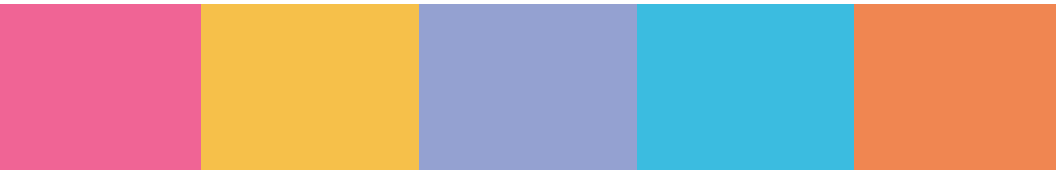




## Therapeutic Video Game Recommendations



# How to Use This Guide



The purpose of this guide is to recommend therapeutic video games for children based on their symptoms. The games recommended in this guide were curated by researchers at Circana, a market-leading video game research firm, in collaboration with mental health researchers at UCSD.

This guide was designed as a quick reference to help caretakers quickly select games for their patients. Caretakers can reference the category that best fits the symptoms of the patient and select one of the games listed.

When selecting an appropriate game, the user should first select the appropriate symptom and age category of the child, and then select a title based on the available gaming platforms at the facility. **Note: Virtual Reality Games are currently not recommended by the manufacturer for children under the age of 12.**

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## Methodology

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Circana operates the largest video game attribute database in the world containing over 170 million game facts.

To create the recommendations in this guide, Circana collaborated with mental health researchers to create a hierarchy of over one hundred game features related to positive health. Circana then classified thousands of video games based on these features.

Circana then collaborated with mental health researchers to determine which features should correspond to which symptom groups.

Circana proprietary recommendation technology was used to select the titles recommended in this guide.



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# Symptom: Pain

Works By: Distracting from physical pain or the symptoms of chronic conditions.

The best games for this category have easy-to-learn game mechanics and rewarding, short game sessions. The quick pace of gameplay in Platformers, Arcade Racers and fast-action Puzzle games can engage a player's mind and body in a way that is especially effective for pain management. Dynamic visuals and high-energy sound design can also be helpful to distract from discomfort.

## Recommended Games for 12 and Under

- Nintendo Switch**
- › **Mario Kart 8: Deluxe** (Action Racing)
  - › **Ori and the Will of the Wisps** (Adventure Platformer)
  - › **Mario Tennis Aces** (Tennis Game)

- Xbox Series X**
- › **Forza Horizon 5** (Racing Simulation)
  - › **FIFA 23** (Soccer Game)
  - › **Puyo Puyo Tetris** (Puzzle)

- Xbox One**
- › **Shovel Knight** (Adventure Platformer)
  - › **Forza Motorsport 7** (Racing Game)
  - › **FIFA 23** (Soccer Game)

- Playstation 4**
- › **N++** (Puzzle Platformer)
  - › **Rez: Infinite** (Musical Rail Shooter)
  - › **The Lego Movie 2 Videogame** (Action-Adventure)

- Playstation 5**
- › **Hot Wheels: Unleashed** (Racing Game)
  - › **FIFA 23** (Soccer Game)
  - › **Astro's Playroom** (Platformer)

- Mobile Android**
- › **Fruit Ninja** (Gallery Shooter)
  - › **Temple Run 2** (Endless Runner)
  - › **Super Mario Run** (Endless Runner)

- Mobile iOS**
- › **Fruit Ninja** (Arcade)
  - › **Temple Run 2** (Endless Runner)
  - › **Super Mario Run** (Endless Runner)



