobby, because for me it is an opportunity to brainstorm over a new idea or tactic.

A6: I would say that I see competitive gaming for myself as hobby which I take seriously and strive to improve to proceed further.

From the above responses we can see that for some participants competitive games in the past were a source of additional income, and sometimes even a professional hobby. Nowadays these players do not devote as much time to games as before, but they still do not abandon their favorite games and sometimes play at the level of today's professionals, but now it is not more than just a hobby for them. Now they come back to these games just to distract themselves from their problems, to remember the past, or just to enjoy the gameplay.

## 4.2

### **Q2: How often do you spend competitive gaming in a typical week?**

A1: In a week, I can play a couple of competitive matches in one of the competitive games (1-2 hours per day), or not play in general, it all depends on my mood and free time.

A2: Usually I spend around 70 hours per week.

A3: Every day for 2 hours minimum during the most active period. The schedule was not constant, as the time mainly depended on the team members.

A4: A To maintain at least some game form, in my free time I allocate an hour every day at least.

A5: I only play 1-2 hours a day at least.

A6: Sometimes it can be up to 60 hours.

People for whom competitive gaming is more than just a hobby spend, on average, more than 60 hours a week playing. Such players see it not just as a free pastime, but also as a source of knowledge from which they can learn new skills. However, the same cannot be said of players for whom it was and still is a hobby. Such people justify their time spent in the game, namely 1-3 hours a day, by going only for old memories, to have fun and just relax. The conclusion that can be drawn from all these answers is that the time a player spends in a competitive game depends on how seriously he takes it.

## 4.3

### **Q3: How did you get to the point when you started playing competitive games?**

A1: Competitive games entered my life through YouTube because as a teenager I liked to watch gamers perform beautiful highlights, which in turn encouraged me to play competitive games.

A2: Once when a friend was playing Dota 2, I watched the gameplay and fell in love with this game.

A3: Started my way in competitive games with Warcraft 3, played against bots in custom matches. After a while I realized that strategy games are not my thing and discovered CS:S. Chose this part precisely, because it had more vanilla servers than in 1.6, which quickly drew me into its atmosphere and interest in the game appeared by itself.

A4: As a child I tried to find myself in different genres of games and competitive games captivated most of all, because the emotions that they brought was not comparable to any other game.

A5: The spirit of competition!

A6: Since being a child, I've always liked to have some sort of competition and I believe that I haven't played many games which do not include that part.

This question revealed that all players were initially interested in these types of games, because of the competitive nature of the games. However, all of the participants in the survey, on average, were involved in competitive games through games closer to what they are currently playing. There were also people who found themselves in competitive games through various video hosting sites, where they could watch professional players playing or clips of cool competitive moments.

4.4- 4.5

**Q4: Tell me about the emotions you have when competitive gaming?**

**Q5: How about after competitive gaming, when you are finished?**

A1: During competitive games, I try not to show unnecessary emotions, as this can bring down the mood, however, there are situations when you get out of balance and overly aggressive both on teammates and on others

A1: It depends on the result after the game process. If you win, then you have positive emotions and are in the mood to play further. If you lose, then you are depressed and doubt that you can play further, thereby exiting the game.

A2: I'm always a bit nervous because almost every game I'm playing is with pro players in my team or in the enemy team.

A2: Disgusting, because a lot of players are so bad at high ranks, it is wasting a lot of your energy.

A3: I liked to make headshots and dominate. When I lost, it was very upsetting and all the desire to play discouraged. Now I go into the game just to have fun in the voice chat (CS community is quite peculiar and motley because of that it becomes more fun to play) and relax after a hard day's work old memory.

A3: Well before, if you lose - tilt, if you win - you have to go next and dominate everyone else, and now do not care, the mood is high, because it was a lot of fun because of the silly members of the team.

A4: First of all, like any other game, I experience a certain dose of pleasure from the process. There's also the gamble, because every time you go into a game you don't know if you're going to get your ass kicked today or if you're going to dominate.

A4: Lack of full satisfaction, because gambling brings it only in the process.

A5: Focus. Joy. Vibe. It all depends on the team!

A5: Online, there is little emotion. In tournaments everything depends on the result. When I lose, I try to find my mistakes and correct them immediately. Winning is a sweet joy.

A6: It can vary on the different matches and teams I must play with/vs. When I perform better than others, I will have good emotions and the opposite to that.

A6: Once again it depends on the overall result.

