

Technology Addiction



My Drift

Title: Technology Addiction

Written by: Jerry D. Petersen

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Have you noticed lately that most everybody (especially young people) are spending a lot of time looking at their smartphones, playing video games and/or doing something on their computers?



What is Technology Addiction?

We can define technology addiction as a kind of impulse control disorder in which the person is exposed to the harmful effects of technology as a result of excessive use of computers, the Internet, video games and mobile devices (like your smartphone). It is also an umbrella term for game addiction, computer addiction and Internet addiction. Yes, the Internet is the “800-pound gorilla in the technology addiction room!”

What Is Internet Addiction?

We can define the term internet addiction as another umbrella term as well. It covers a range of behaviors and impulse-control problems involving the Internet. It can be in the form of a gaming disorder, social media addiction, porn addiction, gambling addiction, online shopping addiction, and so on.

Technology addiction absolutely includes Internet addiction, but Internet addiction is just a part of technology addiction.



Wait a minute. *You have never heard the expression, “800-pound gorilla in the room”? This is an American English expression for a person or organization so powerful that it can act without regard to the rights of others or the law.*

Technology addictions are often overlooked due to the acceptance that society has placed on using digital devices. Technology addictions often go unnoticed by loved ones because the addicted individual may appear as though they are tending to something important such as work-related tasks on their digital device, when in reality hiding behind the screen is something else that can become addictive.

Technology addiction may easily be brushed off as an overreaction to today’s dependency on electronic devices, but a lot of cases of the said condition were proven to have serious implications. In fact, psychiatrists have included “technology addiction” and “internet addiction” in their manual of mental disorders. Likewise, several facilities dedicated to treating these types of addiction have opened in the United States since 2013.

Smartphone addiction is the most prevailing type of technology/internet addiction, so much so that the inability to use the gadget has spruced up its own phobia (nomophobia). As the stats below suggest, people bring their smartphones just about everywhere and there is a selection of apps for any type of activity, which is why mobile phones have easily penetrated nearly every aspect of our life.

Furthermore, this gadget appeals to people of all ages and is one of the most predominant platforms for entertainment. Meanwhile, its portability gives it an edge over other devices like laptops and tablets, allowing users to slide it into their pockets or bags. Also, phone brands release upgrades every year, so the high usage rate of smartphones won't be losing steam anytime soon.

Facts and Statistics

Here are some updated internet and technology addiction facts and statistics that will help you gain a better understanding of the current situation:

- ✚ More than 90% of teenagers use social media and play video games—two of the most addictive forms of technology.
- ✚ More than half of all teens admit that they feel addicted to their smartphones.
- ✚ Every day, 81% of U.S. adults use the internet.
- ✚ As of 2020, 5.2 billion people world-wide (67% of the world population) own at least one mobile phone. And more than 4.5 billion of these people use the internet on a daily basis.
- ✚ Active social media users have passed the 3.8 billion mark.
- ✚ Children are introduced to the internet as early as age 3.
- ✚ 66% of U.S. adults say the internet is an essential part of their life.
- ✚ Many children at the age of 12 or younger own a social media account.
- ✚ An average person spends about 6 hours a day on the internet.

Types of Technology and Internet Addiction

Video Game Addiction



Warning signs of problem video gaming

These problems can happen whether you play online or offline. Here's what to look for:

- ✚ Thinking about gaming all or a lot of the time.
- ✚ Feeling bad when you can't play.
- ✚ Needing to spend more and more time playing to feel good.
- ✚ Not being able to quit or even play less.
- ✚ Not wanting to do other things that you used to like.
- ✚ Having problems at work, school, or home because of your gaming.
- ✚ Playing despite these problems.
- ✚ Lying to people close to you about how much time you spend playing.
- ✚ Using gaming to ease bad moods and feelings.

Video game addiction data show that an average person plays video or computer games for about 6 hours a week, but an addict will play an average of 6 or more hours per day.

Online Gambling Addiction



The word addiction comes from a Latin term meaning “bound to” or “enslaved by.” And anyone who has suffered/suffers from an addiction—or has tried to help someone with an addiction—can attest to the powerful, prolonged grip it exerts; the personal, professional, and other damage it causes; and the challenges to quitting.

This is especially true of online gambling, which is diagnosed according to the same criteria as “traditional” in-person gambling. Features such as 24/7 availability, however, make it potentially more addictive and harder to recover from than gambling at a casino or another physical location. The internet also has made gambling accessible to minors who typically would be identified as underage at a physical betting establishment. Consequently, it has spawned a new generation of problem gamblers: teens and young adults, particularly young men.

