



**GAMES FOR HEALTH EUROPE
2025**

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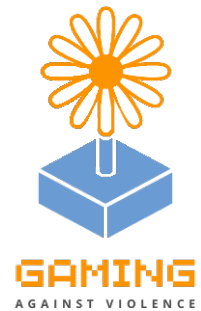
GAMES FOR HEALTH EUROPE 2025 CONFERENCE

I herewith confirm that there is not any conflict of interest with the conference organization or any of its sponsors.



Gaming Against Violence

Bespoke Prosocial Video Games for Violence Prevention



Jennifer Ann's Group®
www.JenniferAnn.org



Overview: **Background and Evolution**

Background

Proof of Concept: 2008 - 2010

Shifting Programs: Increase Awareness – Knowledge Transfer – Gauging Interest

Framework, Theories, & Research: 2010 - 2019

Shifting Strategies: Change Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviour

Public Health Model: 2020 - present

Shifting Focus: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) – Social-Ecological Model (SEM) – NIH & EDU Portal

Announcing Communication Games Finalists



Defining: **Our Games**

“Intentionally designed prosocial bespoke video games.”

**intentional
prosocial
bespoke
video games**

purposefully created to accomplish something beyond mere entertainment (or profit)

behavior or intent to benefit others; promoting behavior beneficial to society

custom-made for a person, a purpose, or an organization

digital interactive content; has attributes of a game (e.g. goals, constraints)



Defining: **Our Topics**

“IPV” Intimate Partner Violence

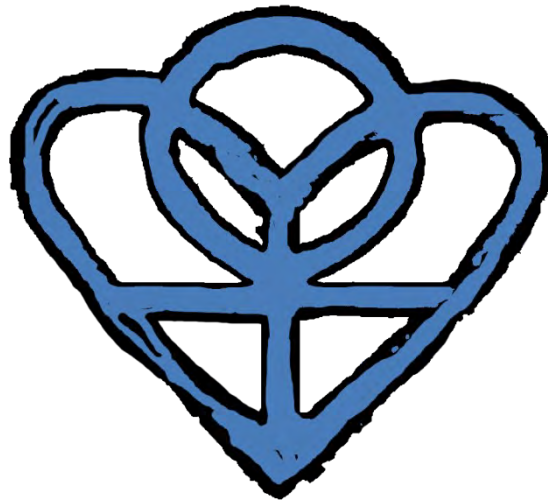
Domestic Violence – Domestic Abuse – Family Violence

“TDV” Teen Dating Violence

Dating Violence – Adolescent Dating Violence – Dating Abuse



Mission: **Jennifer Ann's Group**



Preventing TDV (teen dating violence) through **Awareness, Education, and Advocacy** since 2006.





TDV Prevention: **Impacts & Challenges** (U.S. statistics)

- **Prevalent:** 44% of students in abusive relationship before graduating university.
- **Starts Early:** 16 million women / 11 million men first experience IPV as minors.
- **Dangerous:** 1 in 5 homicide victims are associated with IPV.
- **Costly:** IPV annual economic costs \$8.9Billion (2015).

**Must
address this at
an early age.**

- **Parents:** 81% unaware or otherwise do not see TDV as a problem.
- **Schools (U.S.):** State laws inconsistent on teaching & policies.
- **Culture:** Unhealthy messaging via media / social media affects social norms.
- **Government:** Relatively limited focus; changes with each administration change.

But, how?

TDV Prevention: **Shifting Programs to Increase Awareness & Educate**

Video Games (?)

- **Meet teens where they are**
- **Preferred medium**
- **Private exploration**
- **Possible Media Coverage**



Life. Love. ™

2008 Life. Love. Game Design Challenge

First Prize \$1,000

Can you create a game about
Teen Dating Violence
. . . **without using violence?**

February 15, 2008 - April May
15, 2008

JenniferAnn.org



TDV Prevention Violence: **Gaming Against Violence Program Summary**

- **Annual: Every year since 2008.**
- **Some changes but the primary rule remains: no depictions of violence.**
- **Trauma informed approach: content vetted by experts and revised as needed.**
- **Expert systems: subject matter expertise baked-in by designers & judging panel.**
- **Diverse: games from many countries & games represent variety of characters.**
- **Variety: wide range of games but most are narrative-based.**
- **Free: all games and resources are free with no ads.**