Questions about the emotional impact of competitive games revealed the following result. Regardless of a player's level or style of play, almost all of the players surveyed experience very similar emotions. The gameplay itself can bring both positive and negative results, quite a lot depends on the team. Also, a major factor is the outcome of a competitive game - if they lost, they were depressed and low-spirited, and this in most cases was a reason for the player to stop, draw conclusions, analyse their mistakes, or just take a break. If the game ended in victory, the emotions were extremely positive and added to the motivation of the respondents to continue in the same vein and strive for the best.

4.6- 4.7

**Q6: What positive impacts of competitive gaming do you think there are?**

**Q7: Have you experienced positive impacts yourself?**

A1: Competitive games help to distract from their problems, improve coordination, reaction, and have a positive effect on communication in general.

A1: Yes, I could better understand foreign languages.

A2: It teaches you to think faster.

A2: Yes, especially a thing that there is always a way out of any trouble.

A3: The ability to stand up for yourself in a very difficult verbal altercation in the voice chat, because the community is quite experienced in this matter. Increase stress tolerance because of sweaty situations. Training of purpose and self-love.

A3: Yes

A4: Take up your free time and play a significant role in self-education, because the path to becoming the best requires not only the constant enjoyment of the game, but also a share of the routine. And often the routine prevails over the enjoyment.

A4: Yes

A5: The development of tactical thinking, the interaction of the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

A5: Yes

A6: Thinking strategically improved reaction and sometimes communication skills.

A6: I would say that the biggest improvement is my English since most of the players must communicate on it.

On average, players spoke positively about competitive games, but the positives were quite different for each of them. Some learned to think strategically and make tactical decisions correctly. Others gained the skill to act quickly, thinking through each subsequent action, trying as much as possible to avoid mistakes that lead to negative results. Some have improved their reflective skills, which help them react quickly to any unpredictable action by an opponent. Analyzing all of the above, we can conclude that players emphasize communication among the entire community in competitive games. It is necessary to have really strong nerves and necessary skills in any conflict situation with the players playing both for you and against you, otherwise the consequences can be quite negative on all subsequent games.

4.8

**Q8: Do you agree with the term - "The more you practice, the better you get?", if yes, please explain how this applies to gaming?**

A1: In part, I agree, because without training there will be no result, but not a small part of the game is decided by luck and external factors.

A2: Yes, to get better, namely, to be a professional player, you must spend a lot of hours to prove your skill and getting better.

A3: I disagree. Because, regardless of the skill, you can have such a big win that then you'll lose for a long time straight, and it does not bring any good. You can get tired, burn out, and abandon the game for a long time. When this happened to me, the rejection was on a physical level, I took the mouse in my hands and it did not suit me at all, it felt uncomfortable, as if it had changed shape.

A4: In competitive games, as in any other activity, the level of skill to be trained is paramount, and training, in turn, involves an abundance of practice and analysis.

A5: The formula for success? 10,000 hours of practice, and you're a maestro of a narrowly focused business! Gameplay - experience, analysis.

A6: We can take me and the person who has only installed the game. Obviously, I am going to be better because I've been practicing and playing against others for more than 9000 hours (about 1 year). I will understand more, will think differently, will do differently and will have a different outcome rather than a player who's not practicing that much.

Only one of the 6 respondents spoke negatively about the phrase "you practice more, you get better. He explained his opinion by an example from games, when you win many times in a row, but then suddenly start a series of defeats, which brings disappointment and no desire to play further, to get better.

Nevertheless, the other 5 respondents agreed with this statement and gave the example that it is necessary to spend really a lot of time to achieve the goal. Only through long practice any result can be achieved.

#### 4.9

**Q9: Have you noticed individual progress from yourself? (seriously, strategically, learn from your mistakes).**

A1: There is no individual progress as such, since progress is shown in the in-game ranking.

A2: Yes, when I started to play for 15 hours a day just in 1 year I was in the top 80 players in Europe.

A3: I never had any mistakes. I learned from a friend who played with cheats, but claimed it was his skill. So, I always tried to reach or exceed his level. Worked off even my smallest inaccuracy, tried to become the best. In the end I got the result I wanted, but then it turned out that he was actually a cheater. Despite this, however, I was able to outdo him in actual skills. Probably my only mistake is that I'm not a team player, so when I played in a team, I had the role of all-rounder. I think it came from the public servers, there is basically no concept of team play.