Definition and Risks of Gambling Addiction

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), the American Psychiatric Association's classification for psychiatric disorders, a person can be diagnosed as having a gambling addiction when at least 4 of the following are present:

1. Preoccupation with gambling (such as reliving past gambling experiences, planning one's next gambling session, or devising ways of getting the necessary money to gamble).
2. A need to spend greater amounts of money in order to achieve the desired level of excitement.
3. Multiple unsuccessful attempts to reduce or stop gambling.
4. Irritability and restlessness when trying to quit gambling habits.
5. Gambling as a way of avoiding problems or temporarily improving one's mood.
6. Returning to gambling after losses as a way of earning back lost money (referred to as "chasing losses").
7. Lying to family members, friends, employers and others in an attempt to cover up time spent or money lost while gambling.
8. Significant relationship, job and/or academic difficulties.
9. Relying on others for money in order to get out of a desperate financial situation caused by gambling.

If a problem gambler spends several days in a row at a casino or racetrack, his/her absence is likely to be noticed. Online gamblers can play via computer or mobile device at work, home, or anywhere there's an internet connection at any time of day without being missed or revealing what they're doing.

Like people suffering from alcohol or drug addiction, compulsive gamblers are at high risk for serious social, work-related, financial, emotional, and even legal and physical problems. Compulsive gambling has been linked to a range of mental and physical health issues such as depression, anxiety/panic disorder, poor general health (drug, alcohol, and nicotine dependence) and in extreme cases, suicide.

Gamblers aren't the only ones hurt by their behavior. Family members often suffer problems such as stress-related physical and mental illness (e.g., headaches, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression), loss of trust, domestic violence, severe financial hardship, and breakdown of the family structure. Children with parents who have gambling problems are up to 10 times more likely to develop gambling problems themselves than children whose parents aren't gamblers.

Social Media Addiction

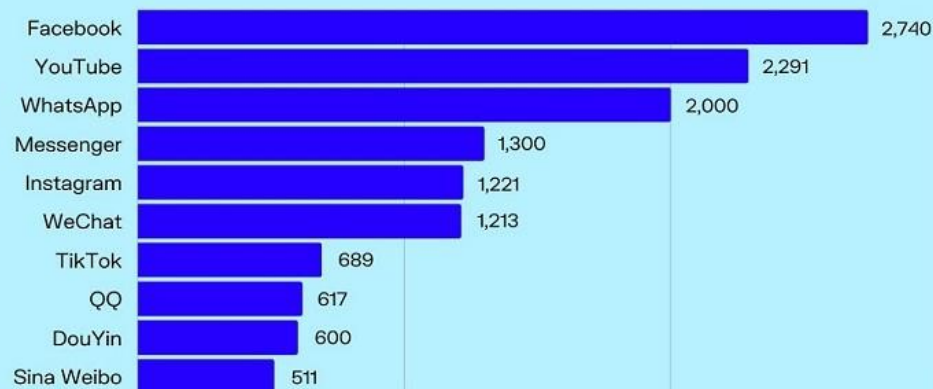


What is social media?

The term “social media” refers to any website or mobile application that allows users to create and share content, communicate with one another, and participate in social networking. The first social networking platforms were created in the late 1990s, with the most popular sites appearing on the internet in the early to mid-2000s.

Some of the most popular social media platforms today include Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter. Different platforms operate in unique ways, with their own features, interface designs, and social etiquette. For example, Instagram is a primarily picture-based platform, while Twitter users must compose their content within a constraint of 280 characters or less.

Most Popular Social Media Platforms in 2021 (in Millions)



What is Social Media Addiction?

Overusing social media can be a serious problem. Social media addiction is a psychological condition that compels someone to be overly concerned about social media, spending so much time on these platforms that it impacts other aspects of their life.

If you have a social media addiction, you may feel an uncontrollable urge to log on to these sites multiple times per day. You may devote so much time and energy to post and engage with other users that you neglect to take care of yourself. In some cases, you may engage in risky behaviors in order to gain attention on social media. For example, many social media users like to post selfies – the more interesting the better. Here are a few I wouldn't do or recommend.



What does selfies stand for? SELFIE means "Self-taken Camera Picture." A “selfie” is a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media.

You may also notice that you begin to use social media more and more as time goes on, developing a tolerance to your usual consumption. When you stop using social media, you may experience unpleasant withdrawal symptoms until you can log on again.

