

Internet, gaming & social media dependence, a guide

In children

Video games, consoles, internet and social media are now a well-established part of most children's lives in western culture, and although this technical revolution has positively transformed our world, for some it is a problem. Many parents will be familiar with the exasperation at their child's apparent obsession with this world of virtual communication and gaming, but much of this is normal. Trouble is when the child is consumed by this forum, to the exclusion of everything else.

Like with any other addictive process, the pattern to address is of increasing use alongside detriment to self – i.e. neglect of day to day life, of self care (e.g. food, sleep, hygiene), a reduction in communication with others (isolation) and volatile mood. These are all indicators that the gaming or internet use is taking over, and it needs to be intervened upon. Some of these symptoms might include falling asleep at school, playing games or being on social media all night, a fear in the parent of asking the child to turn their device off or put it down, worsening grades at school, lots of arguments, lying and manipulating to use devices, headaches, backaches, poor appetite, dropping out of social events. If this is happening to your child, we advise you seek professional help as it is a golden opportunity to help your child manage their emotions.

In adults

Again this addictive pattern is most often present to compensate for an emotional issue. For example, a parent might play games with their child as a way of connecting with them, but in reality they are often avoiding the intimacy of non-competitive relationship. Or gaming use might be a way to avoid intimacy with a partner, or fear to do with work or an event, or in an attempt to deal with stress. It is vital that the space and time is given to any person under duress to decompress so that whatever they do 'for pleasure' does not backfire and become a problem in itself.

Using anything to fix how you feel or to avoid facing what is going on can cause low self esteem, and is likely to perpetuate the negative emotions. Video and gaming addiction and internet/social media dependence left unaddressed will cause a person to continue to feel in charge and in control when gaming or on social media, but as soon as it stops or is taken away, a cliff edge of loss and fear kicks in so that they become aggressive or withdrawn.

At CHARTER treatment includes a period of abstinence, followed by the support to teach families and individuals how to develop bounded behaviour around such seductive but ever present influences as the internet, computer games and social media.

If you have problems with the internet or gaming then give us a call, we can help

Call 020 7323 4970

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