

MARIO ON PRESCRIPTION?

By Will Guyatt

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If you're reading this on Friday, 10th October it's World Mental Health Day - which alongside World Doughnut Day are the only two of "these days" I continue to recognise. I've had my own mental health struggles over the years, yet have experienced no such issue when it comes to doughnuts. This year on World Mental Health Day I've made a note to myself - and it reads 'do more gaming.' I wrote that because it's often the thing in my life that gets routinely pushed to the back of the queue when things get busy, and that needs to stop.

These days, while gaming itself is so far down the list, I still seem perfectly able to continually rack up a queue of discounted games to play on the Steam and Nintendo online stores.



Recently, my friend - Dale, the owner of Forest Green Rovers Football Club teamed up with a local GP in Gloucestershire to describe a matchday ticket to those who wanted to improve their mental health - and I'm beginning to wonder if I we should all start thinking of gaming in the same life-improving fashion.

I'm a true believer in (attempting to find) balance in life - and being told it's ok to game would stop a few people around me from raising their eyebrows.

Over the years, a growing wealth of research has shown that games can be effective for rebalancing your mood - often boosting it more than other activities like reading, cooking or listening to music. Some of this is down to games being more immersive - capturing much of our attention, and boy, this week my attention was truly captured.

I've really been enjoying the remaster of Super Mario Galaxy on the Switch. Despite having won critical acclaim on release back in 2017 - I've long forgotten why I never ended up playing it.

Almost twenty years later, I've fallen in love with it, as there's something unmatched about the ability of Mario games putting a smile on my face - and leaving me with the wonderful feeling of joy, as well as a chance to escape for a bit into a colourful world nothing like Swindon.

Without pulling out the world's smallest violin, it's been a challenging few weeks in my house. There's been a smattering of covid, a touch of family medical problems and a dollop of work stress that's been weighing heavily on my mind - but thanks to my favourite Italian plumber I've been pulled out of the doldrums this week and I feel more able to handle what's going on in my world - thanks to time spent in Mario's.

I've found myself playing for way longer than I have in years - even stretching out these gaming sessions beyond midnight - a time of the day I've long forgotten - unless I've been woken by daughter, the dog, or a deer in the garden.



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