



Co-funded by
the European Union



IADliber

Project number: 2022-1-RO01-KA220-ADU-000087209



IADliber SURVIVAL KIT

A practical guide to understand Internet Addiction Disorder, practice Mindfulness with other methods of focus, develop critical assessment, and learn effective ways to talk with an addicted adult.



Centrum Wspierania
Edukacji
i Przedsiębiorczości



RightChallenge





IADliber Survival Kit

A practical guide to understand Internet Addiction Disorder, practice Mindfulness with other methods of focus, develop critical assessment, and learn effective ways to talk with an addicted adult.

1st Edition: September 2023.

Consortium IADliber – Raising competences of adult educators as a means for adults liberation from internet addiction disorder

Project number: 2022-1-RO01-KA220-ADU-000087209

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Front Cover Image: Towfiqu Barbhuiya

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Introduction

This e-book has been developed within the framework of the project IADliber (raising competences of adult educators as a means for adults' liberation from internet addiction disorder), No: 2022-1-RO01-KA220-ADU-000087209, financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme. This project has been implemented through a consortium of 7 organisations from 7 partner countries; these being ADES (Romania), CWEP (Poland), C4E (Spain), Rightchallenge (Portugal), Dekaplus (Cyprus), MECB (Malta), and GOI (Turkey).

The primary objective of this e-book is to equip adult educators with several essential education materials related to Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD); that can effectively aid their instructional efforts and serve as a valuable instrument for endowing adult learners with various skills based in mindfulness, other methods of focus, self-awareness, and the reliable assessment of situations.

Among the goals of this e-book is to present IAD through various real examples and to illustrate its prevalence throughout Europe. In addition, the document aims to highlight mindfulness and other methods of focus as key skills for the effective and informed use of the internet. The e-book also aspires to endow the reader with skills to effectively assess the veracity of information received online, impart knowledge on how to effectively communicate with addicted adults, whilst also addressing the various risks associated with the use of internet and technology. Moreover, the e-book emphasises media literacy as an essential competency for an informed citizen and delves into the impact emotions may have on the perception of information. The reader is also provided with information on online tools, applications and platforms that support mindfulness skills, raise awareness, and facilitated the prevention of IAD.

This e-book offers a practical guide that empowers adult educators to better understand IAD processes, fosters critical thinking within a digital environment, and provides effective ways to approach and engage individuals struggling with addiction. However, the document is provided for educational purposes only and is intended to offer guidance to adult educators.

Whilst the information contained in this e-book has been developed in consultation with professionals within the field, it is nonetheless crucial to highlight that the content of this e-book does not constitute professional advice, nor is it intended to replace the expertise and judgment of healthcare professionals, psychologists or other licensed practitioners. Individuals facing significant challenges related to IAD are strongly encouraged to seek assistance from qualified professions; such as licensed psychologists, counsellors, or medical practitioners. Furthermore, the information provided within this e-book does not constitute a comprehensive treatment plan for IAD. Every situation is unique to the individual and professional guidance is essential for tailored intervention strategies.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing severe symptoms of IAD, it is imperative to promptly consult with a qualified professional. This e-book is not a replacement for professional assessment, diagnosis, or treatment. The authors of this e-book disclaim any liability or responsibility for the consequences of actions taken based on the information presented herein. Readers are urged to consult with professionals before implementing any strategies discussed within this e-book. By accessing and reading this e-book, you acknowledge that you have read, understood, and agreed to the proper utilisation of this e-book.

Module 1

Techniques of Recognizing & Reacting to Internet Addiction

INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a psychological disorder that reflects repeated execution of behavior (e.g., drug use, gambling) that causes an individual clinically significant impairment (e.g., interference in social relationships) or distress (The American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

According to Cash et al. (2012) all addictions, whether chemical or behavioral, share certain characteristics, these include:

salience, compulsive use, mood modification and the alleviation of distress, tolerance and withdrawal, together with continuation despite negative consequences.

Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) refers to a condition characterized by excessive and compulsive internet use, leading to negative consequences in various aspects of an individual's life (The American Psychiatric Association,

2013). It involves a persistent pattern of internet-related behaviors that interfere with daily functioning, relationships, work or school obligations, and overall well-being. While there is no universally accepted definition for IAD, it typically involves symptoms such as preoccupation with internet use, loss of control over internet activities, withdrawal symptoms when not using the internet, neglect of other important activities, and experiencing negative consequences as a result of excessive internet use.

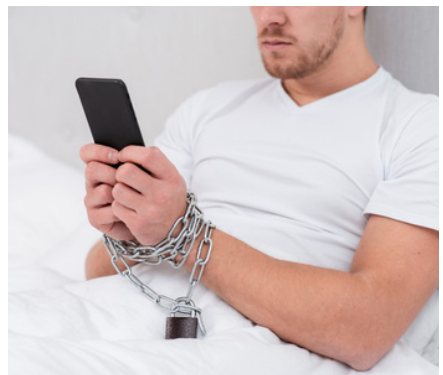


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Regarding internet addiction, research analysed suggests that general internet use can be addictive, and may be associated with a set of typical addiction symptoms:

- conflict at intrapersonal and interpersonal levels (e.g. lack of control over online behaviours, or the difficulty of preserving regular healthy social relationships in everyday life);
- salience (e.g. preoccupation with generalised internet use);
- tolerance (e.g. need for increasing use to be satisfied);
- functional impairment (e.g. when an aspect of life is detrimentally impacted because of internet use).

Furthermore, the research suggests that comorbidity, which means the presence of multiple co-occurring mental disorders, is common among individuals with internet addiction. These additional conditions can include anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorders. In essence, the reported symptoms of addiction and the presence of comorbidities can arise due to a complex interplay of individual factors, including motivations for internet use, cognitive patterns, coping strategies, attachment styles, and other personal characteristics.

Although WHO (World Health Organization), WPA (World Psychiatric Association) and APA (American Psychiatric Association) *have not included a formal disorder diagnosis for "Internet Addiction Disorder" (IAD) in their official classifications*, those with excessive use end up with increased emotional distress as stated by Erol and Cirak (2019).

Gaming addiction or gaming disorder is the problematic online behaviour which has seen the largest evidence base across all internet-use-related addictions:

The diagnostic manual published by the American Psychiatric Association, the DSM-5, (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) includes a condition called "Internet Gaming Disorder" (IGD) as a condition for further study. Internet Gaming Disorder refers specifically to problematic and excessive gaming behaviour, rather than a broader addiction to the internet as a whole (APA, 2013). As for the WHO, in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), internet addiction is included as "Gaming disorder" under the broader category of "Disorders due to addictive behaviors" (WHO, 2019).



