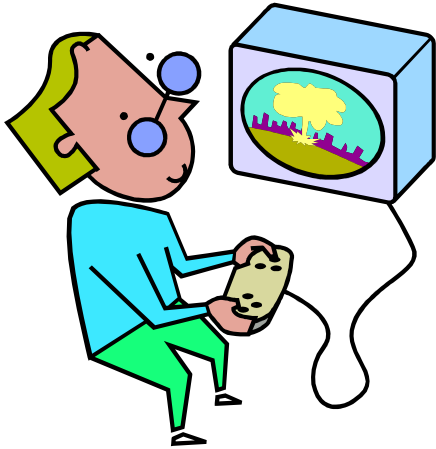


Internet/Computer Addiction can be defined as:

compulsive behaviors related to any on-line or off-line computer surfing, games, viewing, etc. that directly interferes and impacts one's personal environment to include their family, friends, school, work or normal daily activities.



Some Common Names:
Tech addiction, internet addiction, net addiction, gaming addiction, video gaming addiction, computer addiction, on-line addiction, internet addiction disorder (IAD)

Internet addictions can happen to almost anyone. However, there are certain groups and risk factors which may increase the likelihood:

- **Individuals with other, past or present, addictions** (e.g. drugs, alcohol, smoking, or sex)
- **Individuals with other psychological difficulties** (e.g. anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem)
- **People with relationship difficulties** (users may be drawn to the more social aspects of the internet, such as chat rooms, online gaming, message boards, etc)
- **Highly intelligent people** (individuals who are not intellectually challenged by their job or schoolwork may turn to online fantasy games as a way to stimulate their imagination and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- **People with extended periods of non-structured time** (e.g. stay-at-home parents, university students, young children with few after-school activities, retired individuals, and people who work from home.



Counseling Services
A Resource for Students

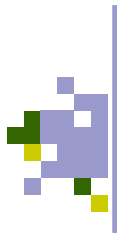
Lake Superior State University
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Internet/ Computer/Gaming Addiction



LSSU Counseling Services:
A Resource for Students



Internet/Computer/ Gaming Addiction

There are 5 different categories of Internet/Computer Addiction:

1. **Cybersexual:** Is excessive viewing, downloading, or trading online pornography, or involvement in adult chat rooms. Men are often more likely than women to experience cybersexual addiction. Currently, this is the most common presenting problem when initiating therapy for internet addiction.
2. **Cyber-Relational:** Becoming excessively involved in online relationships through chat rooms, instant messaging, message boards, email, or social-networking sites. Online relationships are used to find comfort, support, and acceptance. These digital relationships eventually become more important than real-world relationships. Women are generally more likely than men to experience cyber-relational difficulties.
3. **Net-Compulsions:** This refers to a broad category of behaviors including obsessive online gambling, shopping, and stock trading.
4. **Information Overload:** Typically refers to excessive web surfing, information searching, and data collection.
5. **Game Addiction:** Excessive time spent playing video games which significantly detracts from the time and interest one has for relationships, school, or work and previously enjoyed activities and relationships are abandoned. Also the obsessive playing of off-line computer games, such as Solitaire or Minesweeper, or obsessive computer programming.

Signs and symptoms that you may have an Internet/Computer problem:

- **Losing track of time online.** Do you frequently find yourself on the Internet longer than you intended? Do a few minutes turn in to a few hours? Do you get irritated or cranky if your online time is interrupted?
- **Having trouble completing tasks at work or home.** Do you find laundry piling up and little food for dinner in the house because you've been busy online? Perhaps you find yourself working late more often because you can't complete your work on time — then staying even longer when everyone else has gone home so you can surf the Web freely.
- **Isolation from family and friends.** Is your social life suffering because of all the time you spend online? Are you neglecting your family and friends? Do you feel like no one in your "real" life understands you like your online friends?
- **Feeling guilty or defensive about your Internet use.** Do you hide your Internet use or lie to your family or friends about the amount of time you spend on the computer and what you do while online?
- **Feeling a sense of euphoria while involved in Internet activities.** Do you use the Internet as an outlet when stressed, sad, or for sexual gratification or excitement? Have you tried to limit your Internet time but failed?



What you can do to try and address the problem:

First, do a self assessment: how often are you using the computer? Is your daily activities being negatively affected? Have friends or family members voiced concern?

Recognize any underlying problems that may support your Internet addiction. Are you feeling depressed, stressed or anxious? Are you, or have you in the past struggled with alcohol or drugs?

Build your coping skills. Perhaps blowing off steam on the Internet is your way of coping with stress or angry feelings. Building skills in these areas will help you weather the stresses and strains of daily life without resorting to compulsive Internet use.

Strengthen your support network. The more relationships you have in real life, the less you will need the Internet for social interaction. Set aside dedicated time each week for friends and family or join a common interest group.

Keep a log of how much you use the Internet for non-work or non-essential activities. Are there times of day that you use the Internet more? Are there triggers in your day that make you stay online for hours at a time?

Set goals for when you can use the Internet. Try setting a timer, scheduling use for certain times of day, or making a commitment to turn off the computer at the same time each night.

Replace your Internet usage with healthy activities. If you are bored and lonely, resisting the urge to get back online can be very difficult. Have a plan for other ways to fill the time, such as going to lunch with a coworker, taking a class, or inviting a friend over.