Studies have found that Social Media Sites can be just as addictive as drugs



Signs social media is negatively impacting you

There are healthy and unhealthy ways to use social media. However, the nature of these platforms leaves us vulnerable to toxic environments, thoughts, and emotions. If social media is having a negative impact on your mental health and affecting your daily life, you need to step away from all social media sites and/or seek help. Here are some of the signs:

- + You find yourself comparing your life to other people's social media posts often, and experience serious FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) when you see others posting about their social life or accomplishments.**
- + You feel like you are not as successful or as important as other people you see on social media, and you begin to think negatively about yourself due to these comparisons.**
- + You seek validation from social media and feel sad or depressed if you do not receive as many likes or as much interaction as you expect when you post.**
- + You can't stay away from social media, as much as you try to limit your use. Your social media accounts are the first thing you check in the morning, and the last thing you look at before you go to bed.**
- + You find it difficult to fall asleep at night. The blue light from phone screens interferes with our body's circadian rhythm, which controls when we feel sleepy and alert. Scrolling through social media before bed can make it difficult for your brain to relax enough for you to fall asleep.**

Online Shopping Addiction



Nowadays, online businesses always seem to know what we want and how to nudge us toward their shopping carts, even when we are just browsing on Facebook or searching for something else. That pair of shoes you looked at last week pops up in the corner of your screen like a stealth shopping mousetrap.

Targeted and sponsored online ads are trying to capitalize on a concept that scientists call “cue-reactivity,” or excitement from shopping cues. In order to get us to press the buy button, businesses first must grab our attention and then make us interested enough to click on it. This momentum depends both on how excited we get when we see the item and also whether it can cause a craving, an irresistible desire to purchase.

Both of these concepts—cue-reactivity and cravings—come from the field of behavioral addiction, which includes problems like gambling and cybersex addiction. Shopping addiction has many names—pathological buying, compulsive buying, buying addiction, and oniomania. An estimated 5 to 8% of Americans are thought to suffer from shopping addiction.



Here are 10 signs of compulsive online shopping:

1. I feel like I can't stop online shopping even if I wanted to and/or have tried to stop without being able to.
2. Online shopping has hurt my relationships, work, or financial situation.
3. My partner, family members, or friends are concerned about my online shopping. I end up in arguments with them over it.
4. I think about online shopping all the time.
5. I get grumpy or upset if I can't shop online.
6. Online shopping is the only thing that helps me relax or feel better.
7. I hide things that I buy because I'm afraid other people will think it's unreasonable or a waste of money.
8. I often feel guilty after I go online shopping.
9. I spend less time doing other things that I enjoy because of online shopping.
10. I often buy things that I don't need or much more than I planned, even when I can't afford it.

Is shopping addiction a mental illness?

It's described as the compulsion to spend money, regardless of need or financial means. While many people enjoy shopping as a treat or as a recreational activity, compulsive shopping is a mental health disorder and can cause severe consequences.

Cybersex and Pornography Addiction



Porn addiction involves obsessive and compulsive watching of porn, and often coincides with excessive masturbation, hypersexual disorder, and an emotional dependency to porn. Oftentimes porn addiction results in an individual's sex

life becoming less satisfying and becoming less interested in real sexual engagement. As such, porn addiction often results in real life relationships deteriorating. Excessive porn usage often results in feelings of shame, guilt, loneliness, sadness, and frustration.



Cybersex addiction activities include not only viewing and/or downloading pornography along with masturbation, but also reading and writing sexually explicit letters and stories, e-mailing to set up personal meetings with someone, placing ads to meet sexual partners, visiting sexually oriented chat rooms, and engaging in interactive online affairs which include real-time viewing of each other using electronic cameras hooked up to the computer. Many people allow themselves to engage in sexual behaviors online which they would never do in the real world. Spin-offs of cybersex activities are phone sex with people met online, and online affairs that progress to real or offline affairs. A cybersex addict is an Internet user for whom the allure of cybersex has become uncontrollable.

Cybersex addiction is like other addictions such as alcohol or drugs or compulsive gambling since it's a problem with the brain. However, most people with these other addictions learn from their mistakes and then go on to make responsible choices. Cybersex addicts keep making the same bad and destructive choices because they don't want to give up the neuro-chemical high their compulsive behavior gives them.

Cybersex addiction is indiscriminate. Ministers and cops, housewives and business executives, fathers and mothers, men and women, young and old, married and single, rich and poor, have confessed that their behavior is often out of control when it comes to sex and the Internet.

Alright, those are the 5 primary Technology and Internet Addictions but there are more – I will list 4 more without a lot of details.