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.1

Internet Reflection Journal

Rationale:

This exercise is designed to help individuals recognize the influence of the internet on their lives, emphasizing the potential negative consequences of excessive internet use. By reflecting on how the internet affects their mental health, relationships, and daily activities, participants can make more informed choices about their online behaviors. The goal of this exercise is to enhance self-awareness and encourage individuals to make more mindful decisions about their internet usage by understanding its potential effects on their lives.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Participants should engage in this exercise daily to encourage self-awareness and promote balanced internet usage.

Instructions:

1. Dedicate a few minutes each day to reflect on your internet usage and its potential impact on your life.
2. Consider the specific websites, apps, or activities that dominate your online time.
3. Reflect on how these digital activities may be affecting your mental health, relationships, and overall well-being.
4. Assess whether your online habits are preventing you from engaging in face-to-face interactions, pursuing hobbies, or maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Resources Needed:

- A journal or digital note-taking app for recording daily reflections.

Definition of Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD):

A persistent and recurrent use of the internet to engage in games, often with other players, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress as indicated by five (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:

- Preoccupation with internet games.
- Withdrawal symptoms when internet gaming is taken away.
- Tolerance: the need to spend increasing amounts of time engaged in internet games.
- Unsuccessful attempts to control participation in internet games.
- Loss of interests in previous hobbies and entertainment as a result of, and with the exception of internet games.
- Continued excessive use of internet games despite knowledge of psychosocial problems.
- Has deceived family members, therapists, or others regarding the amount of internet gaming.
- Use of the internet games to escape or relieve a negative mood.
- Has jeopardised or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of participation in internet games.



Image: Freepik



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.2

Healthy Digital Diet & Digital Nutrition

Rationale:

This exercise aims to prevent internet addiction by establishing clear guidelines for internet use within a family before acquiring internet services. It emphasizes the importance of a healthy digital diet and digital nutrition, ensuring that all family members are aware of the potential risks and benefits associated with internet access. By setting expectations and boundaries, this exercise fosters responsible internet usage and minimizes the risk of internet addiction.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Families should engage in this exercise before purchasing or setting up internet facilities in their homes to ensure a shared understanding of digital usage rules.

Instructions:

1. As a family, initiate a discussion about the importance of responsible internet usage and its potential impact on daily life.
2. Consider the specific online activities that family members wish to engage in and identify any potential risks associated with them.
3. Develop a digital usage agreement that outlines the rules and expectations for internet use within the household. This agreement may include time limits, acceptable websites, and guidelines for balancing online and offline activities.
4. Ensure that all family members are actively involved in creating and agreeing to the digital usage agreement.
5. Display the agreement prominently in the home as a visual reminder of the family's commitment to responsible internet use.

Resources Needed:

- A family meeting or discussion.
- Writing materials to draft the digital usage agreement.



DEFINITION: Internet Addiction Disorder

Since Internet Addiction Disorder is a relatively new and evolving area of study in the field of mental health, the definition and criteria for IAD may vary across different sources and professional opinions.

Some experts have adopted a less controversial phrase to describe the issue of Internet addiction (IA), referring to it as "problematic Internet use" (PIU). In a significant multi-country study funded by the European Union, the terms "Internet addictive behavior" (IAB) and "dysfunctional Internet behavior" (DIB) were used to distinguish between IA and problematic Internet use. Additionally, some researchers employ the term "compulsive Internet use" (CIU). In a more recent European study spanning 11 countries, the terms "pathological Internet use" (PtIU) and "maladaptive Internet use" (MIU) have been introduced (Ginige, 2017).

Although there are many variations in the way internet addiction is conceptualized, According to Billieux et al. (2017), internet addiction is:

" A repeated behaviour leading to significant harm or distress, which is not reduced by the person and persists over a significant period of time (e.g. at least 12 months), producing functional impairment."



Image: Freepik

According to Young (1998), excessive internet use may create a heightened level of psychological arousal, resulting in little sleep, failure to eat for long periods, and limited physical activity, possibly leading to the user experiencing physical and mental health problems such as depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), low family relationships and anxiety.

Problematic Internet use may be associated with subjective distress, functional impairment and some of the psychiatric disorders such as mood disorders, disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct disorders etc. (Alavi et al., 2011).



Image: [FreePik](#)

Block (2008) states that internet addiction appears to be a common disorder that merits inclusion in DSM-5 since all of the variants of IAD share the following four components:

- **Excessive use:** often associated with a loss of sense of time or a neglect of basic drives,
- **Withdrawal:** including feelings of anger, tension, anxiety and/or depression when the internet is inaccessible,
- **Tolerance:** including the need for better computer equipment, more software, or more hours of use,
- **Negative repercussions:** including lying and arguing about internet usage, social isolation, and fatigue.

These previously mentioned symptoms of IAD; preoccupation, craving, loss of control, neglecting other activities, withdrawal symptoms, tolerance and negative consequences are common diagnoses of other mental health problems such as substance use disorder, eating disorder, gambling disorder (Chou and Potenza, 2009). A core criterion of both substance-related and behavioural addictions is loss of control over one's behaviour, which is associated with significant functional impairment over a period of time.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.3

Disconnect to Reconnect

Rationale:

This exercise addresses internet addiction by emphasizing the importance of disengaging from digital devices during family and friends' gatherings and meal times. By doing so, it promotes meaningful human connections and social interaction, highlighting the negative consequences of excessive internet use. Participants gain a deeper awareness of how their online behaviors affect their relationships and overall well-being, empowering them to make more balanced choices regarding internet usage. The goal of this exercise is to combat internet addiction by promoting meaningful face-to-face interactions during social gatherings and meal times. By disconnecting from screens, participants can reconnect with others on a deeper level, improving relationships and overall well-being.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Participants practice disconnecting from their digital devices during family and friends' gatherings and meal times to prioritize face-to-face interactions.

Instructions:

1. Before attending a family or friends' gathering or sitting down for a meal, commit to setting aside digital devices.
2. Turn off or silence your phone, tablet, or laptop and place them in a designated "device-free" area.
3. Engage fully in the social interaction, conversations, and activities without the distraction of screens.
4. Be present in the moment, actively listening, and participating in discussions without the urge to check your devices.
5. Reflect on how this practice enhances your connections, reduces stress, and contributes to a more enjoyable experience.
6. Encourage others in your group to do the same, fostering a shared commitment to disconnecting to reconnect.