A4: Sure. Most modern games allow you to observe and analyze your stats in them, look for mistakes, work through them, and learn from them.

A5: Progress, degradation. I only learn from my mistakes.

A6: Same as mentioned in question 7. English and overall communication skills.

Most of the respondents gave unique answers. Despite the varying amount of time, they spent in the game, almost all of them achieved the desired result. Some have learned from their mistakes, learning to accept defeat and analyzing their failures so they can work on them and continue to outperform themselves in the future. Others labored and persevered to the point that they surpassed even the game cheaters. It is impossible not to notice that such an approach to business can lead a player even to the European Top 80, as it happened to one of the interviewees.

#### 4.10

**Q10: How do you think professional gamers are similar to professional athletes? (how are they dissimilar).**

A1: Professional players are like athletes only in terms of schedule and emotions about games, because if you want to become a professional athlete you will need years of training to get noticed, but if you want to become a professional player, then you only need a computer, good internet and that's it.

A2: They are similar, because in the first place it is discipline.

A3: Similar in their desire to win by any means necessary. Not like anything else at all. Even the biggest and most skillful players are mostly undisciplined stupid, great-aged or regular kids who still behave like schoolboys on public servers outside of the professional arena.

A4: Definitely similar by way of professional development and their inherent character traits and qualities. The difference, however, is that a person who decides to go into cybersports professionally is treated more like an addicted gamer than an athlete who spends 24 hours a day in the gym.

A5: Constant practice of the same thing - the game. Practicing strategies as a team. Practicing an individual skill. Differences: physical activity, that's all.

A6: I believe that players are not engaging with the outside world as much as athletes in other areas do. You can't just simply compare us. Yes, we do earn money for what we do. We compete against each other. We must improve ourselves and practice to be better. Those things are similar. When it comes down to physical health, that's where I see the biggest difference.

On average, respondents agreed that there are similarities and differences between professional players and athletes. Among the similarities, they noted that both players and athletes have a strong discipline to participate in hours of training to achieve their goals. One way or another, everyone must work tirelessly to remain a professional. The most cited distinction, however, is physical fitness. While professional athletes spend 24 hours a day in the gym, pumping and perfecting their bodies, among professional cyber athletes' physical activity is not particularly popular, and in principle is not required. Moreover, it was also noted that professional players in most cases have a minimal percentage of interaction with the outside world, unlike athletes.

#### 4.11

**Q11: Do these competitive games have any impact on your real life? (positive / negative).**

A1: Competitive games only affect the mood and emotions that you get at the end of the game. If you win, then you have a good mood and a positive attitude, if you lose, then in real life you will be angry and morally lowered.

A2: Yes. I was dating a girl. She was so gorgeous, and was making money from Dota 2, because I was playing for a team so i wasn't just playing all day long, it was my job. and in the end, she broke up with me because out of this game.

A3: It did. Nervousness and overexcitement after any game session, whether it was successful or not. I'd spend a few hours in a row putting up headshots, and after that I didn't want to do anything else but that. It was just a negative impact.

A4: Made me super nervous, unstable, and capable of snapping at anyone. But it was these emotions that motivated me to get back into the game.

A5: Negative. I'd rather be a botanist. It had already gone from a simple hobby to a thirst for victory.

A6: At some point it is positive and at some point, it is negative. I've got to know a bunch of great individuals, earn money from different tournaments, but haven't been engaging with the outside world that much. I believe, when I catch up with things that happen outside my apartment, I will have only positive impacts from competitive gaming.

The survey showed that games have a direct impact on real life, having both positive and negative effects. If a gamer loses, he or she experiences negative emotions, which can also affect the loved ones, a person can show aggression, snap, yell. If a person wins, he/she feels positive emotions which may also reflect on his/her relatives. However, given the previous questions, it is worth remembering that spending a long time in competitive games saps time from real life, negatively affecting his society. A person becomes distant, loses touch with the outside world, which in most cases leads to loneliness. The main source of communication for him becomes the in-game community, which in part can be considered a negative trait.

#### 4.12

##### **Q12: Have you noticed the motivation to play further to become better?**

A1: There is no motivation to play further, since there is no progress as such, I continue to play only because of emotions and communication with friends.

A2: I would say no, because of the previous answer. Gaming affected my real life and my relations.

A3: Yeah, I used to. Play a couple of rolls and then go to a server to practice marksmanship or throwing grenades at different locations and learn/improve skills.

