

Electronics Addiction in Children and Young People

DEFINITIONS



UNHEALTHY

Electronic addiction is the physical, psychological, or spiritual dependence on devices or electronic activity. In most cases, the individual is not able to pause, stop, or disengage the interaction for any length of time. This builds internal thinking patterns that compromise a person's identity, emotions, and general performance, and hinders healthy relationships with friends, family, work, or God.



HEALTHY

Wise use of electronics gathers necessary and helpful information for use in life. It's a source of learning and problem solving. It provides quick and easy connection to friends and family. It delivers ways to collaborate with others and quickly interact on tasks and responsibilities. Cell phones are a servant, not a master. Other electronics should be turned off at times to limit their invasive nature.

FACT:

Almost all children and young people lack the internal strength of character to manage electronics.

NOTE THESE WARNING SIGNS THAT MAY INDICATE ELECTRONIC ADDICTION

1. Continually tired, sleep deprived, or maintaining poor sleep habits.
2. General negative attitude when interrupted or away from electronic stimulation.
3. Isolating oneself or resisting involvement in family, work, or school.
4. A pattern of hostility and anger towards others.
5. General anxiety or specific worry about friends, popularity, or acceptance.
6. Sadness, despair, or discouragement about life.
7. Obsessive, demanding, and controlling behaviors designed to protect screen time or electronic engagement.

FACT:

If young children turn to electronics when bored it robs them of the creativity and brain stimulation they would otherwise use.

FACT:

Electronics have no discernment and thus interrupt social experiences like meals, riding in the car, and family time.

TYPES OF ELECTRONIC USE THAT CREATE CHALLENGES AND CONTRIBUTE TO ADDICTION

COMMUNICATION WITH FRIENDS

Texting and using apps to carry on conversations with friends.

ENTERTAINMENT

Watching movies, shows, or apps such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, or Instagram as amusement activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Posting, reading, searching, following, liking, and commenting on apps with friends and other people in groups or individual streams.

VIDEO GAMING

Playing games alone or with others through apps or on the internet.

PORNOGRAPHY

Watching sexually explicit material and feeding sexual desires.

SHOPPING

Looking at trends, styles, and fashion in order to increase one's ability to be accepted by others.

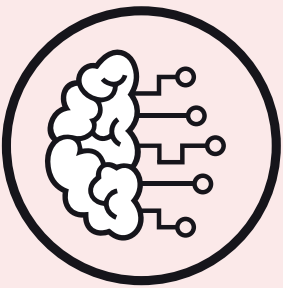
OTHER

Watching or listening to music, news, and radio.

FACT:

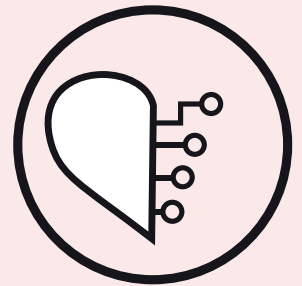
Many parents use electronics as a babysitter or to relieve them of parenting tasks, robbing children of other ways of entertaining or controlling themselves.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN AND THE HEART OF A PERSON WHO OVERINDULGES IN ELECTRONICS



1. Heightened stimulation in the brain creates constant fight/flight reactions triggering unhealthy emotional activity.
2. Chemical release and depletion in the brain are intensified requiring more electronic stimulation to remain at ease.
3. Electronic addiction increases emotional imbalance. Violent video gaming increases anger. Obsession with social media increases anxiety and depression.

4. With electronic overload, silence creates anxiety instead of peace. Boredom creates a vacuum that electronics easily fill instead of the stimulation that creativity provides.
5. Responsibilities are postponed or avoided delaying maturity or productivity.
6. Social media interactions lack the relational depth of face-to-face communication increasing loneliness and the feeling of not being relationally connected.
7. Electronics often open the pathways for worldliness to creep into hearts.



FACT:

Parents are often addicted to electronics making correction of children and young people difficult.

PARENTING SKILLS REQUIRED TO CHALLENGE OVERUSE OF ELECTRONICS

1.

Be firm without being harsh. Firmness builds character. Harshness damages relationship.

2.

Avoid taking a child's emotional antics personally. Your child has a problem and may try to use emotions to control the situation.

3.

Set limits confidently. Children who can't live within limits are generally discontent. Children who learn to accept no as an answer learn to deal with disappointment in a mature way.

4.

Use parental control when children don't have self control.

5.

Don't allow "everyone's doing it" or "you're the strictest parents" to deter you.

6.

Be prepared to handle conflict by refusing to interact with an angry child but willing to listen and teach when things are calm.

7.

Think past the present convenience to the bigger picture of health and balance.

SCRIPTURES TO CONSIDER

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

1 Corinthians 6:12

"Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me," but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

Titus 2:12

It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Proverbs 25:28

Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

1 Timothy 4:7

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

WHAT PARENTS MUST DO

1

Delay the onset of electronic activity. Avoid screen time with young children. Postpone smart phone use until later adolescence.

2

Inspire and require healthier forms of entertainment and comfort. Encourage creativity, reading, and physical activity.

3

Cell phones should be parked overnight, during meals, in the car, and during family time.

4

Set limits on the availability of electronics. Avoid electronic use in private places such as bedrooms. Put computers in common areas.

5

Teach children to be relationally available. When using headphones, keep one ear unoccupied when walking around the house or in common areas.

6

Set parental controls on home internet and cellular activity. Limit apps and content children and young people have access to.

7

Require accountability. Check up on internet history and text and social media interaction. Use apps to monitor electronic use. Both time and content can be reported to parents.

8

Continually teach about worldliness, danger, addiction, and socially appropriate conduct.

9

Plan family time and alternatives to electronic engagement including physical activity, games, service, and face-to-face interactions.

FACT:

Many parents give their children cell phones claiming safety as a primary motivation, not realizing the huge potential and likely dangers.

WHEN ELECTRONIC ADDICTION IS SEVERE

1. Consider a fast from electronics. Usually 3-5 weeks is required to return the brain and heart to a more healthy state.
2. Be firm, recognizing that resistance and emotional dramatics is a symptom of addiction.
3. Get help. Don't allow addiction to continue. Others are trained to support you as a parent and your young person.
4. Create new patterns that use electronics in moderation and prevent obsession, dependence, and fixation.
5. Infuse family life with healthy doses of spiritual and relational activity.

We live in an electronic age. Computers, cell phones, and gadgets can be used for good or can be a danger. Know the warning signs. Take action early. Be proactive. Help your children develop a healthy interaction with electronics to nurture their lives.

VISIT BIBLICALPARENTING.ORG

for more tips on raising your children
with attention on their hearts.