Resources Needed:

- Willpower and commitment to setting aside digital devices.
- A designated area for temporarily storing devices during gatherings or meals.

STATISTICS AND KEY FINDINGS ON (GLOBAL) INTERNET ACCESS AND INTERNET ADDICTION



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Here are some of the some of the statistical findings according to Digital Global Overview Report (2023):

- At the start of 2023, the world's population reached 8.01 billion.
- 57.20 % of the population live in urban areas.
- The median age of the global population is 30.4, with 50.30 % of the population being male and 49.70 % is female.
- The overall literacy rate for adults aged 15+ was 86.70 %.
- 5.44 billion people are now using a mobile phone in early 2023, this is 68% of the total global population.
- There are 5.16 billion internet users in the world today, equivalent to 64.4% of the population.
- 60% of the population uses social media, with 4.76 billion users worldwide. While this year's net addition equates to 3%.
- The time spent online has declined by almost 5% year on year. The average working-age internet user now spends 6 hours and 37 minutes per day online.
- Data shows that the typical working-age internet user now spends more than 2.5 hours per day using social platforms, which is the highest figure. This increase has occurred despite the decline in overall time spent using the internet. 4 in every 10 minutes spent online is now attributable to social media activities.
- 57.8% of users cite "finding information" as their primary reason for using the internet today.
- Approximately 6.09% of the global population suffers from internet addiction.

STATISTICS AND KEY FINDINGS ON (EUROPEAN) INTERNET ACCESS AND INTERNET ADDICTION

- Asia was home to the largest number of online users worldwide – over 2.93 billion at the latest count. Europe ranked second, with around 750 million internet users. China, India, and the United States rank ahead of other countries worldwide by the number of internet users (Digital: Global Overview Report, 2023).
- The prevalence of internet addiction in Europe varies, with rates ranging from 1.3% to 17.4%, and an average prevalence of 6.5% based on a 2022 review in the journal *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2022).
- Among adolescents in Europe, the prevalence of internet addiction was found to be 8.9% in a 2021 study published in the journal *Addiction* (Durkee et al., 2021).
- A 2020 study published in the journal *Journal of Medical Internet Research* reported a prevalence of 6.3% for internet addiction among adults in Europe (Kuss et al., 2020).
- An additional 2022 study in the *European Journal of Public Health* revealed a 6.3% prevalence of internet addiction among European adults, with higher rates observed in Southern and Eastern Europe (Kuss et al., 2022).
- The prevalence of internet addiction among adolescents in Europe was also reported as 8.9% in a 2021 study published in *Computers in Human Behavior*, with a higher prevalence noted in boys and young adults (Przybylski et al., 2021).
- According to a 2020 study in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, common online activities associated with internet addiction in Europe included social media use, online gaming, and pornography consumption (Kuss et al., 2020).



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.4

Checking on Checking

Rationale:

This exercise targets internet addiction by emphasizing the importance of setting specific time limits for socializing online and checking social media responses. It raises awareness of the potential dangers of excessive internet use and encourages individuals to make more balanced and mindful choices about their online behaviors. The goal of this exercise is to combat internet addiction by setting clear time limits for online socializing and response-checking. By practicing moderation in internet use, participants aim to reduce the negative impact of excessive online engagement on their daily lives and overall well-being.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Participants engage in a daily practice of reflecting on their internet usage patterns, focusing on setting limits for online socializing and response-checking.

Instructions:

1. Begin by acknowledging the frequency with which you engage in socializing on the internet and checking responses on social media platforms.
2. Set a designated time slot for socializing on the net each day, and use an alarm or timer to ensure you adhere to this limit.
3. Additionally, establish specific limits on how often you check for responses on social media. For example, you may choose to check only three times per day or once a week.
4. When the alarm or timer signals the end of your designated online socializing time, promptly disengage from the internet.
5. Reflect on how these limits impact your daily routine, mental health, and overall well-being.
6. Consider whether these boundaries contribute to reducing stress, increasing productivity, or enhancing your offline life.
7. Adjust your limits as needed to find a balance that aligns with your personal goals and priorities.

Resources Needed:

- An alarm or timer to help enforce designated internet usage time.
- Self-discipline and commitment to adhering to established limits.

THE NEUROBIOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE INTERNET ADDICTION



Image: Freepik

Drawing from current knowledge in the field of addiction neurobiology, researchers have formulated a neurobiological framework to explain Internet addiction. This framework centers on the brain's "reward center" or "pleasure pathway," responsible for generating feelings of pleasure. Activation of this pathway triggers the release of neurochemicals associated with pleasure, including dopamine, morphine-like endorphins, and others. Notably, both substances of addiction and behaviors akin to addiction have been shown to engage this pleasure pathway. With prolonged exposure, the receptors involved can become desensitized, leading to the development of tolerance and withdrawal symptoms—hallmarks of addiction. Individuals affected by Internet addiction may find themselves needing increasing online engagement to achieve the same level of stimulation, all the while persistently engaging in the behavior to ward off withdrawal effects (Ginige, 2017).

As can be seen from the above, research has established that addictions activate specific regions within the brain associated with pleasure, collectively referred to as the "reward center" or "pleasure pathway." When these regions are stimulated, there is an escalation in the release of neurotransmitters, such as dopamine and opiates, that contribute to the pleasurable sensations experienced during addiction. Over time, the receptors involved in this process may undergo alterations, leading to tolerance, where individuals require higher levels of stimulation to achieve the same pleasurable "high." Consequently, this triggers characteristic behavioral patterns aimed at maintaining the elevated stimulation levels and preventing withdrawal symptoms. In the case of Internet addiction, it has been observed that the engagement with online activities can also prompt the release of dopamine, particularly in structures like the nucleus accumbens, a key player in the reward system implicated in various other forms of addiction (Cash et al., 2012).

Image: [Freepik](#)

According to several neuropsychological studies (Brand et al., 2014; Yuan et al., 2011), IAD is also regarded as a disorder of concern because the neural abnormalities (e.g., atrophies in dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) and cognitive dysfunctions (e.g., impaired working memory) associated with IAD also mimic those related to substance and behavioral addiction.

The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) is a region of the brain involved in executive functions, including **working memory, decision-making, and self-control**. Studies have found that individuals with IAD may show reduced volume or atrophy in this brain region, suggesting potential structural changes associated with the disorder.

