ADDICTED TO NET

Nowadays, surfing on the net is a way of spending time just like going to a movie, a cafe or a bar. Because, internet is informative, easily available and very entertaining. However, some people use internet uncontrollably and addictively.

Just like substance addiction, internet or computer addiction include tolerance (spending more and more time online in order to get the same pleasure), withdrawal (when offline, experiencing an intense desire to connect, curiosity, nervousness, agitation, etc.), affective disorders (such as depression) and impairment of the daily life (decline in or interruption of social relationships). Although professionals do not agree on whether it is a disorder or not, everyone agrees that this behavior ruines the school and the social life. Thus, something has to be done about it.

Since a lot of people use internet as a normal part of their work or school, it is hard to distinguish between normal and extreme, and it cannot be decided based on the time spent at the internet. At this point, what makes the distinction is the "I have to be online" feeling or being unable to remain out. Normal users of internet do not feel this way and they do not neglect other areas of their life.

Being addicted to internet or computer may sound ridiculous but the situation described below may be familiar: "It is 3 a.m. You deeply want to sleep but you are unable to turn off the computer. You enter another website or you are at the most exciting part of the game or a friend just showed up in the chat room, or if you wait 5 more minutes someone you want to see will be online"

University students are at the highest risk for net addiction, especially when chat and online games are considered. Nobody can interfere with what you do or say in this kind of environment. In addition, internet may grant you a secure, assertive and non-anxious self, who you actually want to be. However, problems arise when your boy/girlfriend dumps you because you can't leave the computer, when your grades fall, when you get depressed because someone you met at chat did not pay enough attention to you.

Types of Internet Addiction

- Cybersex Addiction (being addicted to sex chats and porn sites)
- Cyberrelationship Addiction (online friendships, chat rooms, MUD)
- Net Compulsion (uncontrollable online gambling, online shopping)
- Information Overload (relentless surfing and database search)
- Computer Addiction (obsessively playing computer games)

Are you addicted?

- Do you become online unquestionably everyday?
- Do you need more and more time at your computer or on the net?
- Do you feel disturbed when you cut down or stop internet use? (being extremely curious about what's going on there, feeling restless, moody, depressed or irritable, intense desire to be online)
- Do you loose awareness of time while you are online?
- Do you stay online longer than you intend to?
- Do you spend too much time on the internet or dealing with internet-related things?
- Do other people complain about you spending too much time at the computer?
- Do you neglect school, social life or the activities that you used to enjoy before in order to be online?
- Do you risk you relationship, education, career opportunities; do you experience financial problems because of excessive internet use?
- Do you use internet to escape from tough feelings such as loneliness, depression, guilt?
- Do you lie to your family and friends about the time you spent or things you did online?

What can you do?

- If you have a problem, accept it. Most addicts deny that they have a problem. Think about an alcoholic's denial of being an addict and assess yourself.
- Change your routine. Find something else to do when you come home, instead of turning on the computer.
- If you have a problem with turning off the computer, use an alarm clock and do not stay more than you have planned. Put the alarm clock somewhere you cannot reach, so that you will have to stand up to shut down. Then
do something else and return to your computer if you still want to; but you should definitely take a break.

• Assess your online time. How much do you spend for which activity? Which days, at what time of the day, where do you use internet most? Now, by making the opposite of these shake and change your pattern.
• Find other ways to spend time. Join the clubs and other campus activities. Exercise. Spend some time without the computer. Increase your relationship with real life.
• Think about the things you miss. Write down 5 problems that are caused by net addiction and 5 advantages of spending less time online.
• Think about why you are spending this much time at chat rooms, online games, surfing. If this is a way of coping with sadness, emptiness or insecurity, try other ways of solving these problems. Using internet as a way of escaping from tough feelings will make you stuck at these feelings and prevent you from moving on. Get help from a professional.
• If your problem is loneliness, try to adopt the qualities, which make you relate comfortably on the internet, at real life. Imagine yourself as the same secure and assertive person at situations in which you can see and touch.
• Take some sound steps immediately.
• If it is severe, move your computer to another room.
• Tell people about you problem.
• If your grades are falling, everybody around you are complaining, your social relationships have deteriorated, you are unable to sleep and you still cannot control your internet use, you may think about getting help.

If you daily life, grades, sleep and relationships are OK, have fun!

**For More Information**
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