
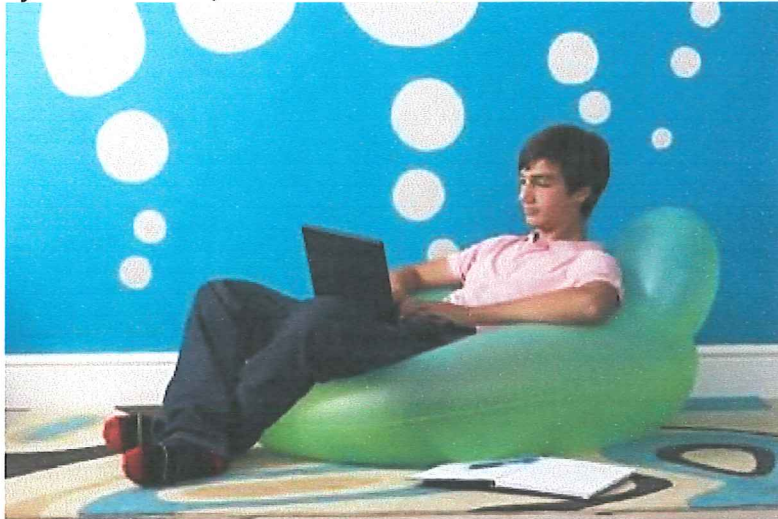


Technology Addiction in Teens

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by Damon Verial, Demand Media 



Teens addicted to technology often neglect their school work.

Many of today's teens spend much of their time with their faces buried in a computer monitor or smart phone. Moms and dads who would prefer that their teens' faces were buried in books might suspect the cause of this phenomenon is technology addiction. However, parents need to understand the specific symptoms of technology addiction before making a judgment.

Definition

Kimberly Young, director of the Center for Internet Addiction Recovery and author of "Internet Addiction: A Handbook and Guide to Evaluation and Treatment," defines technology addiction as a habitual compulsion to engage in using technology instead of addressing life's problems. For example, a teen who instinctively pulls out her smart phone whenever her mom begins lecturing her might be addicted to technology because such a reaction is likely a coping mechanism to avoid conflict. Long-term compulsions, even those that are not physically addictive such as Internet use, can lead to psychological problems such as insomnia, irritability and depression.

Attractiveness of Technology

Teens are particularly susceptible to technology addiction for several reasons. First, teens tend to have poor coping mechanisms. In the face of stress, they often turn to what's comforting to them, usually something easy to focus on, including online videos or social media sites. The increased convenience and widespread availability of technology makes it easy for a teen to whip out a mobile device and switch her focus from the real world to the virtual world. Also, in the teen years, self-identity is crucial. Most teens struggle with understanding who they are and how to present themselves. One attraction of technologies such as online video games and the Internet is the anonymity it brings, allowing teens to express themselves without putting their ego at risk.

Risks

Technology addiction can have several negative effects on a teen. The attractiveness of anonymity, for example, might pull a teen away from social engagement. After all, a teen might embarrass himself at a party, but that's something not easily done online. Such an avoidance of social settings, in combination with the draw of the Internet, could lead to a teen shutting himself off from his peers. This also leaks into family life. A teen who overuses technology or uses technology to cope with problems might refuse to engage in family discourse or family activities in favor of using the newest gadget or phone application. And, as in addicted adults, addiction can affect a teen's work and academic performance. A teen who rushes to get online after school neglects his homework. A teen who is texting in class neglects the lecture.

Characteristics of Addiction

Enjoying technology on a frequent basis does not necessarily mean your teen is addicted to technology. According to Young, less than 5 percent of teens suffer from a technology addiction. Many of the signs of addiction are behavioral. For example, compulsions to use technology in favor of rare and exciting life events, such as parties or vacations, might signify addiction. In addition, attitude changes in your teen might be cause for alarm; sudden depression, loss of self-esteem, and problems paying attention are symptoms of Internet addiction.

References

- [Internet Addiction: A Handbook and Guide to Evaluation and Treatment; Kimberly S. Young and Cristiano Nabuco de Abreu](#)

Resources

- [Cyberbullying Research Center: Emotional and Psychological Consequences](#)

About the Author

Damon Verial has been writing since 2001. Verial is an applied psychologist with specialties in evolutionary psychology, relationships and attachment theory. His thesis investigates the evolutionary adaptations of sex differences and preferences.

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