A study by Young and de Abreu (2011) found that individuals with IAD had significantly less gray matter volume in the DLPFC than controls. Yen et al. (2009) also found that adolescents with IAD had reduced gray matter volume in the DLPFC. And Kim et al. (2010) found that individuals with IAD had reduced gray matter density in the DLPFC and the nucleus accumbens - part of the ventral striatum, a group of interconnected brain regions that are involved in reward, motivation, and addiction.

However, it is not possible to say for sure whether IAD causes these structural changes, or if individuals with IAD are more likely to have these changes in the first place. More research is needed to confirm the findings of these studies.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.5

Doing It In Real

Rationale:

This exercise aims to combat internet addiction among adults by emphasizing the importance of replacing excessive internet usage with more attractive real-life activities. It highlights the potential dangers of excessive internet use, fosters awareness of its negative impacts, and empowers individuals to make mindful and balanced choices regarding their online behaviors.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Participants engage in a daily practice of replacing internet usage with enjoyable real-life activities, fostering a healthier digital balance.

Instructions:

1. Begin by identifying the specific internet activities, apps, or websites that consume most of your online time.
2. Reflect on how these digital habits might contribute to feelings of isolation, stress, or reduced productivity in your life.
3. Acknowledge any instances where your digital habits hinder your ability to engage in face-to-face interactions, pursue hobbies, or maintain a healthy work-life balance.
4. Create a list of more attractive real-life activities that you would like to engage in as alternatives to excessive internet use. These activities can include:
 - o Getting together with friends in real life.
 - o Participating in competitive or recreational sports.
 - o Joining an aerobics class or engaging in other physical activities.
 - o Pursuing hobbies or interests outside of the digital realm.
5. Dedicate time each day to replace internet usage with one or more of these real-life activities.
6. Reflect on how these substitutions impact your mental health, relationships, and overall well-being.
7. Monitor your progress and observe whether these changes contribute to reducing stress, increasing your sense of fulfillment, and enhancing your offline life.
8. Adjust your real-life activities and commitments as needed to maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

Resources Needed:

- A journal or digital note-taking app for reflection.
- A willingness to prioritize and engage in real-life activities.

CLASSIFICATION

Studies on the definition of Internet addiction conceptualise it two different ways; one approach portrays it as being an independent disease, whilst the other classifies it as merely a symptom of another disease. Some researchers and mental health practitioners see excessive Internet use as a symptom of another disorder such as anxiety or depression rather than a separate entity. Those who do not define internet addiction as an independent disease argue that a person may use the internet to suppress the distress caused by another disease; for example, this person may exhibit behaviors such as excessive internet use or prolonged video game playing. It is stated that not all individuals who use the internet excessively are actually people with internet addiction, they use the internet as an ideal environment for the satisfaction of their other addictions; therefore, it is important to distinguish between those who are actually people with internet addiction and those who satisfy their other addictions over the internet (Erden & Hatun, 20105).

Young, who tried to define Internet addiction as a psychiatric disorder in itself, developed a self-report questionnaire for Internet addiction by reorganizing the diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling. According to Young (1999), who was one of the first to define the diagnosis and criteria for Internet addiction, the Internet, just like gambling, is addictive and people with internet addiction suffer from various impulse control disorders. symptoms are observed.

THE MANY FACES OF INTERNET ADDICTION

There are many variations in the way internet addiction is conceptualized.

- **Substance-related addiction model:** a form of addictive behavior that is similar to substance use disorders (Young, 1998).
- **Number of experienced problems model:** characterized by a number of problems that hinder functioning. Individuals with internet addiction may experience problems in their work, school, relationships, or physical health as a result of their excessive internet use (Shapira, Goldsmith, Nigg, & Rumpf, (2003).
- **Pathological behavior model:** similar to gambling addiction (Petry, 2001).
- **Cognitive-behavioral model:** characterized by cognitive distortions and maladaptive coping mechanisms (Young, 2007).
- **Social-environmental model:** influenced by social and environmental factors (Caplan, 2002).
- **Developmental model:** as a disorder that develops over time (Caplan, 2010).



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.6

Mindful Technology Reintegration

Rationale:

This exercise is designed to facilitate a balanced reintegration of technology into daily life for individuals recovering from internet addiction.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Engage in a structured and mindful process of reintegrating technology into your daily life after a period of reduced digital use.

Instructions:

1. **Assessment:** Start by assessing your current technology usage habits.
2. **Identify Triggers:** Identify the situations or emotional states that trigger excessive internet use.
3. **Digital Detox:** Initiate a brief digital detox or reduction phase, such as a weekend without non-essential technology.
4. **Mindful Reintegration Plan:** Outline specific guidelines for when and how you will use technology. Set boundaries on usage, both in terms of time and purpose.
5. **Digital Sabbaticals:** Implement regular "digital sabbaticals." Designate certain days or times when you will disconnect entirely from technology.
6. **Situational Awareness:** Before reaching for your device, ask yourself whether it aligns with your reintegration plan and if there's a healthier alternative for the current situation.
7. **Digital Well-being Tools:** Utilize digital well-being tools and features available on devices and apps to set limits on usage.
8. **Accountability:** Share your reintegration plan with a trusted friend or family member who can hold you accountable.
9. **Reflect and Adjust:** Periodically review your reintegration plan and adjust it based on your experiences and evolving needs. Celebrate your successes and be compassionate with yourself about any setbacks.

Resources Needed:

- A journal or digital note-taking app for self-reflection and planning.
- Digital well-being features on your devices or third-party apps.
- Support from a trusted friend or family member for accountability.

