4 Signs You May Be Addicted to the Internet

by ELLIOTT REDWINE

Understanding Problem Internet Use (PIU)

Currently, 3.6 billion people actively use the internet, which is almost half of the world's population. As the internet continues to consume us as a society and its constant use becomes more acceptable, how can you look for signs you may be addicted to the internet?

Over the years, the definition of the term addiction has begun to encompass other negative actions. Food, sex and gambling are a few of the various, potentially unhealthy, behaviors that have been included under the umbrella of addiction. As the internet continues to rise in availability and popularity, it too has been found to be used to an unhealthy degree.

Internet addiction is often referred to as problem internet use (PIU) within the medical community. Studies continue to be conducted on the prevalence of internet addiction with increasing amounts of people. Video games and social media are two of the most prevalent and discussed facets of internet addiction.

With the current prevalence of smartphones, signs you may be addicted to the internet are closer than you may imagine.

1. You Realize You've Been Online Longer Than You Meant to Be

Most often, one of the biggest signs you may be addicted to the internet is when you use it for longer than intended. It's easy to get stuck playing a few extra rounds of a video game or scrolling down Instagram for a few more minutes. However, once you begin sinking hours into these activities there is a problem.

Those who are addicted to the internet begin innocently enough by liking a few pictures on Facebook or retweeting a funny tweet on Twitter. Soon enough, the need to keep scrolling or playing takes over and the addiction kicks in. When hours have gone by without anything productive coming out of your internet use, you may be addicted to the internet.

2. You Stop Participating in Activities You Enjoy to Use the Internet

Another sign you may be addicted to the internet is when you begin to skip out on engagements or activities you used to enjoy. When the internet becomes more important than your favorite hobby, there is an issue with your use. You become alone and isolated when using the internet for extended periods of time as it is generally a solitary activity.

It may not seem like a big deal that you missed out on your last workout to look at a fitness inspiration tag instead. Maybe you skipped your painting class this week because you were preoccupied with online engagements. Addictions take over your life quicker than you realize, and soon you will look around and realize that you have completely separated yourself from what you used to enjoy.

Most, if not all, of your entertainment now comes from the internet.

3. All of Your Friends Are Online

The internet is helpful in connecting people worldwide but it should not be the only form of socialization you have. Although you may have plenty of friends online, no electronic communication substitutes for face-to-face contact. When you start to avoid dinner with your parents or skip out on going out with friends to hang out with internet acquaintances, these are signs you may be addicted to the internet.

It's easy to build up a life online. With the anonymity of the internet you can be whoever you want to be. You can make yourself skinnier, taller, bigger, stronger, faster. You might have an entire persona built up online that completely mismatches with your real-life self. When you have no one to communicate with in person, you may begin to identify only with this online character you created.

Without the emotional connection with others in your real life, your emotional capacity becomes stunted. It becomes more difficult to carry out conversations in person or to relate with someone who isn't behind a screen. If you notice this happening in your life, this is a sign you may be addicted to the Internet.

4. You Neglect Sleep in Order to Stay Online

Sleep is one of the most important aspects of human health. Addicts neglect the basic functions of life in order to carry on with their addiction. Though you may not drink yourself to the point of alcohol poisoning or snort lines in the evening, your actions are still impacting your health.

By neglecting sleep, you take a toll on your body. After extended periods of sleepless nights, the detriment to your wellbeing is noticeable. You will lack focus during the day or may even find yourself falling asleep at your desk. If this has become a problem in your life, it is another sign you may be addicted to the internet.