

Living on 1HP

Health and Wellness in Gaming and Esports



About Me



- Doctor of Physical Therapy
- M.S. in Clinical Anatomy and Health Sciences
- Esports PT at 1HP

- Favorite Games: Zelda: OOT, Guild Wars 2, Dota 2, Warframe



My name is Cait, and I'm Doctor of Physical Therapy, a certified emergency first responder, and a recovering non-gamer. I think the sum total of what I played growing up was Oregon Trail, Zoombinis Logical Adventure, and about 10 minutes of Ocarina of Time when my cousin got fed up with a boss she couldn't beat. My first "real" game was Dota2, because I wanted to give myself something nice and relaxed and easy to start out with, something with a community that's really known for being welcoming...but since diving in headfirst to the deep end, I've captained and drafted for an amateur dota team, directed and educated a group of statspeople, done ingame statistics for tournaments from inhouse leagues to the BEAT Invitational to The International 5 qualifiers, worked onsite at Dota and Smash tournaments, and somehow found the time to play way too much Dota, Guild Wars, Warframe, Melee, Street Fighter (and I'll always love 4 more than 5, dammit), and Guilty Gear XRD.

Objectives

1. Understand the value of health and wellness as part of community growth
2. Understand the role of health and wellness in player experience, retention, and longevity
3. Understand the types of healthcare professionals best suited to help companies develop health and wellness initiatives/infrastructure



Why Does Health and Wellness Matter?

(besides the obvious)

- Player experience/retention
- Retaining/developing top-tier athletes and streamers



(the obvious first: static endurance activity requiring that challenges executive function in a virtual environment)

Static because we're not moving or the micro-movements of the wrist, mouse and hand are not moving quickly or with large enough velocity to be considered dynamic. But also static because we are holding our bodies up against gravity in the seated position.

Endurance because just like running we are performing the same cyclical, repeated movements over an extended period of time, for which our bodies need to be conditioned in order to prevent injury.

And the executive functions/virtual environment are self-explanatory (Working memory, attentional control, problem solving, planning, reasoning all in the virtual environment of our respective games)

So again the physical demands are us sitting for extended periods of time holding our bodies up (low back, mid-back, neck and shoulders) while using our forearms, wrist and hands repeatedly. It is so common for us not to realize what staying still and NOT MOVING for such a long time does to our muscles, tendons, organs, coordination, mentality.

Healthy Movement

Exercise, Posture is a part of movement - It is how we control our bodies (constant subtle movement)

Healthy Environment

Lifestyle Design, Sleep and Ergonomics

Healthy Eating

This means eating to fuel your brain and muscles

Healthy Thinking

Mindset (emotional, psychological, social well being)

Player Experience/Retention

- Two key categories for retention: Achievement and Friends
- Achievement:
 - Achievement hunters
 - Link in-game and out-of-game “character” growth
 - Gaining prominence/reputation for unique traits
- Friends:
 - Crosslinked communities - Discord, Reddit, Youtube, Twitch, forums
 - Community development, e.g. FitFGC movement, XO Academy



Developing an esports ecosystem isn't necessarily viable, but developing community is both viable and essential.

Achievement:

Individual and group accomplishments are both relevant here

Give them something to show off, bond over, be proud of together.

Friends:

Growth of IRL community supports growth of online/in-game community.

Develop a unique community identity

Get people invested in each other, and your community will become self-sustaining

Retaining/Developing Athletes and Influencers

- Most obvious: players who don't get injured play more and longer
- Influencers/streamers
 - Opportunity for variety streams
 - Increased community interaction
 - Development of parasocial relationships
- Athletes
 - Increased emphasis on not just injury prevention but performance enhancement
 - Developer investment can lead the way, e.g. HiRez



Potential Ways to Incorporate

- In-Game
 - Toast text
 - Contextualized tips
 - Loading screens
 - Save and Quit screens
 - Lore Book/Codex



Toast Text:

Pros - minimally disruptive

Cons - very short, no interaction, can irritate players to have frequent popups

If you're going to use them, they should be short and general. Consider using these as reminders for GENERAL, not specific, habits, e.g. "have a drink of water", "don't forget to stretch", "take a break every 30-60 minutes", "take 3 deep breaths", "check your posture"

Contextualized Tips: after a period of time; after a section of your game that you know requires high APM, after a certain number of matches

-of course there's the risk that at any "stop" point, you'll lose some players. As much as it would be great to have physical health be as much a part of a tutorial as technical skill or in-game abilities, you're unfortunately likely to lose players there.

With contextualized tips, it can be better to put them on loading or save and quit screens. These afford you both more space and more time, and players *expect* to spend time there. That's a great space for pictures of stretches or more specific reminders.

Lore book/codex/etc. Is a great space for achievement hunters in particular. In the same way that you can get entries if, say, you discover a particular kind of flower during open world exploration, you can use time or ability-gated checkpoints to great "healthy habits" entries. Let's say your game allows you to track when a player has used a certain skill, something that involves a multi-button input or really quick

movement like wavedashing in melee, or cycling through a chain of skills like Invoker in Dota2. You could have a toast text that indicates they have a new achievement available to view, and at their next break or after the match, there would be an entry in whatever is used to track achievements in your game that shows “here’s a good stretch to use for that skill you’ve just performed 10/100/1000 times”, or “here’s a good strengthening exercise to make that chain easier to perform”.

Similarly, you can have a time-gated prompt along the lines of “achievement unlocked: x hours of play” that corresponds to a codex entry showing a quick 1-2 minute break routine players can do to avoid injury.

Potential Ways to Incorporate

- Out of Game
 - Pre-season screening/league setup
 - Tournament clinics
 - Video/image/text ergonomic guides for community



IRL health and wellness help isn't just the domain of huge companies like Riot, Blizzard, and Valve. There are plenty of ways that smaller companies and teams can incorporate health and wellness from professionals as well.

Pre-season screenings and incorporating health and wellness programming into league structure is more of a "big studio" thing, but let's talk about how that can work (example: OWL)

Sponsored tournament clinics are a bit more of a viable option. (reference Genesis)

Even if your game exists entirely online, there are ways that you can easily incorporate professional help for your community.

Role of graphics vs text vs video:

For us, we've found that graphics get the best interaction. They're short, simple, and straightforward; you do them on your own time/pace; they don't require as much

You can both make use of *and* grow your crosslinked communities with health content, especially if you incorporate challenges/competitions and have your community involved in the development of the guides. Whatever ergonomics and injury prevention folks you work with, they should be integrated into those communities and in a position to seek feedback/questions so that they know what your community actually needs

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