Internet Addiction

FACT SHEET

Internet addiction refers to a compulsive need to be online in a way that interferes with normal life and that may negatively affect close friends and family. Some of the more common types of Internet addiction are:

Cyber Relationships: addiction to social networking, chat rooms, and messaging to the point where virtual, online friends become more important than real-life relationships with family and friends.

Cybersex: compulsive use of Internet pornography, adult chat rooms, or adult fantasy role-play sites negatively affecting real-life intimate relationships.

Net Compulsions: compulsive online gaming, gambling, stock trading, or compulsive use of online auction sites, such as eBay, often resulting in financial and job-related problems.

Surfing: compulsive web surfing or database searching leading to lower work productivity and less social interaction with family and friends.

What are the potential harms of Internet addiction?

Internet addictions can negatively affect personal relationships with friends, significant others, and family, as well as reduce productivity at work. Internet addiction can also have a physical impact, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, severe headaches, and problems sleeping and eating.

Financial problems, such as losing large amounts of money, can also occur and create stress for individuals and their families. For younger people, the socialization process for normal development is also at risk. By spending hours on the Internet or playing video games instead of socializing face to face with peers, the development of social skills may be negatively impacted.

How can I tell if someone has a compulsive need to be online?

The Internet Addiction Diagnostic Questionnaire developed by Dr. Kimberly Young can help determine if someone has a pattern associated with Internet addiction. Questions describe eight symptoms such as feeling pre-occupied with the Internet, the amount of time spent online, efforts to cut back on use, and loss of relationships. Dr. Young claims that those who identify with five out of the eight symptoms are addicted. The full questionnaire can be found at the following link: http://www.netaddiction.com/

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FACT SHEET

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What should I do if I or someone I know is addicted to the Internet?

Internet Addiction is yet to be added to the American Psychiatric DSM-V as a 'Substance-Related Disorder'. American Journal of Psychology discusses inclusion of internet addiction in the DSM-V.

Popular forms of treatment include counseling, support groups, and psychotherapy. The goal of treatment is to reduce the compulsion to use the internet and try to reach a point where people can continue to use the computer for work and daily routine activities, such as online banking. There are many programs and services available for those who are addicted to the Internet.

To find a list of counselors in your area, visit:
http://www.theravive.com/cities/locations.aspx.

Resources

- ➢ Kimberly Young – Net Addiction
  http://www.netaddiction.com/
- ➢ Plugged Into The Internet
  http://www.statcan.gc.ca/kits-trousses/pdf/social/edu04_0118a-eng.pdf
- ➢ Internet Addiction Help
  http://www.internetaddictionhelp.com/index.php
- ➢ How Canadians' Use of the Internet Affects Social Life and Civic Participation
  http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/56f0004m/56f0004m2008016-eng.htm
- ➢ American Internet and Technology Addiction Recovery Centre
  http://www.netaddictionrecovery.com/

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