TDV Violence Prevention: **Shifting Strategies**

Reminder: original priorities focused on **Awareness + Education**

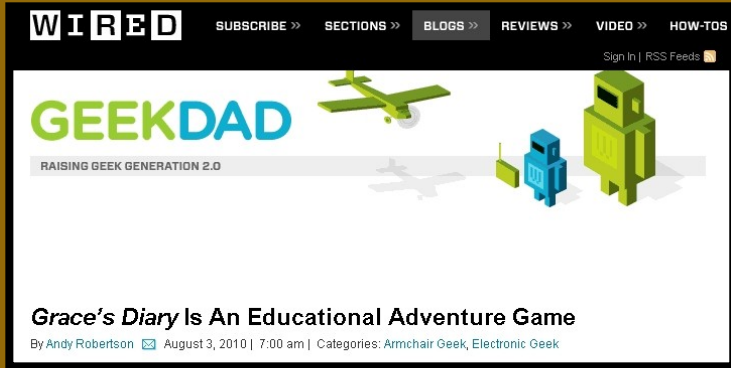
*Grace's
Diary*



(2010)

TDV Violence Prevention: **Shifting Strategies**

These games were accomplishing more than awareness & knowledge transfer.



“I was surprised how much I learned about my own relationships as well as having some really useful conversations with my family about establishing healthy boundaries.”

Player Comments

“Wow. That was ... wow ... Any game that makes my thoughts switch over to capital letters most of the time is truly amazing.”

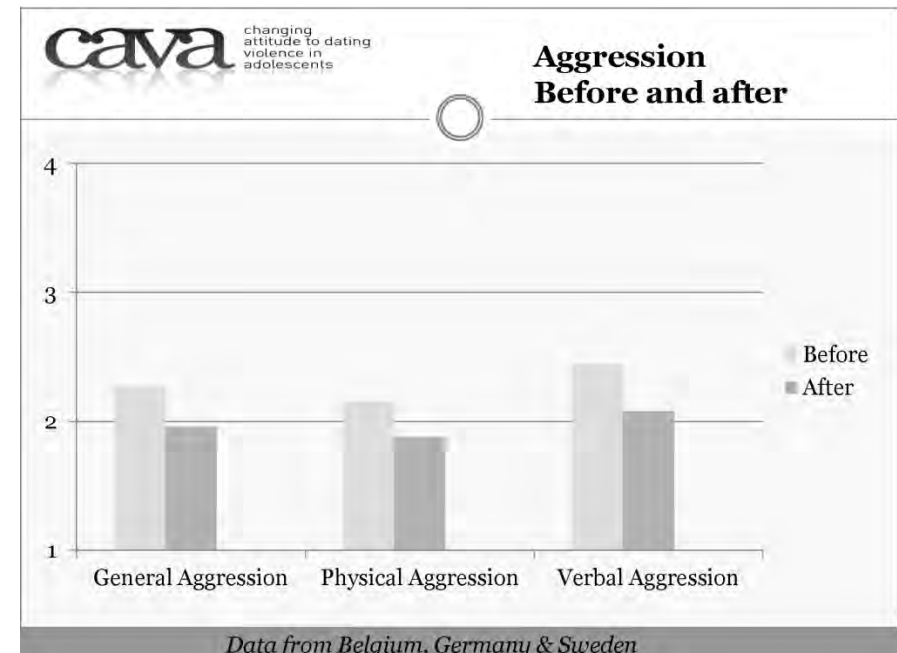
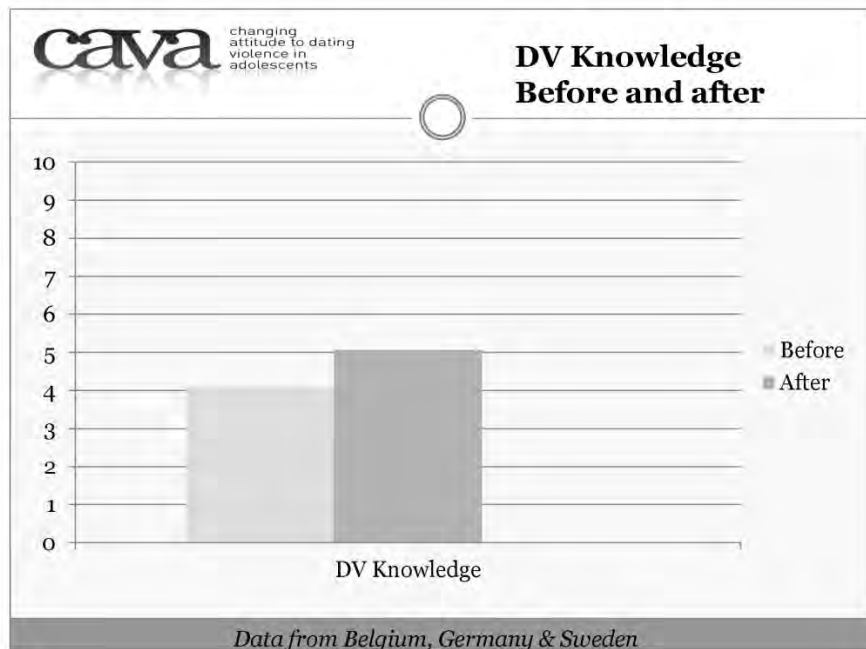
“... this game does immerse you into its world – if you allow it. Please – allow it to.”

