



News you can use...from your EAP

When Does Internet Use Become a Problem?

According to a study by researchers at Stanford University School of Medicine, one out of eight Americans exhibited at least one possible sign of problematic internet use. The researchers found that:

- 13.7 percent (more than one out of eight respondents) found it hard to stay away from the internet for several days at a time
- 12.4 percent stayed online longer than intended very often or often
- 12.3 percent had seen a need to cut back on internet use at some point
- 8.7 percent attempted to conceal non-essential internet use from family, friends and employers
- 8.2 percent used the internet as a way to escape problems or relieve a negative mood
- 5.9 percent felt their relationships suffered as a result of excessive internet use

According to Elias Aboujaoude, MD, lead author of the study, a small but growing number of internet users are starting to visit their doctors for help with unhealthy attachments to cyberspace. He said these patients' strong drive to compulsively use the internet to check emails, make blog entries or visit websites or chat rooms, is not unlike what sufferers of substance abuse or impulse-control disorders experience: a repetitive, intrusive and irresistible urge to perform an act that may be pleasurable in the moment but that can lead to significant problems on the personal and professional levels.

While online pornography and online gambling have received the most media attention, the Stanford study concluded that users are as likely to use other websites, including chat rooms, shopping venues and special-interest websites.

Do you have a problem?

Whether your internet use can be termed an "addiction" or not, it's most important to determine if your internet use is causing any disruption in your life. Do you find yourself spending more and more time online at a greater and greater cost to your real life? Is your internet use causing problems in your relationships, family, at work or school? If your excessive use of the internet is causing problems in other important areas of your life, then your internet use is a problem.

What to do

Recognizing and admitting that your excessive use of the internet is negatively impacting your life is the first step toward overcoming it. You can build the strength to overcome your problem, develop alternatives to it, and learn to live a healthy and full life.

To obtain no cost counseling or other EAP services, please call **800-869-0276** or securely request services from the Member Access section of the EAP website: www.eapconsultants.com