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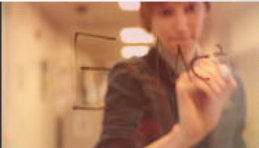
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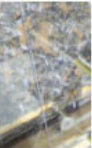
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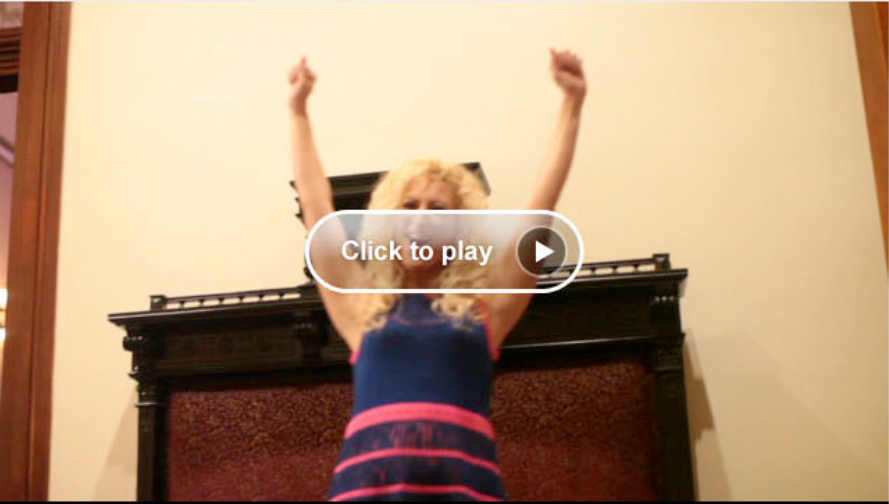
Berlin is dancing

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Game designed to make you 'SuperBetter'

Source: CNN

April 16th, 2012

03:44 PM ET

Jane McGonigal: 'A game saved my life'

By Jane McGonigal, Special to CNN

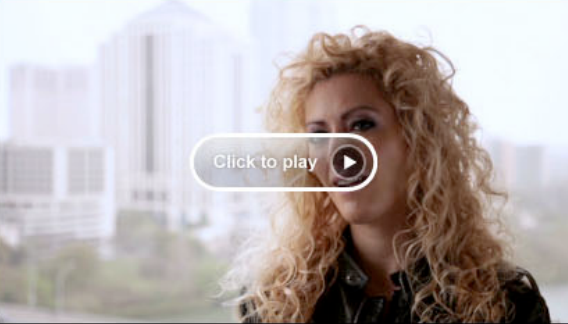
(CNN) - "When you're on your deathbed, will you really wish you'd spent more time playing Angry Birds?"

It's a question I hear all the time. And understandably so: I'm probably the world's leading advocate of spending more time, not less, playing computer and video games.

Why am I so passionate about spending more time playing games (ideally, at least 30 minutes every day)? Because heaps of scientific evidence over the past few years – from an extremely diverse group of investigators, such as [Brigham Young University's School of Family Life](#), the [U.S Army's Mental Health Assessment Team](#), [Michigan State University's Department of Psychology](#) and [Massachusetts General Hospital](#) - have shown that games can increase our mental, emotional and social resilience.

Games can make us more resilient in the face of tough challenges, better able to learn from mistakes, more likely to cooperate with others on difficult problems and more creative in coming up with new solutions. They can alleviate depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. [New research from Stanford University](#) just this month even shows, through fMRI imagery of the brain, exactly how games boost our motivation and self-efficacy at the neurological level. Games build up our belief that we can take positive steps to affect the outcome of our lives – and game help us be more motivated to take those steps and not give up.

CNN



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Tap into your most heroic qualities

"The Next List" profiles Jane McGonigal who says games can help you tap into your most heroic qualities. (Part 2 of 2)

That's why when I was facing the toughest challenge of my life – overcoming a mild traumatic brain injury - I faced it not as an anxious and hopeless patient (although I did feel that way a lot of the time), but rather as a confident gamer. My injury took more than a year to heal, and the symptoms included daily migraines, nausea, vertigo, memory loss and suicidal ideation. It was, without a doubt, the hardest thing I've ever faced. So I invented a game I could play to help me heal my brain. I used the game to collect real-world power-ups (anything I could do that would make me feel better or heal faster, tackle bad guys (obstacles that stood in the way of my recovery), and recruit allies (friends and family who could support me during the ordeal). It helped me spark positive emotion when I needed it most, and it gave people who cared about me concrete things to do every day to help, instead of just worrying about me.

The game I invented is called [SuperBetter](#), and today people around the world are playing it not for brain injuries – but for everything from losing weight, getting fit, fighting cancer, finding a job, and overcoming depression.

So do I think on my deathbed I'll regret the time I spent playing games? Not a chance.

The way I see it, a game saved my life. My many years of playing games helped me build up my capacity to face tough challenges, to work more effectively with others, to invent and put into action creative strategies. It gave me the mental, emotional and social strength I needed to not give up, to keep fighting through the darkness. Games, more than anything else, have helped me be urgently optimistic even while under pressure. That's why I make it a priority to play games every day, even if just for a few minutes. Because you never know when you're going to need your gamer strength – or how it could help you win in real life.