



## STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

### Internet, Smartphone & Social Media Addiction

By Sean Andress

Our society needs to be connected and to have information accessible instantaneously. The internet, smartphones and social media have fulfilled this need. In today's world, it is rare to walk down a street or eat in a restaurant and not see someone using a smartphone. There is no argument that the internet, smartphones and social media have benefitted our society in different ways. However, as use of these devices continues to grow, some individuals will also be negatively impacted.

Studies have found that the internet, smartphones and social media all have the potential to negatively impact individuals and usage of these devices can develop into addictions for some people. Studies have reported internet addiction to be associated with depression, stress, anxiety and suicidality. Internet addiction has also been found to negatively impact academic performance among university students. Another study has reported smartphone addiction to be linked to insomnia, depressions and symptoms of ADHD. Finally, social media addiction has been connected to depression, anxiety, psychological distress and low self-esteem.

I personally believe only an individual can determine if a behavior is problematic. I say this because if an individual does not believe their behavior is problematic, then there will be a lack of motivation and commitment for change.

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### Questions to ask yourself

- Are you preoccupied with the internet, social media or your smartphone?
- Has your time spent on the internet, social media, or smart phone increased to gain satisfaction?
- Have you made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop use of the Internet, social media, or smart phone?
- Are you restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to control use?
- Do you stay on the internet, social media, or your smart phone longer than intended?
- Is there an increased reliance of social media to cope with problems?
- Do you find yourself using your smart phone during other activities such as hanging out with friends and family?

### Steps to cope

- Admit there is a problem.
- Limit screen time.
- Seek therapy.
- Socialize.
- Take a 'screen fast'. (completely avoid all screens for a duration of time)
- Set allotted times for use of phones, tablets, or computers.
- Make phone less appealing. (turning off notifications and changing screen to grey scale)

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