

How Do You Know if You Have an Internet Addiction?



5

Warning Signs

Can you imagine life without the internet? Computers and the internet have revolutionised so much of modern life that it is hard to remember living without them. The internet has immense benefits for productivity, connectivity, and knowledge. Yet, as with any technology, improper usage can result in problems for individuals and the culture at large.

Problems with internet usage are classified into three types by *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, Fifth Edition*: gaming; sexual or pornographic; and email, text, or instant messaging. Each of these three subtypes shares four key characteristics. First is excessive use; this is understood as use which interferes with essential life functions, and is associated with a loss of a sense of time. Second is withdrawal when computer use is unavailable. Third is tolerance, referring to the need for more use and better quality of technology. Fourth is negative outcomes, which may involve adverse effects on relationships, work, school, and health.

Correct diagnosis requires a trained professional. However, it can be helpful to know some warning signs that you may have a problem. The following are some common indicators that might indicate your computer usage is addictive.



1

Losing track of time. It's easy to lose track of time when staring into a screen. It happens to everyone, but if you find yourself lost in cyberspace for extended periods of time, or frequently, it's an important indicator of addiction.



2

Social isolation. Do you feel separate from those around you as a result of your internet usage? Do you neglect your friends and family in order to spend time online? When your internet usage becomes a barrier to socialising, it can mean you have a problem.



3

Difficulty with daily life. A few dishes left in the sink or an unmade bed is not a cause for alarm. However, if you find that you have consistent trouble fulfilling home and work obligations due to internet usage, you may want to consider how it is affecting your life.



4

Usage for escape. Do you feel more at home online than in real life? Is using the computer the highlight of your day? If you find that using the internet is a great source of pleasure and your primary way to relieve stress, your usage may be problematic.



5

Guilt and defensiveness. Often, when people have an addiction, they have an internal feeling that something is amiss. Alternatively, when friends and family are critical, the addict may become defensive and deny any sort of problem. If you find that this occurs in association with your internet usage, you may find that your usage is an issue in your life.

When concerned about any addiction, it is important to receive qualified and professional treatment. At The Cabin, we believe that addiction is a treatable disease. If you are concerned about your internet usage, we recommend you seek professional counselling.