Stock Trading Addiction



Trading in the financial markets is stimulating, exciting, and engrossing. But you can become addicted, just like with actual casino gambling or using illicit drugs. Like any severe addiction, trading addiction can cost you socially and economically.

Texting Addiction



Texting while driving can be deadly!

Compulsive texting is like any other addiction and symptoms include feeling the need to interact constantly with your phone, skipping schoolwork and chores in favor of texting, and losing sleep over these digital messages.

Smartphone Addiction



Smartphone addiction, sometimes colloquially known as “nomophobia” (fear of being without a mobile phone), is often fueled by an Internet overuse problem or Internet addiction disorder. After all, it’s rarely the phone or tablet itself that creates the compulsion, but rather the games, apps, and online worlds it connects us to.

Information overload. Compulsive web surfing, watching videos, playing games, or checking news feeds can lead to lower productivity at work or school and isolate you for hours at a time. Compulsive use of the Internet and smartphone apps can cause you to neglect other aspects of your life, from real-world relationships to hobbies and social pursuits.

Dating Sites Addiction



Looking for love can become addictive. While dating apps such as Tinder, Hinge and Bumble were developed to help people find each other, researchers have found that singles suffering from loneliness and social anxiety are more likely to start compulsively using such apps. **Yes, loneliness and dating apps are usually a bad match!**

Why are Technology Addictions Dangerous?

Contrary to popular belief, technology addictions can be extremely dangerous and contribute to various neurological, psychological, and social problems. In extreme cases digital addictions can even be fatal. Although fatality resulting from a digital addiction is rare, it does happen. Most commonly fatal cases result from individuals engaging in digital usage during high-risk behaviors such as driving a motor vehicle or taking pictures/video for social media content on cliffs, bridges, or other threatening places that can result in death with one wrong step. There have also been extremely rare instances of individuals engaging with technology use for long durations of time without eating, drinking or sleeping for days on end that resulted in death.



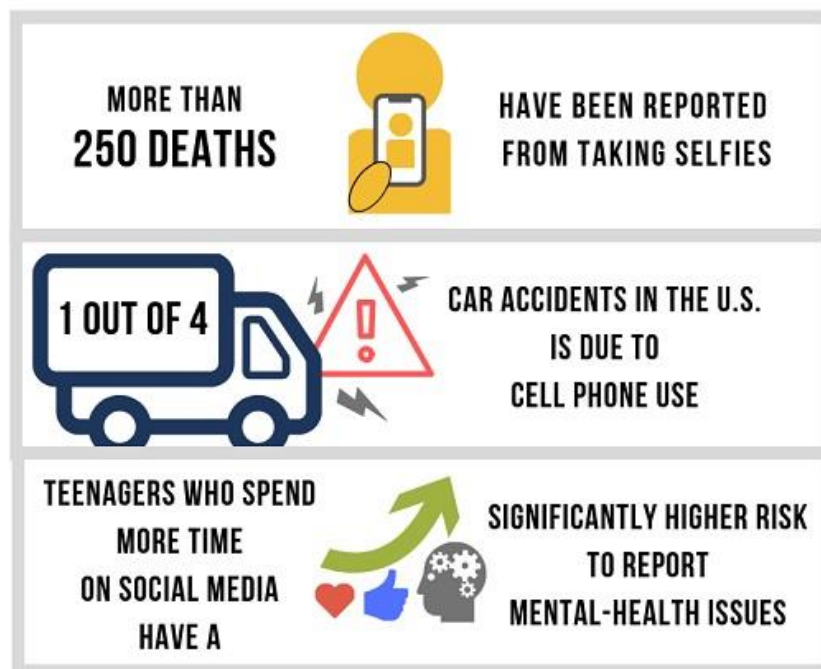
More commonly, technology addictions effect individuals and families in other destructive and dangerous ways. For example, technology addictions can have detrimental effects on individual's career or education as they spend their time engaging in digital usage rather than focusing on school- or work-related tasks. Technology addiction can lead to procrastination and avoidance of work. Technology addictions can also impede on relationships as the individual loses interest in socializing or communication at the expense of their digital device. Technology is a breeding ground for isolation.

Technology addictions can have a severe impact on one's mental health, exacerbating or contributing to anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as well as other disorders. Technology addiction also can lead to restlessness, irritability, agitation, and anger. Furthermore, technology addiction can impact the brain's ability to produce natural feel-good neurotransmitters such as dopamine, as well as lead to increased impulsivity.