“... everybody should see this immediately ... please.”

These games were persuasive.

Frameworks, Theories, and Supporting Research: **cava Study**

After playing 'Green Acres High' students showed an increase in knowledge and a decrease in aggression.
(Belgium, Germany, & Sweden)





Frameworks, Theories, and Supporting Research: **Game Benefits**

- **Experiential Learning**

- action, not mere explanation
- experiencing, not merely reading

- **Discovery Learning**

- exploring and recognizing relevant aspects

- **Contextualized Learning**

- learning in context rather than in isolation

- Preferred technology: Digital Games

- Preferred tools: Computers

- Adolescents appreciate the consideration

General

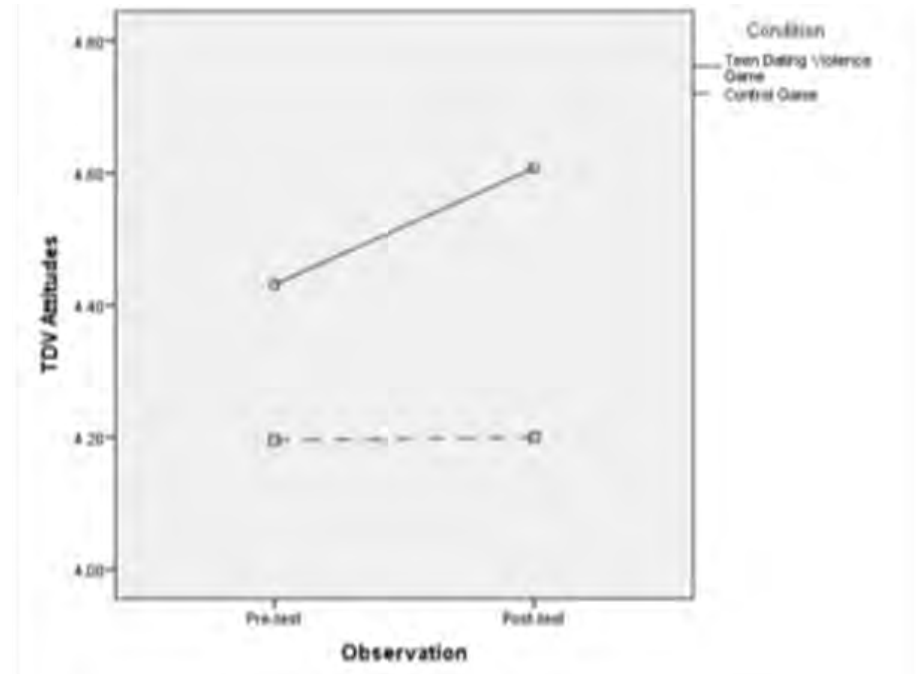
**Emotional
Health**

Adolescents

Frameworks, Theories, and Supporting Research: **Our Games**

Internal:

- 86 unguided players via mTurk
- 5 TDV games, 1 control game
- Published in 2017



“All TDV game players changed their attitude positively, whereas the control group showed no increase.”

