



About Game to Grow

Game to Grow is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2017 on the belief that games of all kinds have the power to improve people's lives. Game to Grow's weekly therapeutic social skills groups help participants become more confident, creative, and socially capable using games of all kinds, most notably Dungeons and Dragons. Founders Adam Davis and Adam Johns use their years of experience in couple and family therapy, drama therapy, and education to develop a unique intervention method which promotes social growth among youth in a fun, safe environment.

Game to Grow also works to spread the intentional application of games by traveling to speak at public conventions and academic conferences. The founders provide training and consultation services so that other therapists, educators, and community organizers can use the beneficial power of intentional gaming in their own communities, around the country and around the world.

Mission and Goals

Game to Grow has three main goals:

1. Provide therapeutic and educational gaming groups that contribute to the growth of communities
2. Promote an understanding of the power and benefit of games across the world
3. Train others to use game-based interventions intentionally to help youth and other populations

Game to Grow believes in the inherent benefits of games to those who play them, and understands these benefits are enhanced when games are intentionally facilitated by a trained professional.

Population Served

Game to Grow runs eleven weekly game-based social skills groups and serves nearly 80 youth between the ages of 8 and 25 in the greater Seattle/Tacoma area each week. Ten social skills groups per week utilize role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons. In these groups up to four players per facilitator come together for 90-minute weekly sessions over a 10-week season. Sitting around a table, rolling dice, and role-playing, players overcome challenges associated with social anxiety, autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and form meaningful, supportive friendships. Game to Grow also runs a weekly group utilizing the video game Minecraft to teach communication and collaboration skills and has used the collectible trading card game Magic: The Gathering to teach mindfulness skills.

Grants and individual donations enable Game to Grow to provide direct services, expand the service area of groups, improve the materials available to players, and provide scholarships that lower or eliminate fees for families with greater financial need.

Impact

Current support for Game to Grow comes from parents who have witnessed the effectiveness of therapeutic gaming for their children.

“You’ve helped him in a big way, giving him a lot of confidence while opening up a whole new world filled with magic and fantastic beasts... teaching him about teamwork & collaboration and creative problem solving.”

“My normally quiet and introverted son leaves this workshop smiling and excited to share out the adventures he just embarked upon. He sees how to better listen, interact, and help others. Thank you for this experience for him and our family.”

“I’m not sure what I would have done had we not found you. The counseling that has come from it, the connection and a place for [my son] to find some direction. When a parent is trying everything under the sun for their kid, with little success, finding a place that feels like “home” is life changing. I know [my son] still has a long way to go, but I’ve let go of the daily worry.”

“We’ve noticed a gradual and definitive change in the way our son approaches interacting with others. He has become more aware of how his actions affect others, like how focusing on only winning is not always the best strategy. He seems more skilled in navigating social situations, like the importance of listening to others and the art of compromise.”

History

Game to Grow is an extension of the efforts of Wheelhouse Workshop, a Seattle-based company founded by Adam Davis and Adam Johns in 2013 to help youth build social skills through the intentional and targeted use of tabletop role-playing games. Davis and Johns combined their training and expertise in family therapy, education, and drama therapy with years of experience as gamers and facilitators to harness the power of tabletop role-playing games to improve players’ empathy, frustration tolerance, creative problem-solving abilities, and leadership skills.

After more than six years of facilitating groups serving the greater Seattle community, Johns and Davis founded Game to Grow to promote the application of intentional gaming to more people with a greater scope of challenges. Using the Wheelhouse Workshop model of game-based interventions, Game to Grow has expanded to reach a broader audience of players with a larger range of therapeutic goals than was previously possible.

Game to Grow received a foundational grant from Child’s Play Charity which allowed Game to Grow to expand services and hire four additional group facilitators to expand services even further. In 2019, Game to Grow launched Critical Core, a starter set for therapeutic gaming, via Kickstarter, raising over 400% of the funding goal, and reaching full funding in just eight hours.

Founders Davis and Johns have appeared on podcasts and Twitch streams, and Game to Grow has been covered by respected news outlets both nationwide and internationally. Facilitators have spoken around the country about their work, addressing audiences at the Penny Arcade Expos in Seattle, San Antonio, Boston, and Philadelphia; Emerald City Comicon; OrcaCon; and Save Against Fear, a convention in Pennsylvania about the therapeutic use of gaming. Davis and Johns led workshops at the North American Drama Therapy Association conference, the Washington Association for Play Therapy, and were keynote presenters for the Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Johns and Davis have provided training to over 500 medical and therapy professionals in the use of role-playing games for therapeutic growth, and provided one-on-one consultations to over five dozen individuals to assist the development of game-based programs in their own communities in countries around the world on every continent except Antarctica!

Vision

Game to Grow believes that games of all kinds can improve people's lives, and these benefits are not limited to helping youth. Intentionally facilitated games can provide support to adults struggling with anxiety and depression, improve cognitive functioning in the elderly, provide relief for veterans suffering from PTSD, and help many other individuals overcome serious challenges. In the years to come Game to Grow will expand to serve these populations through providing direct services and offering support and resources to other providers so that they can use the power of intentional gaming to provide individuals in their care lasting life-enriching benefits.

About the Founders



Adam Davis, MA Ed earned a Master's degree in Education with a focus in drama therapy from Antioch University Seattle, and is a recognized member of the North American Drama Therapy Association. Adam is a contributing author to *The Walking Dead Psychology*, and has also served as a public school teacher. In addition to working with Game to Grow, Adam developed a therapeutic video game program at the Atlantic Street Center.

Adam Johns, LMFT earned his Master's degree in couple and family therapy at Antioch University after earning his Bachelor's in Psychology from the University of Arizona. Adam Johns has been playing tabletop role-playing games for 20 years, and is very involved in the geek community.



Selected Press

Articles

[“The Dungeons & Dragons game rescuing kids from their social anxieties.”](#) *CNET*. August 10, 2019.

[“How tabletop Games Like Dungeons & Dragons Can be Therapeutic for Players.”](#) *SyFy Wire*. May 23, 2018.

[“RPG Therapy for Kids is a Real Thing, and It Works.”](#) *Geek and Sundry*. May 16, 2017

[“Therapists are Using Dungeons and Dragons to Get Kids to Open Up.”](#) *Kotaku*. May 1, 2017.

Podcasts

[“Game to Grow.”](#) *Rolling for Change Podcast*. June 26, 2019.

[“These Guys Use Dungeons and Dragons as a Therapy Tool.”](#) *Our American Stories*. April 17, 2019.

[“Game to Grow on +7 Intelligence Podcast.”](#) *+7 Intelligence Podcast*. July 23rd, 2018.

[“Game to Grow Interview on Using Games to Improve Social Skills.”](#) *Inner Gamer Podcast*. October 5, 2017.

Contact

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Media Files



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