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

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