A4: Of course. What else is there to play competitive games for if not to get better?

A5: Definitely. Becoming better than everyone else is the main goal.

A6: Motivation comes and goes. I would say that I feel like I must play, because I want to be better and get somewhere. This is where motivation doesn't make any sense. It is all about me striving to get to play fully professionally and even if I don't enjoy the process of becoming a pro player, I still must do it. I just want to be better, and there is no need to be motivated, just work and work and work.

Two of six people surveyed on the question of motivation to play further expressed a negative opinion. In their opinion, there is no point in continuing to play, as it does not bring them any meaningful result. The only reason for some to keep playing was to keep in touch with acquaintances they had met in the games. Also, among the negative traits cited were some of the consequences of staying in competitive games for long periods of time, which had a negative impact on the interviewee's personal life.

At the same time, the remaining four players were positive, stating that their main goals were and are to achieve some kind of success in competitive games, to become better not only others, but also themselves. Setting a goal and striving to achieve it is exactly the reason to keep playing.

#### 4.13

#### **Q13: Does competitive gaming teach any skill that can be useful in real life?**

A1: No, not a single competitive game will help you in real life, the ability to correctly place "wards" - vision in Dota 2 will not help you survive in life and ensure a decent life, unless you are a blogger, streamer or cybersports man.

A2: Yes, as I said, it teaches you to think faster, and there is always a way out of any trouble.

A3: No. Super negative answer. Cybersports are only harmful, in some cases even a little dumbing down.

A4: Purposefulness and a way to achieve the best possible result.

A5: Yes. Teamwork, strategy, decisiveness, because you must make split-second decisions all the time.

A6: For me personally, yes. I have learned that you don't need to be motivated to do specific things. Sometimes you just got to push yourself to the limits to feel the result. It can apply to different things, such as football, trading, business development. There is always a need to push and move on, even if you don't feel like doing it.

Just as in the last question, two people of those surveyed responded that competitive gaming does not teach anything useful and does not bring any positive influence on the gamer's real life and can even be detrimental to some extent. Nevertheless, the remaining four players spoke positively or neutrally about the impact of competitive gaming on them. In their opinion, competitive games can teach determination, teamwork, determination, and cognitive skills, such as thinking faster and making decisions in difficult situations.

## General Discussion

### Positive impact

The results of the current study suggest that, while individual answers are unique in their own way and have different opinions about competitive games, four out of six respondents answered that competitive gaming brings more positive impacts, rather than negative. This supports our hypothesis of SDT that no matter how many people will be included in the research, most of the percentage will give positive reaction since they enjoy the process of competitive gaming.

### Autonomy and Competence

The current research used semi-structured interviews to understand how and why gaming can be beneficial for people aged 16–25. Individuals were divided into two sections: three players with a high level of skill who take gaming extremely seriously and three players who see their gaming on a daily basis as an enjoyable way of spending time. The reason for this specific decision is to see the contrast in answers and have multiple examples of how competitive gaming on different levels influences individuals. For example, four out of six interviewees mentioned that they feel that competitive gaming provides them with a specific need for fulfillment that they cannot find in any other area on a daily basis. During their time at their desks, players have noted an improvement in their strategic thinking, problem-solving abilities and communication skills, which are all part of self-determination theory.

Two of the people interviewed highlighted that their leadership skills improved due to their constant development in the game and their ability to coordinate other players and guide them to winning conditions. This particular skill can be simply implied as self-development in real life, where individuals can become leaders and guide others to success.

### Relatedness

Given that none of the interviewees are native English speakers and that English is frequently the language of choice for interpersonal communication, it is also important to note that every single interviewee has experienced an improvement in their ability to communicate in English. Moreover, despite the result which was made in the study (Badatala et al., 2016) participants in the current study reported that competitive gaming helped develop communication skills, the ability to be interactive and find common language, which are lead factors for teamwork and team performance.

## Summary

However, not everyone agreed that playing video games had purely beneficial effects on their lives. In this case, it was specifically noticed by players group that take competitive gaming on a serious level. Individuals have noticed how they set apart from the outside world, become more self-focused which leads them to spending most of their time in front of computers trying to improve. It is contentious because, although the need to constantly improve was previously mentioned as a benefit, players believe that because they spend so much time playing video games, they lose touch with reality. To summarize all the information above, it can be said that competitive games are closely related to the theory of self-development and give to the players more positive impacts than negative.

