

Understanding Internet Addiction and its affects on your Health:

It is common enough for us to hear that we were born to live in some sort of harmony with our earth and our environment. Most of us know how good it can feel walking in bare feet in wet grass or along the beach and we all feel something standing under a tree which is 500 years old. We all have an idea of what living in a loving family or falling in love should be like, even if we have never experienced it. Some of us know how much different a banana ripened on the bush tastes as compared to the ones that we buy in the shops.

Almost none of us in Westernised societies really know anything about what it is like to actually live in harmony with either our own bodies, our own nature or our world. The natural world, the environment and our bodies are all increasingly unhealthy because of this.

There is not a right and a wrong way to live or to treat our world or our own body and spirit. There are just a whole lot of ways we can produce problems because we don't respect our own, and our worlds, need for balance.

Balance is the key.

If our passion for the Internet were matched by an equal passion for say gardening, wind surfing and finding homes for abandoned kittens for example. If it were matched by an equal passion for cooking, rock climbing and Egyptian history. If it were matched with an equal passion for yoga, furniture restoration and archery or whatever, it would not be an addiction, but a part of a balanced and varied experience of life.

If we all had such contrasting passions and experiences of life we would all be healthy, whole and happy and we would live for a hundred years.

Balance is the key.

Those of us who sit at computer screens for long periods every day are already in danger of unsettling our health if this sort of activity is not balanced by a whole lot of contrasting activity. An addict is one who will concentrate their mind and body around one sort of activity to the exclusion of almost all others.

The main health implications of Internet Addiction are as follows;

1. Posture and Tension:

Posture means how we hold ourselves. Sitting or slouching in front of a computer for long periods of time and making repetitive small movements with our fingers and wrists will affect our structure. Some of the effects will be direct, as in placing unusual strains on our spines and the ligaments in our wrists. More importantly, long periods of immobility will introduce habits of muscular tension, which may affect us throughout our lives.

What Can We Do?

We should spend 10 or 15 minutes of every hour doing contrasting activities, which involve bending, stretching, moving about and generally all those things which we are not doing in front

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of the screen. This can be running up and down a few flights of stairs, taking the dog for a walk, doing housework, riding an exercise cycle or alternating between our desk-bound and our other responsibilities in a work situation.

Consciously keep changing your posture throughout the day. Change the shape and height of your chair and your distance from the screen. Change how you are holding your back, shoulders, head and your neck often. Stretch every few minutes.

2. Breathing and Blood Circulation:

When holding ourselves still for long periods of time and doing low energy work, we tend to breathe in a very shallow manner. Long periods of shallow breathing means that a lot of stale air remains in our lungs and the efficiency of oxygen uptake from our lungs into our blood is reduced. Our blood oxygen levels drift lower and lower and the blood supply to our muscles, our digestive system, internal organs and to our brain is affected. Our bodies and our brains are unable to work at optimum levels. This can effect everything from the number of headaches we experience to our mental efficiency, our resistance to common illnesses, even our sex drive not to mention of course, our physical fitness and our hearts.

Just imagine how being addicted to smoking as well as to the Internet can compound the breathing and circulation effects. We could be dead and just not realise it.

What Can We Do?

Practice taking a few deep breaths, often while working at your computer. Get up and move about regularly, as we discussed under posture and tension above, and try to introduce some aerobic exercise into these breaks. Run around the house a few times or up and down a staircase instead of using an elevator. Dance to your favourite music, do a few sit-ups. Do whatever it takes to get the blood moving around in the body, to get your lungs opened up and cleared out.

3. Digestive System and Skin Health:

Even if we eat the best, freshest and most wholesome food, healthy digestion depends on our stomach and abdomen being relaxed and mobile. Waves of movement travel along the tube, which makes up our gastro-intestinal tract. These waves must be able to travel freely without being affected by tension or our abdomens being compressed by hunching over ourselves.

Smooth muscle movement, light exercise and even breathing, drive our lymphatic system, which is primarily responsible for waste removal from tissues and cells throughout the body. If our digestion is sluggish we feel just the same and whatever we put in our mouth is not digested properly. If our lymph is sluggish, our skin health is poor, our breath and body odour may stink and our pimples will be worse.

All these effects can result even if your food is fresh and wholesome. Imagine how much worse they will all be if most of your food is junk and most of your drink is coffee or Coke?

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Eat away from the computer. Take a break, walk to the shop and buy some fresh food, prepare it yourself, eat it in a relaxed manner. Focus your attention on the food and the enjoyment of it. You can't do this when you are on the Net.

If you snack, do so on fresh fruit or simple carbohydrate snacks. Drink regularly. Keep a large jug or bottle of fresh water on the desk. Get up frequently and make a herb tea drink like Chamomile or Rosehips or Mint for example.

If you want crappy health, eat and drink crap. If you want crappier health, do all this while sitting at the computer 6 to 16 hours a day.

4. What about the Electromagnetic Radiation?

Be aware that sitting in front of a cathode ray tube which is beaming electrons directly at your face and brain is not a good idea. We are not being told this because there are too many vested interests involved. It is like the mobile phone issue. Beaming radio waves into your skull from point blank range is definitely not a good idea. Florescent light sources are not much better.

50 years from now we will look back and realise how stupid we were to think that we could abuse ourselves in this way.

Those of you who get headaches from sitting in front of your screens, on your mobile phones or under fluorescent tubes beware, your bodies are trying to tell you something. Remember also that you are the lucky ones. The others are too insensitive even to notice that something is wrong.

What Can We Do?

Get a liquid crystal screen a.s.a.p. Use a hands free kit with your mobile. Get rid of florescent lights.

Take regular breaks from your computer and don't take these breaks in front of the T.V.

5. What about Eye Health?

Our eyes were provided with a lifetime warranty which explains that to maintain optimum health and efficiency we should use our eyes to look around and about at all shapes and sizes and colours. We should frequently look at things close to us and far away. We should look at things in all sorts of light from starlight to bright sunlight.

What Can We Do?

Introducing simple exercises into our routine can alleviate most eye health problems. Have your favourite pictures or photographs behind, beside and above your screen and at various distances away. Have a window in front of you so you can focus on more distant objects regularly. Have a sample of very small print pasted on your machine somewhere which is really too small for you to read, and glance at it often. Have something else very close to your face, less than 10 inches away. This can be a picture or some wording and glance at this regularly also.

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Cover your eyes regularly with the palms of your hand and open them into the darkness to let them rest. Blink rapidly while looking directly at the sun for short periods. Don't use sunglasses except while skiing, sailing or driving in bright sunlight. Vary the light source and direction at your desk. Work without your glasses as much as possible and, as your eyes improve get weaker prescriptions rather than endlessly getting stronger ones. Read H.E Bates "Better Eyesight without Glasses"

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June 2001