Parents who play ‘Pokémon GO’ with kids: ‘It wasn’t really about catching the Pokémon; it was about being together’

Researchers from the University of Washington and the University of South Florida have discovered that parents who played Pokémon GO with their children reported increased exercise, because it prompted them to explore their communities, and increased empathy, because they could bond with their children. The researchers also noted that the virtual reality experience provided a way for parents and children to enjoy an activity together, which is especially important for the younger generation, who are more interested in digital media than in traditional sports.

Together with researchers in the UW Information School, HCDE doctoral students Kiley Sobel, Arpita Bhattacharya, Alexis Hiniker, and Professor Julie Kientz researched how parents use Pokémon GO and other―mobile games in general―to promote healthy behaviors with their children. The team found that parents who played Pokémon GO with their children reported feeling more active and connected to their children, and that the game provided a way for parents and children to bond over a common interest.

In a study published in the journal Games and Culture, the researchers described how parents used Pokémon GO to encourage healthy eating, exercise, and family bonding. They found that parents who played Pokémon GO with their children reported increased exercise, because it prompted them to explore their communities, and increased empathy, because they could bond with their children. The researchers also noted that the virtual reality experience provided a way for parents and children to enjoy an activity together, which is especially important for the younger generation, who are more interested in digital media than in traditional sports.

The study, titled “Parents Who Play Pokémon GO with Kids: It wasn’t Really About Catching the Pokémon, It was About Being Together,” is the first to examine how parental use of Pokémon GO relates to healthy behaviors. The researchers hope that their findings will help parents and caregivers understand the potential benefits of using Pokémon GO as a tool for promoting healthy behaviors with children.

The study was funded by the National Science Foundation and the University of Washington. The researchers plan to continue their research to better understand how parents and children use Pokémon GO, and to explore how other mobile games can be used to promote healthy behaviors.