## Limitations

The use of interviews as a data collection method had some limitations, such as the potential for a limited number of participants to be included in the study. This could have led to some compromise in the analysis and interpretation of the data. To address this limitation, the questions used in the interviews were created according to SDT to ensure that the data collected was meaningful. Additionally, efforts were made to maximize the number of participants included in the study to mitigate this limitation. Moreover, for subsequent research, it would be desirable to have a larger number of participants involved in competitive games. For example, it would be great to look at players who are also passionate about other types of games. Naturally, the same can be said about the other age range; both older and younger people are interested in competitive games, even if not on a professional level. All of these changes could better recognize the positive impacts of competitive gaming, as both competitive and other genres of gaming are increasing in popularity. So in order to avoid further restrictions, it would be best to take all aspects into account for a more accurate and clear result.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, our research aims to provide readers with an understanding of the potential benefits of competitive games. Furthermore, through a synthesis of literature and our own investigation, this study also aims to elucidate the virtues of competitive games by exploring their association with the theory of self-development. The findings from this study suggest that engaging in gameplay can foster tactical and strategic thinking, which, in turn, can have practical implications in various real-life contexts. This type of thinking can be particularly advantageous, such as for chess players or individuals working in large companies or any other business sphere, as it enables them to carefully consider their actions and strive for improvement.

Additionally, competitive games cultivate cognitive abilities and the ability to make effective decisions in challenging situations, making these skills valuable in sports activities. Lastly, the core factor underlying competitive games associated with self-development theory is the concept of goal orientation. It teaches individuals to learn from their mistakes, analyze their failures, and persistently strive until their objectives are achieved. This research was conducted to explore the positive influences of competitive games and shed light on the aforementioned aspects. For example, game designers play a crucial role in shaping these positive impacts by creating engaging, balanced, and inclusive games that foster growth and a thriving esports ecosystem. It would be extremely great if game designers would take all the valuable points to gamers and take different statistics into consideration.

There are undoubtedly many more people interested in competitive gaming than the six individuals that were interviewed by a small group in this study. There are unique examples and stories that statistics and studies will not be able to cover. If there was a chance to touch upon this topic again in the future, then the preparation time would take a lot longer and every part of the research would be much more meaningful. Meanwhile, this study has touched upon the things that certain individuals might find useful, especially the contrast between taking something seriously and simply enjoying the process. As in competitive games as in real life, there is always a way to improve in order to become better; in some cases, it might be a sacrifice, but without a sacrifice, there is no great reward.

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## Appendix

### Questions for the interview

1. How do you view competitive gaming in your life or lifestyle? (e.g. is it a hobby, social activity, a job, career, or something else).
2. How often do you spend competitive gaming in a typical week?
3. How did you get to the point when you started playing competitive games?
4. Tell me about the emotions you have when competitive gaming?
5. How about after competitive gaming, when you are finished?
6. What positive impacts of competitive gaming do you think there are?
7. Have you experienced positive impacts yourself?
8. Do you agree with the term - "The more you practice, the better you get?", if yes, please explain how this applies to gaming?
9. Have you noticed individual progress from yourself? (seriously, strategically, learn from your mistakes).
10. How do you think professional gamers are similar to professional athletes? (how are they dissimilar).
11. Do these competitive games have any impact on your real life? (positive / negative).
12. Have you noticed the motivation to play further to become better?
13. Does competitive gaming teach any skill that can be useful in real life?

## 1.1

1. Competitive gaming is a big part of my life as most games involve competition in one way or another, it's always nice to win. This type of entertainment for me is just a hobby or an attempt to escape from everyday problems.
2. In a week, I can play a couple of competitive matches in one of the competitive games (1-2 hours per day, or not play in general, it all depends on my mood and free time.
3. Competitive games entered my life through YouTube because as a teenager I liked to watch gamers perform beautiful highlights, which in turn encouraged me to play competitive games.
4. During competitive games, I try not to show unnecessary emotions, as this can bring down the mood, however, there are situations when you get out of balance and overly aggressive both on teammates and on others
5. It depends on the result after the game process. If you win, then you have positive emotions and are in the mood to play further. If you lose, then you are depressed and doubt that you can play further, thereby exiting the game.
6. Competitive games help to distract from their problems, improve coordination, reaction, and have a positive effect on communication in general.
7. Yes, I could better understand foreign languages.
8. In part, I agree, because without training there will be no result, but not a small part of the game is decided by luck and external factors.
9. There is no individual progress as such, since progress is shown in the in-game ranking.
10. Professional players are like athletes only in terms of schedule and emotions about games, because if you want to become a professional athlete you will need years of training to get noticed, but if you want to become a professional player, then you only need a computer, good internet and that's it.
11. Competitive games only affect the mood and emotions that you get at the end of the game. If you win, then you have a good mood and a positive attitude, if you lose, then in real life you will be angry and morally lowered.
12. There is no motivation to play further, since there is no progress as such, I continue to play only because of emotions and communication with friends.
13. No, not a single competitive game will help you in real life, the ability to correctly place "wards" - vision in Dota 2 will not help you survive in life and ensure a decent life, unless you are a blogger, streamer or cybersports man.

