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ETEC 525

October 14, 2008

**There’s No Patch to Quit Internet Addiction**

 Internet addiction is something that is affecting more and more people with the rising use of technologies. The internet has gone from a computer exclusive service to something that can be accessed through cellular phones, mp3 players, and handheld organizers. The internet has also gone from being accessed through telephone cables at a fifty-six kilobits per second speed to fiber-optic speeds sent through wireless networks (wi-fi). Internet addiction is a growing condition, and I will demonstrate what behaviors, attitudes, and web applications have encompassed it.

 The first thing internet users must know before they classify themselves as addicts or non-addicts is that there are various definitions of internet addiction set forth by different researchers. Internet addiction has been classified as combination of traits that include technological and behavioral addictions (Chou, 2005). Dr. Kimberly Young, a specialist on internet addiction, has stated that an internet addict spends about thirty-nine hours per week on the internet. Young calls this being “internet-dependent.” On the other hand, Dr. Chien Chou, another internet addiction specialist, states that those who are addicted to the internet spend anywhere from twenty to twenty-five hours online.

 There are many behaviors that are linked to internet addiction, and some of these can have other underlined addictions. One of the major things to understand before analyzing these behaviors is to know what it is exactly that makes the internet so addictive. The internet, like any other source of addiction, has many characteristics that make it tempting. According to Mark Griffiths (2003), professor of Gambling Studies at Nottingham Trent University, there are various reasons that make addicts and abusers tempted to use the internet. The internet has many opportunities for access and convenience, as it is something easily found in homes and in workplaces. Because it is becoming more and more common, another reason the internet is so tempting is because of its affordability. Next, the internet provides anonymity, meaning that hardly anyone knows who you really are and being caught doing online activity is unlikely. Another reason the internet is so tempting is because it offers an escape, one where users can let go of their inhibitions. Along with its temptations, the internet has also gained a huge popularity because of its low cost, growing bandwidth, and growing amount of information that has become available. These reasons are why so many people spend vast amounts of time online and these reasons are also the basis of behaviors linked to internet addition.

 The behaviors that occur doing a person’s internet addiction stage are ones to be taken seriously. These behaviors may accompany other hidden conditions. The first of these behaviors is one that involves sexual involvement. This includes using the internet for cybersex and cyberpornography. This type of behavior can also be linked to an addiction to pornography and abundant sexual activity. Another type of internet behavior is one linked to creating online friendships and relationships. This type of behavior would include e-mailing friends, use of social networks, and the search of companionship online. Online friendships and relationships allow people to play with their gender roles and they may also serve as precursors to cybersex. More men than women are addicted to the internet, and that is mostly due to the fact that behaviors men seek after allow them to exert power in some way (Chou, 2005). Other types of popular behaviors that cause internet addiction are the use of online gambling, shopping, stock trading, and gaming. One very dangerous territory that is a behavior of internet addiction is online activity as it relates to criminal use. This can include being a sexual predator, pedophile, or online stalker. All of these behaviors can be drives and fixes for an internet addict.

The majority of online behaviors internet addicts have offer some kind of sexual fulfillment. Although some behaviors like those that have criminal intents offer mostly bad perceptions, others like cybersex offer the advantage allowing people to engage in sexual activity without the risks of contracting HIV, AIDS, and/or other sexually transmitted diseases. This touches into behaviors of internet addiction as they relate to the world outside of the internet. Internet addiction can affect how one devotes his or her time and the responsibilities one decides to neglect because of it. It can hinder a student’s academic duties by consuming the time he or she needs in order to complete them. According to Kathleen Scherer, a psychologist at the University of Texas-Austin, thirteen percent of students said that internet use hindered their academic, professional, and social lives (Chou, 2005). Another outside behavior is that the internet can be an escape for those who suffer from depression. By doing something with offers gratification, the person keeps his or her mind off of that which makes him or her depressed. From all of these behaviors, there is only one true and concrete consequence. That being that it consumes time for the internet addict.

There most popular web applications that the internet addict thrives in include gambling, pornography, and networking. Gambling has become one of the most popular web applications for the internet addict because it offers lawful betting without the need to travel to a state where it is considered legal. The stigma and self-conscious worries that exist when purchasing pornography are eliminated when done online. The internet allows people looking to purchase pornography the ability to do it anonymously because the need for travel and interaction with sales people and other people in a shop are completely removed. Networking allows people to engage in communication with friends, family, and potential partners. This application offers satisfaction in allowing people to always have someone to communicate with and offer their availability to others. Although these applications may very well be causes of internet addiction, Griffiths (2003) states that the internet may just very well be the form in which people engage in the parallel addictions to gambling, pornography, and networking.

With the growing use of the internet and its abundant availability, it may very well be that the growth in internet addiction will become prevalent. Internet addiction, like any other addiction, should be treated with the ability to accept the addiction and the use of techniques to recover from it. Internet addiction is something that can affect the personal and professional lives of all types of people who have access to online services. The use of the internet can be productive with the use of moderation and web applications that allow for fruitful results in one’s life. The internet is not a demon as it lets people gain access to a wealth of information and services, just be forewarned that it does not lead to a lifestyle with a ruinous outcome.

References

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