CAUSES OF INTERNET ADDICTION

There are different theories about what causes IAD, which takes into account socio-cultural factors (e.g., demographic factors, access to and acceptance of the Internet), biological vulnerabilities (e.g., genetic factors, abnormalities in neurochemical processes), psychological predispositions (e.g., personality characteristics, negative affects), and specific attributes of the Internet to explain “excessive engagement in Internet activities”

- One theory is the **cognitive-behavioral model**, which says that people with IAD have negative thoughts and beliefs about themselves and the world, and they use the internet to escape from these thoughts and feelings. The cognitive-behavioral approach includes approaches that eliminate and alleviate psychological distress through the development of alternative healthy and realistic thoughts to replace the errors and unhealthy thoughts about oneself.
- Another theory is the **anonymity, convenience, and escape (ACE) model**, which highlights the allure of the internet as an anonymous and easily accessible platform. This model suggests that individuals seeking to evade real-world problems and social pressures may turn to the internet for refuge.
- The **Access, Affordability, Anonymity (Triple-A) Engine Theory**, an extension of the ACE Model. This theory incorporates the affordability of internet access as an essential factor in driving excessive usage. Research demonstrates that the accessibility and affordability of the internet have facilitated its pervasive use, particularly among vulnerable populations.
- **Grohol's phases model of pathological internet use** describes four stages of IAD: experimentation, immersion, excessive use, and addiction.
- **Winkler and Dörsing's comprehensive model of IAD** takes into account a variety of factors, including socio-cultural factors, biological vulnerabilities, psychological predispositions, and specific attributes of the internet. Research underscores the role of demographic factors, societal norms, genetic predispositions, personality traits, and the unique allure of online interactions in contributing to the development of IAD.

It is important to note that there is no single theory that explains all cases of IAD. The best way to understand IAD is to consider all of the different factors that may contribute to it (Cash et. al., 2012).



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.7

CBT Digital Detox Technique

Rationale:

This exercise employs principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help individuals reduce internet addiction by gradually and systematically decreasing their online time.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Start by conducting a self-assessment of your own internet use. Reflect on the amount of time spent online, the activities you engage in, and the impact on your daily life, relationships, and mental well-being. In a journal or digital document, list the triggers that lead to excessive internet use for you. Triggers could include stress, boredom, loneliness, or specific situations.

Instructions:

- Set realistic goals for reducing your internet use. These goals should be specific, measurable, and time-bound. For example, reducing your daily screen time by 30 minutes over the next two weeks.
- Design a structured digital detox plan for yourself. This plan should outline: specific hours or time slots, permitted and restricted online activities, strategies for replacing excessive online time with offline activities, and coping mechanisms to deal with triggers without resorting to excessive internet use.
- Follow your digital detox plan. Start with small steps and gradually increase the intensity of the detox. For example, begin by reducing evening screen time for a few days and then progress to full-day detoxes on weekends. Periodically review the participant's progress together. If they have successfully met their initial goals, discuss adjusting the detox plan to set new, more challenging targets.
- Reflect on the positive changes in your life resulting from reduced internet use. This could include improved focus, better sleep, or enhanced relationships. Positive reinforcement can motivate continued progress.

Resources Needed:

- Journal or digital document for self-assessment and tracking.
- Personal commitment and dedication to follow the detox plan.
- Consider seeking support from friends, family, or online communities for motivation and accountability.

RECOGNIZING INTERNET ADDICTION

In the digital age, it's becoming increasingly important to recognize the signs of Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) as the lines between healthy internet use and problematic behavior can blur.

Many different assessment instruments have been developed to identify Internet addiction. Young's Internet Addiction Test, the Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ) developed by Demetrovics, Szeredi, and Pozsa and the Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS) are all examples of instruments to assess for this disorder.

In this section, techniques of recognizing internet addiction suggested by different experts will be presented. This section emphasizes the importance of recognizing the signs associated with internet addiction without offering a formal diagnosis.

Kimberly Young (1998), a psychologist and researcher who has extensively studied internet addiction, has identified **several signs and symptoms** of Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD):

- **Preoccupation with the internet:** Spending a significant amount of time thinking about the internet, anticipating the next online session, or planning online activities.
- **Increased tolerance:** Needing more time spent online to achieve the desired level of satisfaction or stimulation.
- **Failed attempts to cut back or control internet use:** Making repeated efforts to reduce internet use or quit altogether but being unsuccessful.
- **Withdrawal symptoms:** Experiencing restlessness, irritability, or depression when attempting to reduce or stop internet use.
- **Loss of interest in other activities:** Neglecting or giving up on previously enjoyed hobbies, social activities, or responsibilities in favor of spending time online.
- **Excessive time spent online:** Spending increasing amounts of time online, often to the point of neglecting personal relationships, work, or school obligations.
- **Interference with daily functioning:** Experiencing negative effects on academic, occupational, or social functioning due to excessive internet use.
- **Using the internet to escape or alleviate negative emotions:** Turning to the internet as a way to cope with stress, anxiety, loneliness, or depression.
- **Hiding or lying about internet use:** Attempting to conceal the extent of internet use from family, friends, or loved ones.
- **Continued internet use despite negative consequences:** Persisting with excessive internet use, even when it leads to relationship problems, financial issues, or health concerns.

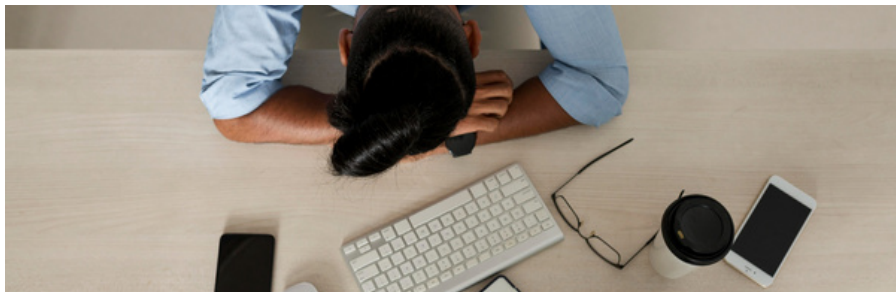


Image: Freepik

Beard (2005), similarly to Young, recommends that the following **set of criteria as necessary to identify Internet addiction**. These criteria encompass a range of behaviors and emotional states, from preoccupation with online activities to the need for increasing amounts of online time for satisfaction. Individuals exhibiting these signs may also struggle with controlling or cutting back on their internet use, and they may experience restlessness or mood disturbances when attempting to do so. Furthermore, the consequences of Internet addiction can extend to various aspects of life, including relationships, jobs, and personal well-being.

1. Is **preoccupied with the Internet** (thinks about previous online activity or anticipate next online session);
2. Needs to use the Internet with **increased amounts of time in order to achieve satisfaction**;
3. Has made **unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop** Internet use;
4. Is **restless, moody, depressed, or irritable** when attempting to cut down or stop Internet use;
5. Has **stayed online longer than originally intended**. Additionally, at least one of the following must be present:
6. Has **jeopardized or risked the loss of a significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity** because of the Internet;
7. Has **lied to family members, therapist, or others to conceal** the extent of involvement with the Internet;
8. **Uses the Internet as a way of escaping** from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g., feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression).