## 1.2

1. A couple of years ago it was my job, because I was playing in a team, but now it is just a hobby.
2. Usually I spend around 70 hours per week.
3. Once when a friend was playing Dota 2, I watched the gameplay and fell in love with this game.
4. I'm always a bit nervous because almost every game I'm playing is with pro players in my team or in the enemy team.
5. Disgusting, because a lot of players are so bad at high ranks, it is wasting a lot of your energy.
6. It teaches you to think faster.
7. Yes, especially a thing that there is always a way out of any trouble.
8. Yes, to get better, namely, to be a professional player, you must spend a lot of hours to prove your skill and getting better.
9. Yes, when I started to play for 15 hours a day just in 1 year, I was in the top 80 players in Europe.
10. They are similar, because in the first place it is discipline.
11. Yes. I was dating a girl. She was so gorgeous, and was making money from Dota 2, because I was playing for a team so i wasn't just playing all day long, it was my job. and in the end, she broke up with me because out of this game.
12. I would say no, because of the previous answer. Gaming affected my real life and my relations.
13. Yes, as I said, it teaches you to think faster, and there is always a way out of any trouble.

### 1.3

1. I play competitive games only because I do better in them than in other genres.

Competitive games are the best way to show off your shooting and reaction skills.

2. Every day for 2 hours minimum during the most active period. The schedule was not constant, as the time mainly depended on the team members.

3. Started my way in competitive games with Warcraft 3, played against bots in custom matches. After a while I realized that strategy games are not my thing and discovered CS:Source. Chose this part precisely, because it had more vanilla servers than in 1.6, which quickly drew me into its atmosphere and interest in the game appeared by itself.

4. I liked to make headshots and dominate. When I lost, it was very upsetting and all the desire to play discouraged. Now I go into the game just to have fun in the voice chat (CS community is quite peculiar and motley because of that it becomes more fun to play) and relax after a hard day's work old memory.

5. Well before, if you lose - tilt, if you win - you have to go next and dominate everyone else, and now do not care, the mood is high, because it was a lot of fun because of the silly members of the team.

6. The ability to stand up for yourself in a very difficult verbal altercation in the voice chat, because the community is quite experienced in this matter. Increase stress tolerance because of sweaty situations. Training of purpose and self-love.

7. Yes.

8. I disagree. Because, regardless of the skill, you can have such a big win that then you'll lose for a long time straight, and it does not bring any good. You can get tired, burn out, and abandon the game for a long time. When this happened to me, the rejection was on a physical level, I took the mouse in my hands and it did not suit me at all, it felt uncomfortable, as if it had changed shape.

9. I never had any mistakes. I learned from a friend who played with cheats, but claimed it was his skill. So, I always tried to reach or exceed his level. Worked off even my smallest inaccuracy, tried to become the best. In the end I got the result I wanted, but then it turned out that he was actually a cheater. Despite this, however, I was able to outdo him in actual skills. Probably my only mistake is that I'm not a team player, so when I played in a team, I had the role of all-rounder. I think it came from the public servers, there is basically no concept of team play.

10. Similar in their desire to win by any means necessary. Not like anything else at all. Even the biggest and most skillful players are mostly undisciplined stupid, great-aged or regular kids who still behave like schoolboys on public servers outside of the professional arena.

11. It did. Nervousness and overexcitement after any game session, whether it was successful or not. I'd spend a few hours in a row putting up headshots, and after that I didn't want to do anything else but that. It was just a negative impact.

12. Yeah, I used to. Play a couple of rolls and then go to a server to practice marksmanship or throwing grenades at different locations and learn/improve skills.