Depression

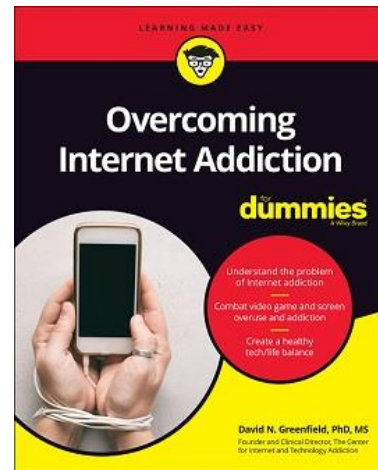
Technology addiction can also lead to severe physical health problems such as headaches, weight gain or loss, backaches, and carpal tunnel syndrome. Oftentimes digital dependencies can also lead to insomnia or poor sleep-hygiene, which can then also contribute to exacerbating underlying mental health conditions and increased stress levels. Excessive digital usage can also impede on physical health as a result of poor nutrition, lack of physical exercise, and inadequate self-care.



What is the Treatment for a Technology Addiction?

The first step of treating a technology addiction is the individual's awareness of the problem, and a desire to want to get help. This is often the most challenging step for the individual. Oftentimes the problem is realized by family and friends who may seek out help on behalf of the individual. In many cases an intervention is needed in order to assist the individual into recognition of the problem and help them initiate treatment. If the individual is motivated the issue can resolve itself with self-corrective behaviors, screen-life balance, and assistance from technological innovations that help with technology moderation such as by enabling app restrictions or WiFi restrictions, turning off notifications, enabling "Do Not Disturb" mode, setting up automatic email/text responses, enabling automatic downtime, blocking apps or websites, using screen time reports, and other such innovations that can help curb digital use.

For those that may need to seek professional help from an addiction therapist there are different types of treatment available for technology addictions. Since each individual is unique with their own set of circumstances, history, and symptoms it is important to find a treatment approach that works for each respective individual, and tailor it to meet their needs. It will be important to address the contributing factors that led a technology addiction such as neurological imbalances, underlying mental health issues, and environmental stressors.



If reading this book doesn't work, seek professional help

Some common types of treatment for technology addiction include Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Reality Therapy (RT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), experiential adventure-based therapy, mindfulness-based relapse prevention, and behavioral modification. Therapy may be carried out as individual therapy, family therapy, group therapy or a combination of the three using a multimodal treatment approach. Pharmacological interventions may also be used to address underlying mental health issues. Holistic and wellness-based treatments are often encouraged focusing on meditation, nutrition, physical exercise, nature, and other natural remedies. Although there are inpatient residential treatment options available for technology addictions, treatment is generally done on an outpatient basis.

Some Final Statistics

Percentage of Technology/Internet Addicts Across Different Age Groups

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
18-29 years	48%
30-49 years	36%
50-64 years	19%
65+ years	7%

Some Final Thoughts

So, are you a Technology or Internet Addict? Am I an addict? Let's find out.

#1 Video Game Addiction. I don't play video games. The only games I play on my computer are the ones I programmed. I don't play games on my iPhone.

#2 Online Gambling Addiction. I don't gamble online. About the only gambling I do now days is to bet a beer or two with friends on football or basketball games.

#3 Social Media Addiction. I don't do social media. Period! I talk to my small number of friends and family by telephone, text, and email.

#4 Online Shopping Addiction. I have never purchased anything online in my life. I hate shopping!

#5 Cybersex and Pornography Addiction. Well, I will have to admit to stumbling across a few porn websites in my day. I didn't know what cybersex was until I did the research for this article. I thought cybersex and pornography were the same thing. When I was young, there were no computers and no Internet – the closest I came to seeing porn was looking at a Playboy magazine.

#6 Stock Trading Addiction. I have no stocks.

#7 Texting Addiction. I average 5 or 6 texts a day. I find texting easier than making a telephone call. At my age, most of my texts are answering friends and family who are wondering if I'm still alive. I don't text while driving.

#8 Smartphone Addiction. According to that weekly message I get, my iPhone average daily facetime is around 1.5 hours. I admit to being somewhat attached to my iPhone and carry it around during the day. I mostly use it to Google stuff I can't remember and to learn new things. Having an iPhone in case of an emergency could save my life. For example, if I fall down or have a heart attack

while walking the dog, I can call somebody to come help me. At night, I put my iPhone on silent mode and hook it to the charger – away from my bed.

#9 Dating Sites Addiction. I have never visited a dating site.

So, what do you think? Am I an addict? I may have a beer addiction but probably not a technology addiction.



Bigdrifter44@gmail.com

Bigdrifter.com