COMPUTER & INTERNET ADDICTION

The following information is adapted and sourced from
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_addiction .

Computer and Internet addiction means the overuse of computers/internet to such extent that our everyday life collapses. Thus it eventually leads to complete breakdown of our personal and social relationship, work and sleep routine as well as our mood and thinking capability.

The following information is adapted and sourced from http://www.helpguide.org.

When you feel more comfortable with your online friends than your real ones, or you can't stop yourself from playing games, gambling, or compulsively surfing - even when it has negative consequences in your life - then you may be using the Internet too much.

Internet Addiction, otherwise known as computer addiction, online addiction, or internet addiction disorder (IAD), covers a variety of impulse-control problems, including:

Cybersex Addiction – compulsive use of Internet pornography, adult chat rooms, or adult fantasy role-play sites impacting negatively on real-life intimate relationships.

Cyber-Relationship Addiction – 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.

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

Information Overload – compulsive web surfing or database searching, leading to lower work productivity and less social interaction with family and friends.

Computer Addiction – obsessive playing of off-line computer games, such as Solitaire or Minesweeper, or obsessive computer programming.

The most common of these Internet addictions are cybersex, online gambling, and cyber-relationship

addiction. [1][2]

Healthy vs. unhealthy Internet use

The Internet provides a constant, ever-changing source of information and entertainment, and can be accessed from most smart phones as well as tablets, laptops, and computers. Email, blogs, social networks, and message boards allow for both public and anonymous communication about any topic.

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

Risk factors for Internet addiction and computer addiction

You are at greater risk of Internet addiction if:

1. You suffer from anxiety. You may use the Internet to distract yourself from your worries and fears.

2. You are depressed. The Internet can be an escape from feelings of depression, but too much time online can make things worse.

3. You have any other addictions. Many Internet addicts suffer from other addictions, such as drugs, alcohol, gambling, and sex.

4. You lack social support. Internet addicts often use social networking sites, instant messaging, or online gaming as a safe way of establishing new relationships and more confidently relating to others.

5. You're an unhappy teenager. You might be wondering where you fit in and the Internet could feel more comfortable than real-life friends.

6. You are less mobile or socially active than you once were. For example, you may be coping with a new disability that limits your ability to drive. Or you may be parenting very young children, which can make it hard to leave the house or connect with old friends.

7. You are stressed. While some people use the Internet to relieve stress, it can have a counterproductive effect. The longer you spend online, the higher your stress levels will be. [1][2]

Tips for dealing with Internet addiction

1. Ask yourself, "What am I missing out on when I spend so much time on the Internet?" Write down these activities and decrease your Internet time to pursue some of them.

2. Set reasonable Internet use goals and stick to them. Take frequent breaks, at least 5 minutes each hour, and do some other activity.

3. Alter your routine to break your usage patterns. If you spend evenings on the Internet, start limiting your use to mornings.

4. Seek out friends and acquaintances who "couldn't care less" about the Internet. Take time to appreciate the fact that all life is not yet online.

5. Stay connected to the offline world. Visit newsstands, book and music stores, and participate in entertainment such as museums, music, and live theatre. Novels and poetry readings are hard to experience online.

6. Treat the Internet as a tool. Stay focused on the fact that the Internet is a means to an end. Plan your strategy—whether you're looking for information or entertainment—with the end in mind and you'll save valuable time.

7. Group support for Internet addiction: Since Internet addiction is relatively new, it can be hard to find a real-life support group dedicated to the issue. There are some Internet addiction support groups on the Internet. However, these should be used with caution. Although they may be helpful in orienting you and pointing you in the right direction, you need real-life people to best benefit from group support.

Tips to helping others with Internet addiction

1. Be a good role model. Manage the Internet and computer use in your own life well.

2. Introduce the Internet addict to other people who handle their Internet use sensibly.

3. Get your friend involved in non-Internet related interests.

4. Talk to your friend about your concerns with their Internet use.

5. Support their desire for change if they think they have a problem.

6. Encourage them to seek professional counselling.

Helping a child or teen with an Internet addiction

It's a fine line as a parent. If you severely limit a child or teen's Internet use, they might rebel and go to excess. But you should monitor computer use, supervise computer activity, and get your child help if he or she needs it. If your child or teen is showing signs of Internet addiction, there are things that you can do to help:

1. Encourage other interests and social activities. Get your child out from behind the computer screen. Expose kids to other hobbies and activities, such as team sports, Scouts, and after school clubs.

2. Monitor computer use and set clear limits. Restrict the use of computers, iPads, or smart phones to a common area of the house where you can keep an eye on your child's online activity, and limit time online. This will be most effective if you as parents follow suit. If you can't stay offline, chances are your children won't either.

3. Talk to your child about underlying issues. Compulsive computer use can be the sign of deeper problems. Is your child having problems fitting in? Has there been a recent major change, like a move or divorce, which is causing stress?

4. Get help. Teenagers often rebel against their parents but if they hear the same information from a different authority figure, they may be more inclined to listen. Try a sports coach, doctor, or respected family friend. Don't be afraid to seek professional counselling if you are concerned about your child. [1][2]

References:

1. Internet and Computer Addiction, http://www.helpguide.org
2. Computer addiction, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_addiction