

Read and be ready to discuss the article below:

Telltale Signs of Internet Addiction

The [New York Times](#) has reported on a problem that many of us have but are not **aware of** – Internet addiction. According to reporter Tara Parker-Pope, millions of us are **addicted to** being online. She says this is a growing problem that is making us more **forgetful** and **impatient**. Ms Parker-Pope writes about various reports highlighting how technology is changing people. In one, she quotes cyber-psychologist Dr. Elias Aboujaode who says: “More and more, life is resembling the **chat room**.” He said we are living in “virtual lifestyles” which is negatively **affecting** our **real-life** relationships. Nicki Dowling, a clinical psychologist from Melbourne University in Australia, concluded in a recent study that ten per cent of young people had what she called “Internet dependence”.

Tara Parker-Pope **quizzed** experts in this field **on** what the signs are of being overly **absorbed** in technology. She **came up with** seven indicators of “tech overload”. The first is whether you check your e-mail before doing other things. Another **telltale sign** is if you always **anticipate** and **look forward to** your next online visit – a sure sign of dependence and addiction. The third point is if you say, “just a few more minutes” when someone wants you. Parker-Pope found your interaction with others also says a lot about how important the Internet is compared with family and friends; do you lie about how much time you spend online or choose to **surf the Net** instead of go out with others? Other **giveaways** include the “**online lift**” that stops you being unhappy, and when others complain about you always being online.

Compulsive Internet Disorder

The Internet has become an important **aspect** of most people's lives, because it's used for communication, information, or entertainment. Billions of people around the world send e-mail, chat online, read the news, and maybe even **gamble**, trade stocks, or play competitive games on a daily basis. Some have moved into a dangerous **realm**, though. The Internet can provide a sense of instant **fulfillment** or cause people to withdraw from the real world, exactly like someone addicted to drugs or alcohol.

A number of psychologists state that people who become addicted to the Internet already suffer from some kind of illness. For example, someone **hooked on** day trading would still **recklessly** buy and sell stocks by phone or face to face with a broker. But other psychiatrists see the addiction as real. These professionals believe the medical world should recognize Internet addiction, and insurance companies should pay for treatment.

While doctors and other experts debate the issue, South Korea has already acted on the problem. In addition to counseling centers and treatment programs at hospitals, a rehab center for teens has recently been established. The country held the world's first conference on compulsive Internet disorder, too. Ninety percent of South Korean homes have Internet access, and online gaming is a national sport. Children **ditch** school to play games. Some gamers have even dropped dead from **exhaustion** after days and days online.

The rehab center offers teens the opportunity to rediscover satisfaction with the real world. During the twelve days, participants are **barred** from computers and may only use a cell phone one hour per day. The remaining time gets filled with physical exercise and group activities which establish real-life emotional bonds.

The center turns away about four **applicants** for each available opening.

ADDICTED? Are you dependent on the Internet?

How often do you...
check your e-mail before doing other things?
really want to get online?
say "just a few more minutes" when online?
lie about how long you spend online?
choose the Net to going out with friends?
feel much happier after logging on?

ONLINE: What do you like most? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- e-mail
- shopping
- social networking (Facebook, etc.)
- reading news

Questions for discussion:

- What is the Internet?
- What would the world be like without the Internet?
- Could you live without the Internet?
- Is the Internet dangerous?
- What kind of technology will replace the Internet?
- What annoys you about the Internet?
- Are you addicted to the Internet?
- What do you think of social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Vkontakte?
- How many hours a day do you spend Networking? How many Social Networks have you signed up for?
- Can you remember the first time you used the Internet?
- How does the Internet work?
- How would your life be different without the Internet?
- What do you use the Internet for?
- How has the Internet changed the world?
- What's the best thing about the Internet?
- Could the Internet have a better name?
- What does the Internet need more of?
- What is your favourite Internet site?
- What do you think of the idea of Internet shopping or online dating?
- Do you think people will prefer to live their lives on the Internet instead of real life?
- How many hours per day do you use the Internet? Do you think this is too much? Why?
- Is Internet addiction a real illness that doctors and insurance companies should recognize? Why/not?
- Could you go without a computer or the Internet for one week? one month? one year? Why/not?
- At which point does the Internet become an addiction rather than a useful tool? Please explain.
- What is the most useful invention of the last thirty years? How about the most dangerous? Why?