According to Saliceti (2015), individuals with addiction tend to prioritize cyber relationships over in-person connections, disrupting their social lives. It's easy to get lost in the vast online world, often without a specific purpose, leading to compulsive technology use. The consequences of addiction are particularly severe in terms of family dynamics, financial stability, and work / academic performance. The Internet can induce mood swings and powerful emotions that provide an escape from daily life challenges, allowing individuals to hide behind screens for a sense of safety and protection. Consequently, individuals with addiction create a virtual world as a substitute for reality, distorting their perception of time, similar to the temporal distortions experienced with drug addiction, providing a sense of invincibility.

The most important **behavioural symptoms** characterizing Internet addiction are:

- The **need to spend more and more time** on the Internet to get satisfied.
- A **pronounced lack of interest** in all activities except the Internet.
- When the addiction is reduced or interrupted, **experiencing psychomotor agitation, anxiety, depression, obsessive thinking** about what is going on the Internet, typical withdrawal symptoms.
- The **need to log on to the Internet more and more often** and for length of time extended compared with what planned in advance.
- The **inability to interrupt or keep under control** the use of the Internet.
- The **waste of time in Internet related activities**.
- Keeping on **using the Internet despite of the awareness** of healthy, social, psychological issues.

From a cognitive-behavioural prospective, some authors say that some **maladjusted perceptions** are observable in individuals with addiction:

- Distorted thoughts about self and the world.
- Distorted perceptions about experiences of inadequacy, insecurity, low self-confidence, and relationship problems.
- Other researches have shown that individuals with addiction may have personality disorders like:
- Mood disorders, anxiety, and impulse dyscontrol.
- With regard to health issues, individuals with addiction have:
- Sleep disturbances, back aches, head aches, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, tired eyes, bad eating habits.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.8 A Week of Mindful Screen Use

Rationale:

This week-long digital detox challenge exercise is designed by Tanya Goodin to help individuals become more aware of their screen time habits, regain control over their digital lives, and develop a healthier relationship with technology.

How To Apply the Exercise:

The digital detox rules:

- Delete all social media apps from your phone; check these only from a desktop computer.
- Turn all sound notifications off all other apps (keep the badge-type notifications where you have to visually check the app).
- Leave your phone in your pocket or keep it out of sight for meetings or conversations involving other people.
- Keep your phone out of sight during your commute.
- Don't take your phone with you into the bathroom or toilet.

Instructions:

- Day 1: Leave your phone outside your bedroom overnight; get an alarm clock or turn up the volume on your phone so you can hear its alarm easily from your bed through the door. Continue this all week.
- Day 2: Put your phone in a central place when you return home and go to the location of the phone (rather than carrying it around with you) if you need to check it.
- Day 3: Take work email off your phone (notify everyone in advance that you're doing this).
- Day 4 Go out to dinner, lunch or to an evening event/gym session and leave your phone behind.
- Day 5: Keep your phone on airplane mode as default all day; take it off this mode only when you need to use it.
- Days 6 and 7 Your complete digital detox: keep your phone switched off and put away from 7 pm Friday to 8 am Monday.

Resources Needed:

- Your smartphone or digital device
- Alarm clock (if needed)
- Knowledge of notification settings on your device
- Ability to communicate the email removal decision
- Offline activities and outings for Day 4 and the weekend detox
- Goodin also recommends downloading a tracking app such as Moment



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.9

The 24-Hour Screen-Free Day

Rationale:

This digital detox challenge focuses on creating a brief but impactful break from screens to reset and rejuvenate. It encourages individuals to experience the benefits of a screen-free day and become more mindful of their digital habits.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Choose a specific day (e.g., a weekend day) for your 24-hour screen-free challenge. Inform friends, family, and colleagues about your commitment to a screen-free day, so they can support your effort and adjust their expectations. Define what "screen-free" means to you. Typically, this includes refraining from smartphones, tablets, computers, television, and even e-readers. Exceptions can be made for essential communication (e.g., phone calls) or work-related emergencies. Create a list of activities you'd like to do during your screen-free day.

Instructions:

- On your chosen day, power down all electronic devices and put them out of sight. Refrain from checking emails, social media, or watching TV. Instead, engage in the offline activities you planned.
- Journal about your day, noting how you felt physically and mentally during your screen-free time. Reflect on any insights gained, including whether you felt more relaxed, present, or productive.
- Decide how frequently you'll engage in screen-free time. It could be a weekly screen-free evening or a monthly 24-hour screen-free day. Commit to this schedule to maintain a healthy balance with technology.
- Share your journey on social media or with friends and family. Encourage them to join you in experiencing the benefits of a screen-free day.

Resources Needed:

- Time: Participants will need to set aside a specific 24-hour period for the screen-free challenge.
- Offline Activities: Participants should plan and prepare offline activities to keep themselves engaged during the screen-free day.
- Journal or Digital Note-Taking App: A journal or a digital note-taking app can be used for recording daily reflections and experiences during the screen-free day.
- Optional: Emergency Communication Plan: If participants need to stay reachable for emergencies (e.g., work-related), they may need an alternative communication plan that doesn't involve screens, such as a basic cell phone.

REACTING TO INTERNET ADDICTION

There is a general consensus that total abstinence from the Internet should not be the goal of the interventions and that instead, an abstinence from problematic applications and a controlled and balanced Internet usage should be achieved. The aim should be to abstain from engaging in problematic online activities and to cultivate a controlled and well-balanced pattern of Internet usage.

In “Internet Addiction: Symptoms, Evaluation, And Treatment” Dr. Young offers some strategies for reacting to internet addiction:

Practice the Opposite:

Individuals are encouraged to disrupt their normal Internet usage routine by adopting new time patterns and behaviors. For example, if an individual habitually checks emails first thing in the morning, they may be advised to delay this activity until after other morning routines like taking a shower or having breakfast.

External Stoppers:

Concrete triggers, such as the need to leave for work at a specific time, can be used to prompt users to log off the Internet. Setting alarms or timers can also help users stick to a predetermined limit of Internet use.

Setting Goals:

Instead of vague plans to reduce Internet use, individuals are encouraged to set specific, achievable goals. Structured sessions with well-defined time slots can help in reducing cravings and withdrawal symptoms.



Image: Freepik

Abstinence:

In cases where a specific application triggers Internet addiction, users may be advised to abstain from that particular application. This does not mean complete Internet abstinence, but rather avoiding the problematic application while continuing to use others that are less addictive.

