Gamers Get It

"If video games have taught me anything, it's that if you encounter enemies then you're going the right way"

One thing I love about teaching is how much I learn. One surprising thing that I've learned from my younger students is that gamers tend to understand some of the concepts behind Stoic resiliency much quicker than the average person. They just seem to get the fundamentals without needing a lot of examples laid out for them. After looking into it a little bit, it makes a lot of sense that playing certain types of games primes players for understanding resiliency and lays the groundwork for personal growth and development.

Here's what I think gives gamers the edge: it's the format of the games they spend hundreds or sometimes thousands of hours playing. While they're playing a video game, they're also engaged in the process of character development. This is especially true for those who gravitate toward action RPGs (Role Playing Games). Often, in games like these, the final objective is only possible once you build your character up to a point where they have the skills and strength to conquer the late-stage enemies.

Practical Stoic philosophy and resiliency skills mirror this game format quite a bit. The day-to-day goal, or the focus of a practicing Stoic, is character development. Through doing good deeds, overcoming challenges, working hard, and living with purpose, the Stoic is able to "level up." Problems that once seemed great now appear small.

In video games, you often start with a weak and helpless character. By accomplishing missions and overcoming foes, you gain experience. Most games literally have an experience system, where, after gaining a certain amount of experience, you acquire new skills and abilities. The gamer learns that overcoming problems, solving puzzles, completing missions, and defeating bad guys is how you gain experience — and with that, you receive rewards in terms of character development.

Why do gamers just seem to understand Stoic resiliency concepts so easily? Because they are constantly engaged in the process of character development, and they know that the only way to gain experience is to face adversity, struggle, and difficulties. They enjoy the process and see it as a challenge. This is exactly how we should view our actual lives, because our character development and ability to level up work in the same way.

As with all concepts, tactics, and philosophies, the knowledge will only benefit you if you put it into action. Just like our game character can't stand still at the first level and expect to become powerful without some time and effort, neither can we. If our life were a video game, we wouldn't get any points for chilling, sitting on the couch, or shirking our responsibilities.

So, I encourage you to treat your character development as if you were the main character in the most epic video game of all time. Do those quests, save the villagers, take on the enemy hordes, and engage in tasks that will earn you those experience points for real. I hope you are well on your way to leveling up.

Amor Fati
- Sgt. Steve