

Why Is the Internet Addicting?

It's there. You can have a free account. You have lots of access, with computer labs scattered throughout campus. You may already be on the computer to write a paper for class, to send a paper by modem to a professor, to research a topic, or to communicate by e-mail with friends, family, or other students.

Comfort factor. Using the computer may seem like a safe and easy way to make relationships. On our large campus, dealing with the crowds can be intimidating.

Something to do. When you are bored, feeling down, or feeling anxious, getting on the computer may give you something to keep your mind busy.

Fantasy. When you go to a chat room, get on e-mail, or use a "MUD" (Multi-User Dungeon), you have the opportunity to pretend to be a different type of person than you usually are. It gives you a chance to explore different ways to be. After a while, you may get to know others on line, and you are greeted warmly by others in this on-line community. Conversely, you can also take out rage with fewer ramifications.

You never know what you'll find. Getting on the Net, you may get some great e-mail, or you may stumble into a cool, new web site. Similar to people who gamble at slot machines, this possibility of getting an unlikely "reward" can be highly addicting.

What's going on? When you go to a chat room and "lurk" (just watch what others type), you have an opportunity to see what others are talking about without having to participate.

No one knows what you look like. On-line, all the common concerns about having to look a certain way to be popular are thrown out the window. Whether you are different in any way physically, it doesn't matter. All that matters is what you type.

Relationships with real people can be scary. Having on-line relationships can be much "safer." If you don't like someone, you can likely avoid them. If you do like someone, the on-line "relationship" can seem less real and less intimidating.

Other Dangers of Internet Addiction:

- Chat addiction -- spending too many hours chatting, to the point where other important tasks (even sleep!) are ignored, creating problems in one's life
- Chat romances- security risks taken in meeting people encountered in chat rooms or through e-mail
- Sexual compulsion with pornographic chat rooms, web pages, and usenet groups