Internet Addiction: The Upcoming Storm
Why Internet Addiction Matters to Your Family

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Do you know someone who spends hours daily playing World of Warcraft? How about a teenager who is on Facebook until the early hours of the morning? It is not uncommon to see teenagers texting to their friends during dinner, or even in the classroom. While the Internet has given us the ability to access almost unlimited information, it can also be addictive and dangerous.

No One is Immune

In March of 2010; a city councilman in Bulgaria was removed from office for playing Farmville using city property. His defense? He needed to match the level of others on the council. During the same time a South Korean couple let their three month-old daughter starve to death while they played an online game where they raised a virtual, fake child. Online gaming addiction is so severe in South Korea lawmakers are proposing a law to limit online access to minors from midnight to 6 AM. Internet Addiction is becoming a serious problem throughout the world, and could impact you and your family.

Warning Signs

If you suspect someone you know may have a problem managing their time online, below is a list of warning signs which often occur for someone who is addicted to the Internet.

- An excessive amount of time online spent on recreational pursuits. (Games, Chatting, Facebook, etc.).
- Neglect of responsibilities (work, school, duties at home).
- Sharp increase of Internet only relationships.
- Decline of real world relationships.
- Obsessive thoughts of what will occur once online.

If most of this list applies to you or someone you know; the Internet has become problematic. Without focusing on the needs the Internet supplies, problems will continue.

Needs

Like most addictions, excessive time online fulfills a need that is missing. For example, someone who spends time in an online game may feel powerful and important within the game, while in the real world they feel alone and invisible. The needs involved will differ for each person; however fulfillment of these needs is the key to ending the addiction. In the example above, if real world friendships are created and fostered, feelings of self-worth and acceptance will replace the need of the game.

Ending the Addiction

In overcoming Internet Addiction, I help my clients go through a series of stages which help to end the addiction:

- Accepting the problem with the motivation to change.
- Identify the needs supplied by the Internet and how they came to be.
- Finding healthy alternatives to supplies these needs.
- Learning to use the Internet in a healthy manner.

If you feel you need help ending the addiction, myself or a qualified therapist will help you move through these stages.

The Upcoming Storm

With the increase in computing power and the availability of the Internet, the problem of Internet Addiction is growing. As content becomes more interactive the likelihood of addiction will increase. It is important as a society to acknowledge the existence of Internet Addiction. For you and your family, take notice of the warning signs and do not delay if a problem develops, as Internet Addiction can be just as destructive any other addiction.

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