GAMING AGAINST VIOLENCE: An Exploratory Evaluation of the Efficacy of Persuasive Digital Games in Improving Unhealthy Relationship Attitudes of Unguided Players

Drew Crecente, JD
Jennifer Ann's Group



Ruud Jacobs, PhD
Erasmus University Rotterdam



About Teen Dating Violence

40% of graduating college students in the US have been in an abusive relationship.

Although adverse effects include academic achievement and substance abuse, 16 million US students are educated in states lacking teen dating violence (TDV) education legislation or funding.

Therefore effective TDV prevention cannot rely on institutional education programs, specialized training, or expert knowledge.

About Gaming Against Violence

Since 2008 the charity Jennifer Ann's Group (JAG) has produced over 40 digital games to confront the problem of TDV through its "Gaming Against Violence" program. As the games seek to change players' attitudes they are considered *persuasive games*.

- Digital games allows schools to affordably and reliably meet student needs.
- Students prefer exploring a sensitive topic at their own pace.
- TDV games promote experiential, exploratory, and contextual learning.
- Students prefer digital games over other media and computers over other methods.

Can games change attitudes?

Are JAG's TDV games effective at changing player-held attitudes of unguided players regarding abusive dating behavior compared to games unrelated to the topic?

Method

- A 2 (TDV and control games) by 2 (pre- and post-test) mixed experimental design was applied to 86 US participants through Amazon's MTurk.
- The TDV group played one of 5 JAG games about TDV.
- The control group played one of 2 non-TDV games.
- Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales were used pre- and post-test as the indicator of the games' effects.

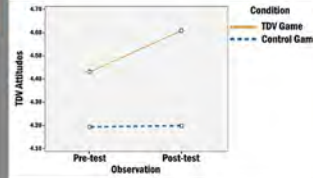
Results

- Two major groups of players:
- The TDV group who played one of JAG's TDV games.
- The control group who played one of the non-TDV games.

The two groups significantly differed post-test. An interaction effect was also found, indicating that persons who played the TDV games changed their attitudes towards the topic more than people who played the control game. The difference scores was largest for players of the TDV games.

Conclusions

JAG's TDV games incited significantly greater attitude change than the control games. This result supports the viability of persuasive games to combat TDV.



Attitude change in the TDV and control game conditions. Higher scores indicate lower acceptance of dating violence. The difference to pre-test between conditions is not significant at an alpha of .05, though that of the post-test is.



Images from TDV study game Little Things. Title screen (left); gameplay involves interactions within a simulated social media site (middle); and an in-game message simulates the use of social media as a tool for digital abuse against adolescents in abusive dating relationships (right).



Images from TDV study game Grace's Diary: Title screen (top); a mobile phone screen for an abusive dating partner (left); and a message of clues sent by the perpetrator to assist the friend in an abusive relationship highlights the importance of persuasive awareness and intervention (right).



Images from TDV study game The Guardian: Title screen (top); a scenario highlighting the excessive use of alcohol in an abusive relationship (left); and an interactive scene in which the player judges obstacles to reach the goal, incorporating the weather and time of day based on the game player's real-world location (right).



Images from TDV study game Another Chance: Title screen (top); the top-down perspective, retro style, and RPG elements are reminiscent of classic games (left); and an interactive in-game scene indicates the real-world locations of other game players, a reminder to the player that they are not alone (right).



Images from TDV study game Love in the Dumpster: Title screen (top); the game is presented in a text, alternating between male and female protagonists to highlight the fact that all genders can be victimized in abusive relationships (left); and a scene showing the game's use of redactable dialogue and RPG game mechanics (right).

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Frameworks, Theories, and Supporting Research: Erasmus Study

Erasmus University:

- 262 participants
- 2 TDV games (narrative & procedural rhetoric) & 1 control game
- Published in 2016/2019