Child's Play  
Charity



**Fast RMX**

### Recommended Games for 13 and Over

- Nintendo Switch**
- › **Owlboy** (Adventure Platformer)
  - › **Fast RMX** (Racing Game)
  - › **Ultra Street Fighter II: The Final Challengers** (Fighting Game)
- Xbox Series X**
- › **N++** (Puzzle Platformer)
  - › **Rayman Legends** (Platformer)
  - › **Overwatch 2** (First Person Shooter)
- Xbox One**
- › **Overwatch 2** (First Person Shooter)
  - › **Session: Skate Sim** (Skateboarding Simulator)
  - › **Aerial\_Knight's Never Yield** (Endless Runner)
- Playstation 4**
- › **Castle Crashers: Remastered** (Hack and Slash)
  - › **Tetris Effect** (Matching Puzzle)
  - › **Megaman 11** (Action-Platformer)
- Playstation 5**
- › **Gran Turismo 7** (Racing Game)
  - › **Overwatch 2** (First Person Shooter)
  - › **Session: Skate Sim** (Skateboarding Simulator)
- Playstation VR**
- › **Super Stardust Ultra VR** (Shooter)
  - › **EVE: Valkyrie** (Dogfighting Shooter)
  - › **Thumper** (Rhythm Action)
- Meta Quest VR**
- › **DiRT Rally** (Racing Simulation)
  - › **Fruit Ninja VR** (Arcade)
  - › **Pinball FX2** (Pinball)



# Symptom: Boredom (Short-Term Stay)

Works By: Entertaining players in waiting rooms or short-stay situations.

Games for short-term boredom are focused experiences that are smaller in scope and can be played quickly, in genres such as Racing, Fighting, and Arcade-style games. They are often designed to be replayed many times over, with rules that are easy to understand but difficult to master. Ideal titles for this symptom allow a player to start and stop frequently, with little to no persistence between play sessions.

## Recommended Games for 12 and Under

- Nintendo Switch**
- › **Nintendo Switch Sports** (Sports Simulation)
  - › **Cadence of Hyrule** (Rhythm Game)
  - › **Super Mario Party** (Party Game)

- Xbox One**
- › **Overcooked 2** (Cooperative Cooking Sim)
  - › **Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout** (Platformer Battle Royale)
  - › **Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare 2** (Third-Person Shooter)

- Xbox Series X**
- › **Forza Horizon 5** (Racing Simulation)
  - › **NBA 2K23** (Basketball Game)
  - › **Nickelodeon All-Star Brawl** (Fighting Game)

- Playstation 4**
- › **Peggle 2** (Puzzle)
  - › **Journey** (Adventure)
  - › **Cake Bash** (Party Game)

- Playstation 5**
- › **Hot Wheels: Unleashed** (Racing Game)
  - › **FIFA 23** (Soccer Game)
  - › **Astro's Playroom** (Platformer)

- Mobile Android**
- › **True Skate** (Skateboarding)
  - › **Flight Controller** (Time Management Game)
  - › **Super Mario Run** (Endless Runner)

- Mobile iOS**
- › **Rocket League Sideswipe** (Vehicular Soccer Game)
  - › **Bloons TD6** (Tower Defense)
  - › **Super Mario Run** (Endless Runner)



### Recommended Games for 13 and Over

- Nintendo Switch**
  - > **Mario Strikers: Battle League** (Sports Game)
  - > **Super Bomberman R** (Action Maze Game)
  - > **Ultra Street Fighter II: The Final Challengers** (Fighting Game)
- Xbox One**
  - > **Star Wars: Squadrons** (Space Combat Game)
  - > **Minit** (Adventure Game)
  - > **Marvel vs Capcom: Infinite** (Fighting Game)
- Xbox Series X**
  - > **Overwatch 2** (First Person Shooter)
  - > **FIFA 23** (Soccer Game)
  - > **Need for Speed: Unbound** (Racing)
- Playstation 4**
  - > **Spelunky 2** (Platformer)
  - > **Star Wars: Battlefront II** (Action Shooter)
  - > **Windjammers 2** (Sports Game)
- Playstation 5**
  - > **Just Dance 2023** (Dance Rhythm Game)
  - > **Overwatch 2** (First Person Shooter)
  - > **Need for Speed: Unbound** (Racing)
- Playstation VR**
  - > **Drive Club VR** (Racing)
  - > **Job Simulator** (Simulation)
  - > **Catlateral Damage** (First Person Cat Sim)
- Meta Quest VR**
  - > **The Lab** (VR Showcase)
  - > **Job Simulator** (Simulation)
  - > **Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes** (Puzzle)



# Symptom: Boredom (Long-Term Stay)

Works By: Providing more substantial entertainment for long stays or recurring patient recreation.

Titles recommended for this category are designed to hold a player's attention over many play sessions. They emphasize story more than many other titles, and have more nuanced mechanics that may take a while for players to fully understand. Games for Long-Term Boredom are more immersive and (as the category name implies) require longer sessions than most of the other recommendations in this guide. More complex story-driven Action and Puzzle games fit in well here, as well as RPGs and Strategy titles.

