People who play violent video games less affected by distressing images, study shows

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People who frequently play violent video games are less affected by violent or distressing images, a new study has found.

The research from the University of New South Wales did not find that video game players were more violent or aggressive, but that violent images had less of an effect in distracting their vision when they were searching for something else.

In the experiment, people were shown 17 images of neutral landscapes in a quick flashing sequence. They were told to try and pick out one image that had been rotated sideways and remember which direction it was rotated.

However, researchers also included images of violence, or disgusting images like dirty toilet bowls, to confuse the participants.

They found that people who frequently played violent video games were less distracted by the confronting images, and could more easily ignore them to pick out the target image.

The lead author, Dr Steve Most, said this was due to a phenomenon known as "emotion-induced blindness".