

# Cyber Addiction

For those of you who remember using encyclopedias that became out-of-date a short time after publication, or having to drive to the library to obtain information, the Internet is nothing short of a blessing. Today, information and entertainment are just a click away. Email, blogs, and social networks allow for both public and anonymous communication about any topic. But how much is too much Internet usage?



Each person's Internet use is different. You might need to use the Internet for work, or you might rely heavily on social networking sites to keep in touch with family and friends. Spending a lot of time online only becomes a problem when it absorbs too much of your time and results in neglecting your relationships, your work, school, or other important things in your life. If you keep repeating compulsive Internet behavior despite the negative consequences in your offline life, then it is time to strike a new balance.

## **Do you...**

- frequently lose track of time when online?
- get irritated or cranky if your online time is interrupted?
- have trouble completing tasks at work or home?
- find yourself neglecting your family and friends?
- feel guilty or defensive about your Internet use?
- hide your Internet use or lie to your boss and family about the amount of time you spend on the computer?
- feel a sense of euphoria while involved in Internet activities?
- use the Internet as an outlet when stressed, sad, or for excitement?
- find yourself saying, "Just one more game." "Just one more." "Just one more?"

If you answered yes to several of these questions, you might have a disorder called "cyber addiction."

Cyber addiction is a relatively new phenomenon. Just like any other behavior that may harm us mentally, physically, or emotionally, too much computer usage can lead to addiction.



Common physical problems stemming from overuse include carpal tunnel syndrome, dry eyes, migraine headaches, back aches, eating irregularities, neglecting personal hygiene, and changes in your sleep pattern.

While professional guidance is always the best way to treat any psychological or physical issue, there are steps you can take to combat your own Internet abuse or the cyber addiction of a friend or loved one.



- Try keeping yourself busy with other activities:
  - read a book
  - phone a friend
  - exercise
  - go to a movie
  - just get out of the house and away from your computer
- When you leave your electronic "friend," turn it off! The simple task of having to turn it back on and wait while it boots up may be enough of a deterrent to keep you from heading back too soon.
- Whenever you are online, set a reasonable time limit and stick to it.

If you suspect that you or a loved one may be experiencing this form of addiction, and none of the steps listed above are working, seek professional help. Do not let the consequences of cyber addiction ruin your life, your relationships, your health, or your reputation. Log off before it's too late!

**“Internet: absolute communication, absolute isolation.”**  
~~ Paul Carvel

**Optima EAP is available to provide assistance with the types of challenges we can all face in work or home life. If you are currently faced with a challenge, please call us to schedule a confidential appointment with one of our licensed clinical professionals.  
1-800-899-8174 or 757-363-6777**

Visit our EAP website at <http://www.ilab.org/hr/sentaraeap.html> for additional topics & info.

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