## Recommended Games for 12 and Under

**Nintendo Switch**

- › **Animal Crossing New Horizons** (Social Simulation Game)
- › **Super Mario Odyssey** (Platformer)
- › **Kirby and the Forgotten Land** (Platformer)

**Xbox One**

- › **Spyro: Reignited Trilogy** (Platformer)
- › **Wizard of Legend** (Roguelike)
- › **Slime Rancher** (First-Person Life Sim)

**Xbox Series X**

- › **Slime Rancher 2** (First Person Life Sim)
- › **Bugsnax** (Adventure)
- › **Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga** (Action-Adventure)

**Playstation 4**

- › **Kingdom Hearts III** (Action RPG)
- › **Donut County** (Puzzle)
- › **Crash Bandicoot 4: It's About Time** (Platformer)

**Playstation 5**

- › **Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart** (Third-Person Shooter Platformer)
- › **Disney Dreamlight Valley** (Life Simulation Adventure Game)
- › **Alba: A Wildlife Adventure** (Open World Adventure)

**Mobile Android**

- › **Final Fantasy VI** (RPG)
- › **The Oregon Trail** (Adventure)
- › **Game Dev Story** (Simulator)

**Mobile iOS**

- › **LEGO Batman: DC Super Heroes** (Action-Adventure)
- › **Oceanhorn** (Action-Adventure)
- › **Catan Classic** (Strategy Game)





**Spider-Man Miles Morales**

### Recommended Games for 13 and Over

- Nintendo Switch**
- › **Two Point Campus** (Business Simulation)
  - › **Pokemon: Arceus** (Action RPG)
  - › **Tunic** (Action-Adventure)
- Xbox One**
- › **Sea of Thieves** (Action-Adventure)
  - › **Civilization VI** (Turn-Based Strategy)
  - › **Star Wars: Jedi Fallen Order** (Action-Adventure)
- Xbox Series X**
- › **Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy** (Action-Adventure)
  - › **Return to Monkey Island** (Point and Click Adventure)
  - › **It Takes Two** (Action-Adventure Platformer)
- Playstation 4**
- › **Shadow of the Colossus 2018** (Action-Adventure)
  - › **No Man's Sky** (Action-Adventure Survival)
  - › **Psychonauts 2** (Platformer)
- Playstation 5**
- › **Spider-Man Miles Morales** (Action-Adventure)
  - › **Horizon II: Forbidden West** (Action RPG)
  - › **Stray** (Adventure)
- Playstation VR**
- › **Moss: Book II** (Adventure)
  - › **Iron Man VR** (Shooter)
  - › **Everybody's Golf VR** (Golf Sim)
- Meta Quest VR**
- › **Windlands** (Grappling Hook Exploration)
  - › **Chronos** (RPG)
  - › **The Climb** (Climbing Game)



# Symptom: Anxiety / Hyperactivity

Works By: Relieving discomfort and stress and promoting a peaceful mood.

For players prone to anxiety, many games can unfortunately cause more discomfort than relief. The games curated for this category avoid the high-intensity play that define Arcade and Action games and instead focus on gentler experiences that engage a player's critical thinking skills and creativity. Many of them feature soothing music and pleasant visuals to help relax the player. Casual Simulation titles and Puzzle games without time constraints are great choices here.

## Recommended Games for 12 and Under

- Nintendo Switch**
  - › **Chicory: A Colorful Tale** (Adventure)
  - › **Cadence of Hyrule** (Rhythm Game)
  - › **LEGO Bricktales** (Puzzle)
- Xbox One**
  - › **Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair** (Platformer)
  - › **Rime** (Adventure Puzzle)
  - › **Kalimba** (Puzzle Platformer)
- Xbox Series X**
  - › **Alba: A Wildlife Adventure** (Open-World Adventure)
  - › **My Fantastic Ranch** (Casual Simulator)
  - › **LEGO Builder's Journey** (Puzzle)
- Playstation 4**
  - › **Donut County** (Puzzle)
  - › **Dragon Quest Builders 2** (Action RPG Sandbox)
  - › **Abzu** (Adventure)
- Playstation 5**
  - › **Alba: A Wildlife Adventure** (Open-World Adventure)
  - › **Yonder: The Cloud Catcher Chronicles** (Adventure)
  - › **Chicory: A Colorful Tale** (Adventure)
- Mobile Android**
  - › **Cut the Rope 2** (Puzzle)
  - › **Scribblenauts Remix** (Action Puzzle Game)
  - › **Spelltower** (Puzzle)
- Mobile iOS**
  - › **Peggle** (Puzzle)
  - › **Plants vs. Zombies** (Tower Defense)
  - › **Bridge Constructor** (Puzzle)