Reminder Cards:

Users create lists of problems caused by Internet addiction and benefits of reducing Internet use. These lists are transferred onto index cards and used as reminders to stay focused on their goals when tempted to use the Internet excessively.

Personal Inventory:

Users identify activities they've neglected or curtailed due to excessive Internet use. They rank these activities based on importance and use this list to rekindle hobbies and social interactions they once enjoyed.

Support Groups:

Users who turn to the Internet due to loneliness or as a distraction from real-life problems are encouraged to seek out real-life support groups that address their specific situations. These groups can help build social connections and reduce the need for online companionship.

Family Therapy:

When Internet addiction has negatively impacted family relationships, family therapy is recommended. It involves educating the family about the addictive nature of the Internet, improving communication, and involving the family in the person with addiction recovery process.



Image: [Freepik](#)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 1.10

A Brief Guide for a Balanced Tech-Life

Rationale:

This exercise aims to help individuals strike a healthier balance with technology during their workday. By implementing these five practical tips, participants can enhance their focus, productivity, and overall well-being in the workplace.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Designate specific times when you will disconnect from devices or limit their use to essential work-related tasks only. Identify zones or moments in your workday where you commit to going device-free. This could include during meetings, lunch breaks, or specific work areas. You can communicate these boundaries with colleagues for mutual support. Step away from screens during breaks and engage in mindful activities such as stretching or walking.

Instructions:

- Review and adjust notification settings on their devices. Prioritize essential work-related alerts and mute or turn off notifications from non-essential apps, including social media, during work hours.
- Encourage face-to-face interactions with other colleagues whenever possible. Provide suggestions on how to initiate discussions, brainstorm ideas, and collaborate in person to enhance workplace relationships.
- Decide how frequently you'll engage in screen-free time. It could be a weekly screen-free evening or a monthly 24-hour screen-free day. Commit to this schedule to maintain a healthy balance with technology. Share your journey on social media or with friends and family. Encourage them to join you in experiencing the benefits of a screen-free day.

Resources Needed:

- Mindful Activities: you may consider engaging in activities like stretching or walking. These activities don't require special equipment, but choose activities that suit your preferences and workspace.
- Designated Zones: identify specific areas or moments in your workplace.

CONCLUSION

Navigating the landscape of internet addiction encompasses a multifaceted understanding, from historical classification to global prevalence statistics. The recognition of core components, such as excessive use, withdrawal, tolerance, and negative repercussions, forms the groundwork for comprehending the complexity of this modern challenge. Global insights shed light on the widespread impact of internet addiction, emphasizing regional variations. The exploration of the neurobiological basis, including structural changes in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, adds a scientific dimension to the discussion. Furthermore, the module delves into the classification debate, offering insights into whether internet addiction stands as an independent disorder or is linked to other mental health issues.



Transitioning from theoretical perspectives to practical approaches, the module introduces techniques for recognizing and responding to internet addiction. It underscores the importance of distinguishing between individuals with primary internet addiction and those using the online realm to cope with underlying mental health concerns. Causes of internet addiction are examined, and a spectrum of techniques, from goal-setting to family therapy, is presented as effective strategies for intervention. By amalgamating historical, statistical, neurobiological, and practical insights, the module serves as a comprehensive guide for understanding, recognizing, and addressing the intricate dynamics of internet addiction in today's digital era.

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Module 2

Types of IAD and Disease Aggravation

INTRODUCTION

Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) refers to a phenomenon where individuals develop problematic or compulsive behaviours related to their use of the internet. Similar to addiction to substances like alcohol and drugs, recently, through the recent advancement in the digital age, individuals tend to develop addictive patterns in relation to their online activities.



Image: Pexels

Shaw and Black (2008) and Salicetia (2015) outline and discuss several distinct types of internet addiction. They highlight the different ways in which people can develop addictive behaviours related to the internet. It is pertinent to note however, that not everyone who uses the internet excessively has an addiction. Addiction implicates a loss of control and negative consequences. IAD can result in serious implications for individuals' mental health, relationships, and overall well-being. It is therefore critical to understand the types and be aware of the signs of IAD and degree of disease aggravation.



DEGREE of DISEASE AGGRAVATION

It is also important to classify the degree of IAD aggravation. Throughout this section, this will be categorised as follows:

MILD

- Symptoms of IAD are present but have a relatively minor impact on the individual's life.
- Individuals may experience occasional difficulties or disruptions due to excessive internet use, but they can still manage their responsibilities and obligations.

MODERATE

- Symptoms of IAD are more pronounced and have a noticeable impact on the individual's life.
- Individuals may struggle to maintain a healthy balance between internet use and other areas of life, such as work, relationships, and self-care.

SEVERE

- Symptoms of IAD are significant and severely affect the individual's life.
- Internet use becomes the primary focus, leading to neglect of important responsibilities, deteriorating relationships, and adverse consequences on physical and mental well-being.

TYPES OF INTERNET ADDICTION

Cyber Sexual Addiction

Cyber Sexual Addiction refers to the excessive and compulsive engagement in online sexual activities and usually occurs in people who are typically engaged in viewing, downloading and trading online pornography or are involved in adult fantasy role-play chat rooms.

Examples:

Common Examples of Cyber Sexual Addiction include:

- **Online Pornography:** The consumption of explicit sexual content through websites, streaming platforms, or social media. It also entails frequent visits to adult websites for sexual arousal and gratification.

- **Cybersex:** Engaging in sexual conversations or role-playing via online platforms, chat rooms, or video chats. It also denotes sharing sexually explicit messages, images, or videos with others.
- **Sexting:** Sending or receiving sexually explicit text messages or multimedia content through messaging apps or social media platforms often involving intimate exchanges between partners or strangers.



Image: Pexels

Symptoms

The following are **common Cyber Sexual Addiction symptoms:**

Preoccupation: Having excessive thoughts or fantasies about cyber sexual activities and spending significant time planning, engaging in, or recovering from online sexual behaviours (Shaw & Black, 2008).

Loss of Control: Experiencing inability to control or limit online sexual behaviours with failed attempts to reduce or quit engaging in cyber sexual activities (Shaw & Black, 2008).

Neglect of Responsibilities: Neglecting personal, social, or professional responsibilities due to online sexual activities. This includes but is not limited to failing to meet work or academic obligations, deteriorating relationships, or neglecting self-care (Salicetia, 2015).