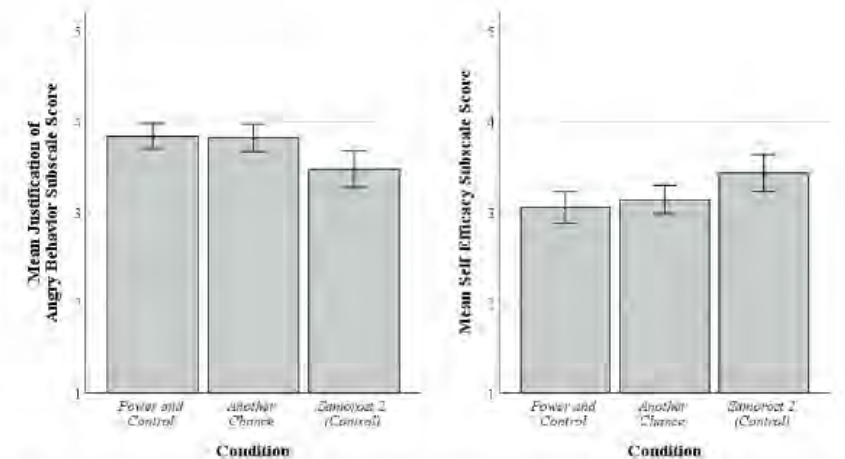


Figure 1: The differences in means between the three conditions for the justification of angry behavior subscale and the self-efficacy subscale tested for hypotheses 1 and 2. Both scales had five-point likert-type response options. 95% CIs are included for each condition.

Both TDV game types tested affected TDV attitudes more than the control game.



Frameworks, Theories, and Supporting Research: **School Pilot Program**

HONEYMOON (2016)

- English & Spanish
- Lesson Plans
- Pilot Study in EPISD (2017)

Honeymoon – Episode 1.....		
Episode 1: Group Guide.....		
Honeymoon – Episode 2.....		
From Psychology Today – Gaslighting.....		
Honeymoon Assignment Sheet.....		
 3.....		22
4.....		25
Episode 4: Response Exercise.....		27
Lesson Plans for HONEYMOON		
Episode 5: Escalated Words and Actions.....		31







Frameworks, Theories, and Supporting Research: **IPV Topics**

CONSENT (2017)

- Six games published.
- Consent game for youth in Vanuatu.
- Life-size museum consent game.



 ADRIFT	 HOW TO BLOBBLE BLOBBLE
Consent Game Series	Consent Game Series
You are a member of an interstellar salvage crew exploring an abandoned spaceship. Appropriate for all ages.	A fun, lively exploration of consent in the context of learning new dance moves. Appropriate for middle school ages (11+).
 Crossing Boundaries	 STUCK IN A DARK PLACE
Consent Game Series	Consent Game Series
This globetrotting game explores the meaning of consent through a series of travel adventures. Appropriate for high school ages (15+).	A wide variety of scenarios about consent are explored through eight chapters of game play. Appropriate for high school ages (15+) but prior review by a parent or guardian is suggested.



Public Health Model: **Shifting Focus**

Public Health: The Social-Ecological Model

Cross-cutting & multi-disciplinary strategy of addressing root causes of violence.

Fostering and celebrating skills supporting protective factors against violence.

Individual	Promote healthy attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors Conflict resolution skills Social-emotional learning healthy relationship skills
Relationship	Promote healthy relationships Strengthen communication & problem-solving skills
Community	Improving social environment in schools
Societal	Social and Cultural Norms

Public Health Model: **Shifting Focus**

Resilience (2022)
Four games published.



One New Message (England)



New Sun (Colombia)



UnEarth (Canada)



What's Next?!? (US)

1
more to publish

Critical Thinking (2023)
Two games published.



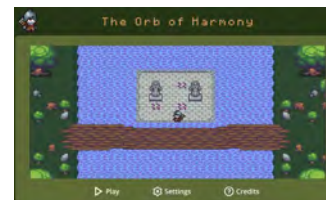
MushWhom? (US)



Figure It Sprout (US)

1 or more
to publish

Connectedness (2024)
One game published.



The Orb of Harmony (US)

4 more to publish

Communication (2025) (TBA)



Current Status & Future Plans: **Shifting Scope**

EDU Portal Spring 2025 & NIH Grant 2025-2026



Communication Games: Finalists for the 2025 Life.Love. Game Design Challenge

2GEN Team Argentina	CelleC Games U.S.	CoLab U.K.	DOTDOT U.S.
Misift Adventure U.S.	Monkey Dori Team India	Necther Louie Philippines	Pawzzle Studios Canada
Story Tonic U.S.	Unwise Tootsie U.S.	The Whole Circus U.S.	A.R. Georgia
D.T. India	F.Z. Czech Republic	L.V. France	S.H. U.S.

Communications Game Design Challenge Website: www.communicating.games



Gaming Against Violence

Video Games as a Violence Prevention Tool

What are your Questions?

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