

INTERNET ADDICTION

Many people use the word addiction casually to describe something they do often and somewhat compulsively. We hear people say things like, "I'm addicted to chocolate" or "I'm addicted to my cell phone." Clinical addiction is a different matter. A clinical diagnosis is defined by:

- Negative consequences: problems with relationships, work, school and more
- Tolerance: needing to engage with the substance more and more to get the same affect
- Withdrawal: feelings of anxiousness and depression or physical symptoms when away from it
- Unable to stop: Serious difficulties with trying to cut down or stop



The term "addiction" as it relates to the internet is confusing. Internet Gaming Disorder as a diagnosis is currently being considered for official recognition by the American Association of Psychiatry (APA). This is based on studies that show psychologic and physiologic patterns similar to those exhibited by a person with a drug addiction. For example, MRI studies of the brains of people engaged in excessive video game use look very similar to people addicted to drugs like cocaine.

However, internet addiction is not currently being considered by the APA as a diagnosable addiction. This is in part because the internet is so expansive, making it hard to assess what aspects of it are actually addictive.

If you are concerned about addiction in yourself or someone else, or you want to teach your kids about this issue, take a look at these two questionnaires below that screen for problematic use. Each has been validated by research. Even if a person has no signs of addiction, I think it is a great idea to do these surveys with your family as a way to open a conversation around addiction.

VIDEO GAME ADDICTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey developed by Dr. Paul Gentile

Over time, have you been spending much more time thinking about playing video games, learning about video-game playing, or planning the next opportunity to play?

1. Do you need to spend more and more time and/or money on video games in order to feel the same amount of excitement?
2. Have you tried to play video games less often or for shorter periods of time, but are unsuccessful?
3. Do you become restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop playing video games?
4. Have you played video games as a way of escaping from problems or bad feelings?

7. Do you sometimes skip household chores in order to spend more time playing video games?
8. Do you sometimes skip doing homework in order to spend more time playing video games?
9. Have you ever done poorly on a school assignment or test because you spent too much time playing video games?
10. Have you ever needed friends or family to give you extra money because you spent too much money on video game equipment, software, or game/Internet fees?

Total your "Yes," "Sometimes" and "No" answers.

Kids are considered to be pathological gamers if they responded with a "Yes" or "Sometimes" to at least 6 of these 11 questions.

ARTICLES ON SCREEN ADDICTION

[What is Social Media Addiction?](#) – Social Media Victims Law Center

[Addictive potential of social media, explained](#) – Stanford Medicine's Scope Blog

[Learning How to Exert Self-Control](#) – New York Times

[New study identifies the most definitive signs of "TikTok Addiction"](#) – PsyPost

[Internet Gaming Order in the DSM 5](#) – In the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), Internet Gaming Disorder is identified in Section III as a condition warranting more clinical research and experience before it might be considered for inclusion in the main book as a formal disorder

INTERNET ADDICTION PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

[reSTART](#)

The nation's first center specializing in the treatment of problematic internet, video game and technology use.

[Outback Therapeutic Expeditions](#)

A wilderness therapy program for teens.

[The Center for Internet & Technology Addiction](#)

Founded by Dr. David Greenfield, one of the world's latest voices on internet, computer and digital media behavior.

[Social Media Victims Law Center](#)

A law center dedicated to holding social media companies accountable for the harm they do to children.

RELATED TECH TALK TUESDAY BLOGS

[Digital Binging: Is it a Problem?](#)

[Gaming Internet Addiction Test](#)

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