

cue Mii Theme

WOW! I feel like I am jumping into my past with this music! Also mom, if you are listening to this, yes! I AM playing Legend of Zelda, instead of going to the gym to somehow cure my anxiety. Which has me thinking, there has always been this dreamy voice in my head that usually resembles my mother that says persuasively: *cue harp music* “make sure you stop and smell the roses.” Well, dreamy-voice-that-usually-resembles-my-mother, I would rather “stop and let mario throw obstacles at Bowser with his fire flower,” and that’s the tea.

1. Gamecube

a. *Thinking back into my deep deep memories, my very first gaming systems were a Gamecube and an XBox, handed down from my cousins. The two systems were kinda ugly, dysfunctional, and collectively worth less than 5 dollars now at Gamestop. I scarcely received any enjoyment out of them other than the swooning idea of being like my older cousins. Even so, to this day, every time I hear THIS jarring tune...*

i. *Cue GameCube Open song*

b. *I can feel my bones shift back in time *back in time sound*, wanting to be sitting on the floor of my living room in front of a static tv playing Crash Bandicoot.*

2. DS Lite

i. *Cue DS Lite Opening*

b. The Gamecube and Xbox were my foundations for my gaming career, but the first time I remember actually discovering my own “mold” in terms of videogames was when the ICONIC ds Lite came out... listen to this following angelic hymn to maybe spark some memories:

i. *Cue DS Lite Opening*

c. This console has been the stepping stone for the rest of my video gaming career. A portable, double screen, interactive gaming system with a stylus, all of which can be used to message local friends using the truly ICONIC Pictochat.

3. But as much as I love video games, I have been frequently told that they were mindless distractions. Whenever I pick up a gaming system, ANOTHER voice, much more evil but also still resembles my mother, says: *cue lightning or dark tune* “*Why are you doing this? What will you gain from it? It rots your brain!*” Sure, I am not treating cancer patients when I tell my Pikachu to use thunderbolt on an Alolan Vulpix, but I am still improving myself. Universes such as Pokemon helped spark my creativity, and enhanced many relationships as a child. When I met someone who enjoyed playing pokemon games, we did not just have a conversation about it, we would usually whip out our DS’ and compare stats and sometimes battle each other. It was, in on sense, more interactive than a simple conversation! An [AD2] instant bond between two gamers when we know of the same alternate universes.

3. *cue finale game music* I look at where I am now, still into pokemon, but all the effects ten times more immersive. I feel the foundation of my youth in gaming has flourished into an entire new situation. When I was younger, I played games simply because they were

imaginative and captivating for my creative and innocent mind. Gaming is a behavior that has matured with me.

4. I have struggled a lot with anxiety and depression in my past, and I still am. When I step my reality into a video game's, I develop a sense of agency. Whenever I am spiraling and overwhelmed by life in my physical body, I can always rely on whatever alternate universe I am currently simulating to have control over something. With the way I experience anxiety and depression, I know that once I get in a dark place, it can take moving mountains to get myself back out of it. What I have been doing more so since arriving at UNC, is when I feel myself getting anxious or am in a triggered mental state, I hop on a game and play away.

5. Whether I am Princess Peach with my really cute umbrella in Super Smash Bros, or Link in Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, flying through the skies, riding my horse, and solving immersive puzzles, I can create a home within my hands. On top of that, every year the graphics for games become excitingly beautiful, which makes the experience all more nurturing. When I am in my new realm, running around, feeling free but with a well structured and interactive puzzling system, I don't need to think about how I got a low grade on that quiz I studied for, or how I have twenty two assignments due in the next three weeks, or how I have the irrational fear that the people around me are judging me. Video games teach me to just... exist.

6. I have struggled with the effects they have on me because I (and my mother) ask me, "Is a distraction from reality even healthy?" And I think that it is definitely important to address my issues and sometimes I have avoided my problems too much, but I use video games less for an ignorance of my problems and more as a temporary isolation from them so that I can calm myself down enough to address them properly.

7. Sometimes to unplug, I have to plug up.