**Chicory: A Colorful Tale**

### Recommended Games for 13 and Over

- Nintendo Switch**
- › **The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild** (Action-Adventure)
  - › **Chicory: A Colorful Tale** (Adventure)
  - › **Fe** (Platform Adventure Game)
- Xbox One**
- › **Child of Light** (Platforming RPG)
  - › **My Brother Rabbit** (Point and Click Adventure)
  - › **Arise: A Simple Story** (Adventure)
- Xbox Series X**
- › **Planet Coaster: Console Edition** (Construction Sim)
  - › **Flight Simulator (2020)** (Flying Simulator)
  - › **PGA Tour 2K23** (Golf Simulator)
- Playstation 4**
- › **Guacamelee! 2** (Metroidvania Action Platformer)
  - › **Gardenia** (Gardening Simulator)
  - › **Islanders** (City Builder)
- Playstation 5**
- › **The Pedestrian** (Side Scrolling Puzzle-Platform)
  - › **Chicory: A Colorful Tale** (Adventure)
  - › **Planet Coaster: Console Edition** (Construction Sim)
- Playstation VR**
- › **Tilt Brush** (3D Painting Sim)
  - › **Eagle Flight** (Simulation)
  - › **Everest VR** (Adventure)
- Meta Quest VR**
- › **Lumen** (Meditation)
  - › **Windlands** (Grappling Hook Exploration)
  - › **Perfect** (Exploration)



## Symptom: Sadness

Works By: Improving mood and discouraging negative thought patterns.

These games in the Racing, Matching Puzzle, and Action genres have been selected for both their rewarding gameplay and pleasant overall atmosphere. They feature relatable, charming characters and forgiving difficulty options to keep players from becoming discouraged. Immediacy of gameplay is also a key factor; for players in emotional distress, being engaged by a task can help to alleviate feelings of dread or regret.

### Recommended Games for 12 and Under

- Nintendo Switch**
  - › **New Super Mario Bros. U Deluxe** (Platformer)
  - › **Untitled Goose Game** (Puzzle Stealth)
  - › **Splatoon 2** (Third-Person Shooter)
- Xbox One**
  - › **Sonic Mania** (Platformer)
  - › **Castle on the Coast** (Arcade Game)
  - › **Untitled Goose Game** (Puzzle Stealth)
- Xbox Series X**
  - › **Bugsntax** (Adventure)
  - › **Catlateral Damage: Remeowstered** (Simulation)
  - › **LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga** (Action Adventure)
- Playstation 4**
  - › **Journey** (Adventure)
  - › **New Super Lucky's Tale** (3D Platformer)
  - › **Rocket League** (Vehicular Soccer)
- Playstation 5**
  - › **Astro's Playroom** (Platformer)
  - › **Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart** (Third-Person Shooter Platformer)
  - › **LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga** (Action Adventure)
- Mobile Android**
  - › **Super Mario Run** (Endless Runner)
  - › **Bloons TD 6** (Tower Defense)
  - › **Angry Birds Space** (Puzzle)
- Mobile iOS**
  - › **World of Goo** (Puzzle)
  - › **Jetpack Joyride** (Endless Runner)
  - › **Tiny Wings** (Arcade)



### Recommended Games for 13 and Over

- Nintendo Switch**
- › **Mario + Rabbids: Kingdom Battle** (Turn-Based Tactics)
  - › **Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker** (Action Puzzle)
  - › **Pokemon: Scarlet / Violet** (RPG)
- Xbox One**
- › **Overcooked 2** (Cooperative Cooking Simulator)
  - › **Skylanders: Imaginators** (3D Platformer)
  - › **The Sims 4** (Life Simulator)
- Xbox Series X**
- › **Return to Monkey Island** (Point and Click Adventure)
  - › **Disney Dreamlight Valley** (Life Simulator)
  - › **Super Monkey Ball: Banana Mania** (Arcade)
- Playstation 4**
- › **Cat Quest II** (Open World RPG)
  - › **Rock of Ages III: Make & Break** (Tower Defense)
  - › **Rayman Legends** (Platformer)
- Playstation 5**
- › **Return to Monkey Island** (Point and Click Adventure)
  - › **BugsNax** (Adventure)
  - › **OlliOlli World** (Sports Game)
- Playstation VR**
- › **Carnival Games VR** (Arcade)
  - › **Fruit Ninja VR** (Arcade)
  - › **Job Simulator** (Simulation)
- Meta Quest VR**
- › **Lucky's Tale** (Platformer)
  - › **Rock Band VR** (Rhythm Game)
  - › **Job Simulator** (Simulation)



