

## Addiction to Internet 'is an illness'

Level 3 • Advanced

### 1 Warmer

**addiction** – a strong need that someone feels to regularly take an illegal or harmful drug:

*There is a growing problem of drug addiction in our cities.*

**addiction to** – a strong need or wish to spend as much time as possible doing a particular activity:

*Many people have an addiction to nicotine.*

*His addiction to the Internet is taking over his life.*

Source: Macmillan English Dictionary Online

What things might people become addicted to?

Make a list. Divide the list into new or modern addictions and old or traditional addictions.

### 2 Key words and phrases

Write the key words and phrases into the sentences.

case study      discussion boards      self-help group      negative repercussions      a fix  
clinical disorder      public health issue      significant other      withdrawal symptoms      wean off

- \_\_\_\_\_ are the unpleasant physical and mental effects suffered by someone who stops taking a substance that they are addicted to.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a medical matter that affects the general population.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a medical problem or condition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ are the bad effects that something has, usually lasting for a long time.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a piece of research that records details of how a situation develops over a period of time.
- Your \_\_\_\_\_ is the person you are having a (romantic) relationship with.
- When you make someone gradually stop depending on something that they like and have become used to, especially a drug or a bad habit, you \_\_\_\_\_ them \_\_\_\_\_ it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is an amount of a drug that someone feels they need to take regularly to satisfy their addiction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is another term for *online forums*.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ consists of people who discuss their problems and find ways to deal with them.

## Addiction to Internet 'is an illness'

### Level 3 • Advanced

#### Addiction to Internet 'is an illness'

*New evidence shows that heavy users suffer isolation, fatigue and withdrawal symptoms*

**David Smith, technology correspondent**  
**March 23, 2008**

- 1 Tense? Angry? Can't get online? Internet addiction is now a serious public health issue that should be officially recognised as a clinical disorder, according to a leading psychiatrist.
  - 2 Excessive gaming, viewing online pornography, emailing and text messaging have been identified as causes of the disorder by Dr Jerald Block, in the respected *American Journal of Psychiatry*. Block argues that the disorder is now so common that it should be included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. He says Internet addiction has four main components:
    - Excessive use, often associated with a loss of sense of time or a neglect of basic drives;
    - Withdrawal, including feelings of anger, tension and/or depression when the computer is inaccessible;
    - The need for better computers, more software, or more hours of use;
    - Negative repercussions, including arguments, lying, poor achievement, social isolation and fatigue.
  - 3 A case study is South Korea, which has the greatest use of broadband in the world. Block points out that 10 people died from blood clots from remaining seated for long periods in Internet cafes and another was murdered because of an online game. Their country now considers Internet addiction as one of its most serious public health issues. The government estimates that around 210,000 South Korean children are affected and in need of treatment. 80 per cent of them might need drugs targeting the brain and nearly a quarter could need to go to hospital. Since the average high school pupil there spends about 23 hours per week gaming, another 1.2 million are believed to be at risk of addiction and require basic counselling. There has been alarm over a rising
- number of addicts dropping out of school or quitting their jobs to spend more time on computers. In China it has been reported that 13.7 per cent of adolescent Internet users, about 10 million, could be considered addicts.
- 4 Block, a psychiatrist at the Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, writes that the extent of the disorder it is more difficult to estimate in America because people tend to surf at home instead of in Internet cafes. But he believes there are similar cases and says: "Unfortunately Internet addiction is resistant to treatment and has high relapse rates." He told *The Observer* that he did not believe specific websites were responsible. "The relationship is with the computer," he said. "First, it becomes a significant other to them. Second, they exhaust emotions that they could experience in the real world on the computer, through any number of mechanisms: emailing, gaming, porn. Third, computer use occupies a tremendous amount of time in their life. Then if you simply try to remove the computer, they've lost their best friend. That can take the form of depression or rage."
  - 5 Harry Husted, a single 51-year-old from New York, spends 16 hours a day on the Internet. He insists that he is not addicted, but admits that he used to be. "I used to work with computers for eight hours, then get home and go online for seven hours. I would stay up until two or three in the morning or until I got so sleepy I had to go to bed. I wouldn't go out to get the groceries and I couldn't have cared less about friends, TV, anything. After a while I realized what was happening and did something about it. Now if I use *MySpace* it's only to advertise my business."
  - 6 Internet addiction clinics have sprung up around the world in an attempt to wean people off their need for a fix. Many people have turned, apparently without irony, to web discussion boards with names such as *Internet Addicts Anonymous*. The Centre for Internet Addiction Recovery in Bradford, Pennsylvania, says Internet addiction has become a growing legal issue in criminal, divorce and employment cases.

## Addiction to Internet 'is an illness'

### Level 3 • Advanced

- 7 Robert Freedman, editor of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, said Internet addiction can be diverse. "In Korea, it seems to be primarily gaming sites. In America, it seems to be *Facebook*. Additionally, it's porn, it's games, it's gambling, it's chatting with friends. All these things existed before, but now they're a lot easier."
- 8 To beat the addiction, he advised: "A self-help group might be a place to start. Maybe replace an online group with a real one."

© Guardian News & Media 2008  
First published in *The Observer*, 23/03/08

### 3 Comprehension check

Find the answers to the questions in the article.

- What are the four basic components of Internet addiction?
  - Emailing, viewing online pornography, texting and isolation.
  - Excessive use, withdrawal symptoms when the computer is not accessible, the constant need for better computers and software and negative repercussions on the user's life.
  - Spending at least 16 hours a day on the Internet, quitting jobs, leaving school and social isolation.
- In Korea, the main cause of Internet addiction is...
  - ... playing online games.
  - ... viewing pornography.
  - ... spending time on social websites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace*.
- The case study revealed that many Internet addicts...
  - ... are in financial trouble.
  - ... take recreational drugs.
  - ... left their jobs or stopped attending school.
- Ironically, self-help groups can be found...
  - ... in Internet cafes.
  - ... on the Internet.
  - ... in Pennsylvania.

## Addiction to Internet 'is an illness'

Level 3 • Advanced

### 4 Vocabulary: Negative emotions

In the article, there are many words that are used to describe negative emotions and states of mind.

a) Find words that mean the following.

tiredness \_\_\_\_\_

despondency \_\_\_\_\_

loneliness \_\_\_\_\_

anxiety \_\_\_\_\_

b) How many other similar words can you find? Explain their meaning.

### 5 Discussion: Are you a net junkie?

Answer these questions for yourself or for someone you know and discuss the results. Do you think these test questions are a good indicator of Internet addiction?

- Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet?
- Do you need increasing amounts of time on the net in order to achieve satisfaction?
- Have you repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop Internet use?
- Do you feel restless, moody, depressed or tense when you try to cut down or stop Internet use?
- Do you often stay online longer than you originally intended?
- Have you jeopardized or risked losing a partner, job, educational or career opportunity because of the Internet?
- Have you lied to family members, a therapist or others to conceal the extent of your involvement with the Internet?
- Do you use it to escape from problems (e.g. feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression)?

If you answer 'yes' to five or more of these questions, you may have an Internet addiction!

Source: Centre for Internet Addiction Recovery [www.netaddiction.com](http://www.netaddiction.com)

### 6 Webquest

Go to the website [www.netaddiction.com](http://www.netaddiction.com). Here you can take further tests, read about real-life cases of Internet addiction, listen to podcasts and watch videos.