13. No. Super negative answer. Cybersports are only harmful, in some cases even a little dumbing down.

## 1.4

1. 100% just a hobby. Competitive games are my most preferred genre of computer games because they evoke the very emotions, I want to get out of playing video games.
2. To maintain at least some game form, in my free time I allocate an hour every day at least.
3. As a child I tried to find myself in different genres of games and competitive games captivated most of all, because the emotions that they brought was not comparable to any other game.
4. First of all, like any other game, I experience a certain dose of pleasure from the process. There's also the gamble, because every time you go into a game you don't know if you're going to get your ass kicked today or if you're going to dominate.
5. Lack of full satisfaction, because gambling brings it only in the process.
6. Take up your free time and play a significant role in self-education, because the path to becoming the best requires not only the constant enjoyment of the game, but also a share of the routine. And often the routine prevails over the enjoyment.
7. Yes.
8. In competitive games, as in any other activity, the level of skill to be trained is paramount, and training, in turn, involves an abundance of practice and analysis.
9. Sure. Most modern games allow you to observe and analyze your stats in them, look for mistakes, work through them, and learn from them.
10. Definitely similar by way of professional development and their inherent character traits and qualities. The difference, however, is that a person who decides to go into cybersports professionally is treated more like an addicted gamer than an athlete who spends 24 hours a day in the gym.
11. Made me super nervous, unstable, and capable of snapping at anyone. But it was these emotions that motivated me to get back into the game.
12. Of course. What else is there to play competitive games for if not to get better?
13. Purposefulness and a way to achieve the best possible result.

## 1.5

1. Hobby, because for me it is an opportunity to brainstorm over a new idea or tactic.
2. I only play 1-2 hours a day at least.
3. The spirit of competition!
4. Focus. Joy. Vibe. It all depends on the team!
5. Online, there is little emotion. In tournaments everything depends on the result. When I lose, I try to find my mistakes and correct them immediately. Winning is a sweet joy
6. The development of tactical thinking, the interaction of the left and right hemispheres of the brain
7. Yes.
8. The formula for success? 10,000 hours of practice, and you're a maestro of a narrowly focused business! Gameplay - experience, analysis.
9. Progress, degradation. I only learn from my mistakes.
10. Constant practice of the same thing - the game. Practicing strategies as a team. Practicing an individual skill. Differences: physical activity, that's all.
11. Negative. I'd rather be a botanist. It had already gone from a simple hobby to a thirst for victory.
12. Definitely. Becoming better than everyone else is the main goal.
13. Yes. Teamwork, strategy, decisiveness, because you must make split-second decisions all the time.

## 1.6

1. I would say that I see competitive gaming for myself as hobby which I take seriously and strive to improve to proceed further.
2. Sometimes it can be up to 60 hours.
3. Since being a child, I've always liked to have some sort of competition and I believe that I haven't played many games which do not include that part.
4. It can vary on the different matches and teams I must play with/vs. When I perform better than others, I will have good emotions and the opposite to that.
5. Once again it depends on the overall result.
6. Thinking strategically improved reaction and sometimes communication skills.
7. I would say that the biggest improvement is my English since most of the players must communicate on it.
8. We can take me and the person who has only installed the game. Obviously, I am going to be better because I've been practicing and playing against others for more than 9000 hours (about 1 year). I will understand more, will think differently, will do differently and will have a different outcome rather than a player who's not practicing that much.
9. Same as mentioned in question 7. English and overall communication skills.
10. I believe that players are not engaging with the outside world as much as athletes in other areas do. You can't just simply compare us. Yes, we do earn money for what we do. We compete against each other. We must improve ourselves and practice to be better. Those things are similar. When it comes down to physical health, that's where I see the biggest difference.
11. At some point it is positive and at some point, it is negative. I've got to know a bunch of great individuals, earn money from different tournaments, but haven't been engaging with the outside world that much. I believe, when I catch up with things that happen outside my apartment, I will have only positive impacts from competitive gaming.
12. Motivation comes and goes. I would say that I feel like I must play, because I want to be better and get somewhere. This is where motivation doesn't make any sense. It is all about me striving to get to play fully professionally and even if I don't enjoy the process of becoming a pro player, I still must do it. I just want to be better, and there is no need to be motivated, just work and work and work.
13. For me personally, yes. I have learned that you don't need to be motivated to do specific things. Sometimes you just got to push yourself to the limits to feel the result. It can apply to different things, such as football, trading, business development. There is always a need to push and move on, even if you don't feel like doing it.