# Symptom: Cognitive Impairment

Works By: Offering low-impact entertainment for medicated or cognitively inhibited patients.

Recommendations for this category offer simplified mechanics and require less of the player than other titles while still remaining interactive and rewarding. These games place an emphasis on play and experimentation as opposed to winning or losing. With intuitive controls and little to no time constraints, players can learn and enjoy the games below regardless of their skill level. Non-linear games without mandatory goals and those that encourage the player to explore are recommended.

## Recommended Games for 12 and Under

- Nintendo Switch**
  - › **Donut County** (Puzzle)
  - › **Fez** (Puzzle Platformer)
  - › **Snipperclips: Cut it Out, Together!** (Puzzle)
- Xbox One**
  - › **Donut County** (Puzzle)
  - › **Guacamelee! Super Turbo Championship Edition** (Metroidvania)
  - › **Shovel Knight** (Adventure Platformer)
- Xbox Series X**
  - › **PowerWash Simulator** (Simulator)
- Playstation 4**
  - › **Trine 2: Complete Story** (Puzzle Platformer)
  - › **Dragon Quest Builders 2** (Action RPG Sandbox)
  - › **Bastion** (Action RPG)
- Playstation 5**
  - › **Yonder: The Cloud Catcher Chronicles** (Adventure)
- Mobile Android**
  - › **Fruit Ninja** (Arcade)
  - › **Pocket God: Journey to Uranus** (Simulation)
  - › **World of Goo** (Puzzle)
- Mobile iOS**
  - › **Plants vs. Zombies** (Tower Defense)
  - › **Super Mario Run** (Endless Runner)
  - › **Bloons TD 6** (Tower Defense)



**Donut County**

### Recommended Games for 13 and Over

- Nintendo Switch**
- › **Donut County** (Puzzle)
  - › **Super Mario Party** (Party Game)
  - › **Feather** (Exploration Game)
- Xbox One**
- › **A Hat in Time** (Platformer)
  - › **Overcooked 2** (Cooperative Cooking Simulator)
  - › **Peggle 2** (Puzzle)
- Xbox Series X**
- › **PowerWash Simulator** (Simulator)
- Playstation 4**
- › **Ratchet & Clank** (Action Platformer)
  - › **Tearaway: Unfolded** (Adventure Platformer)
  - › **Rayman Legends** (Platformer)
- Playstation 5**
- › **Yonder: The Cloud Catcher Chronicles** (Adventure)
- Playstation VR**
- › **Tilt Brush** (3D Painting)
  - › **Carnival Games VR** (Arcade)
  - › **Eagle Flight** (Simulator)
- Meta Quest VR**
- › **Lumen** (Meditation)
  - › **Allumette** (Adventure)
  - › **Apollo 11 VR** (Historical Simulation)



## About Child's Play

Child's Play is a charitable organization that donates toys and games to children's hospitals all over the world. It was founded in 2003 by Mike Krahulik and Jerry Holkins, authors of the popular computer and video games-based webcomic Penny Arcade. Child's Play seeks to improve the lives of children in hospitals and domestic violence shelters through the generosity and kindness of the video game industry and the power of play. Since its creation, it has raised over 50 million dollars for this cause, benefiting over 190 hospitals worldwide.



## About Circana

At Circana, we have more than two decades of experience exploring where U.S. consumers spend their dollars in the video games market. Leveraging a proprietary database of over 165 million internally researched data points from more than 100,000 physical and digital video game products, Circana is the sole provider of end-to-end integrated data analysis solutions that allow for the examination of every factor influencing the success of past, present, and future video game titles.

**View the online guide at [gametherapy.org](http://gametherapy.org)**