Escalation: Escalating sexual activities to more extreme or risky behaviours. Often this translates in seeking novel or explicit content to maintain the same level of arousal (Salicetia, 2015).

Withdrawal Symptoms: Experiencing restlessness, irritability, or anxiety when unable to engage in cyber sexual activities and using online sexual behaviours as a coping mechanism to alleviate negative emotions (Cooper, Scherer, Boies, & Gordon, 1999).

Impaired Social Functioning: Neglecting face-to-face interactions, friendships, or intimate relationships due to excessive focus on cyber sexual activities and experiencing difficulty in forming or maintaining meaningful connections in real life (Cooper, Scherer, Boies, & Gordon, 1999).

Degree of Disease Aggravation

Mild

- Occasional engagement in cyber sexual activities with minimal interference in daily life.
- Recognition of problematic behaviour but struggling in moderating it exists.
- Experience of mild emotional distress or guilt.

Moderate

- Frequent engagement in cyber sexual activities, leading to moderate disruption in personal and professional life.
- Struggling in controlling the behaviour and experience of increased cravings.
- Experience of moderate distress, shame, or negative consequences.

Severe

- Compulsive and excessive engagement in cyber sexual activities, leading to severe impairment in various life domains.
- Significant inability to control or stop the behaviour despite negative consequences.
- Profound emotional distress, social isolation, and deterioration in relationships.



Image: Pexels

Cyber-Relational Addiction

Cyber-Relational Addiction refers to an excessive and compulsive involvement in online relationships usually occurring in people who become overly involved in online relationships or may engage in virtual adultery. With this addiction, online relationships become more important than real life ones, possibly resulting in marital discord and family instability.

Examples:

Common Examples of Cyber-Relational Addiction include but are not limited to:

- **Online Dating:** Engaging in romantic or sexual relationships through online dating platforms or apps and forming connections and interacting with potential partners virtually.
- **Online Friendships:** Developing close friendships with individuals met online through social media, forums, or chat rooms, communicating primarily through digital means.
- **Virtual Relationships:** Engaging in intimate or romantic relationships in virtual worlds or online gaming environments and interacting with avatars or virtual characters.

Symptoms

The following are **common Cyber-Relational Addiction symptoms:**

- **Obsession about online relationships:** Constantly thinking about online relationships, spending excessive time maintaining or seeking new cyber relationships (Young, 1998).
- **Neglect of Offline Relationships:** Neglecting real-life relationships, including family, friends, or romantic partners and spending less time or showing disinterest in face-to-face interactions (Morahan-Martin, & Schumacher, 2003).
- **Emotional Dependency:** Developing a strong emotional dependence on online partners or friends often relying on cyber relationships for emotional support or validation (Young, 2004).
- **Loss of Control:** Inability to control the amount of time spent on cyber relationships often neglecting personal or professional responsibilities due to excessive online engagement (Griffiths, 2000).

- **Escapism:** Using cyber relationships to escape from real-life problems or difficulties and seek relief, comfort, or a sense of identity in virtual interactions (Whang, Lee, & Chang, 2003).

Degree of Disease Aggravation

Mild

- Moderate involvement in cyber relationships without significant interference in daily life.
- Recognition of the behaviour as problematic but struggling to establish a balance.
- Experience of mild emotional distress or guilt.

Moderate

- Frequent engagement in cyber relationships, leading to noticeable disruption in personal and professional life.
- Struggling to limit or control the behaviour and experience of increasing cravings.
- Experience in moderate distress, loneliness, or negative consequences.

Severe

- Compulsive and excessive engagement in cyber relationships, leading to severe negative effect in life.
- Inability to disengage from online relationships notwithstanding the negative consequences.
- Profound emotional distress, social isolation, and deterioration in real-life relationships.



Image: [Pexels](#)

Net Compulsions / Net Gaming Addiction

Net Compulsions / Net Gaming Addiction refers to excessive and compulsive involvement in online gaming activities comprising a wide range of behaviours, including online gambling, shopping or stock trading. Such addiction may result in financial losses, as well as relational and job disruptions.

Examples:

Common Examples of Net Compulsions include but are not limited to:

- **Competitive Online Gaming:** Participating in competitive online games, such as e-sports or multiplayer battles while seeking achievement, recognition, and social status in gaming communities.
- **Compulsive Internet Shopping:** Experiencing a compulsion to shop online, resulting in excessive and uncontrollable buying behaviour. This usually results in the accumulation of large amounts of debt, while hiding or lying about online purchases, and experiencing feelings of guilt or shame related to the addiction (Rose & Segrist, 2014).
- **Online Gambling Addiction:** Engaging in persistent and excessive online gambling, leading to financial difficulties, emotional distress, and impaired relationships accompanied with a feeling the need to gamble more frequently or with larger amounts of money to achieve the desired excitement or relief (Petry, & Weinstock, 2007).

Symptoms

Net Compulsions / Net Gaming addictions symptoms are similar to those associated with Cyber Sexual Addictions and include:

- **Preoccupation:** Constantly thinking about gaming activities and spending excessive time planning, anticipating, or discussing gaming experiences (Griffiths & Hunt, 1998).
- **Neglect of Responsibilities:** Neglecting school, work, or personal obligations due to excessive gaming resulting in decreased academic or occupational performance (Hussain & Griffiths, 2009).

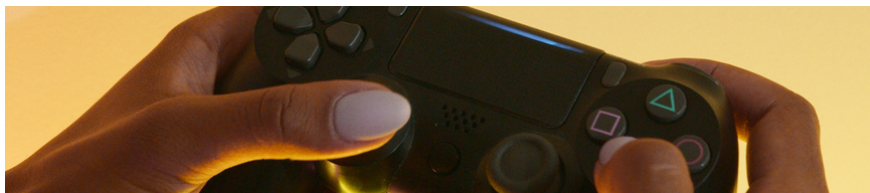


Image: [Pexels](#)

- **Escalation:** Increasing the amount of time spent gaming to achieve the desired level of excitement often finding the difficulty of controlling or limiting gaming sessions (Rehbein, Kleimann & Mößle, 2010).
- **Social Withdrawal:** Withdrawing from real-life social activities and relationships while preferring virtual interactions over face-to-face interactions (Amendola, Cerutti & Presaghi, 2023).
- **Emotional Disturbances:** Experiencing mood swings, irritability, or restlessness when unable to play games and often using gaming as a coping mechanism for stress or emotional discomfort (Lemmens, Valkenburg & Peter, 2011).

Degree of Disease Aggravation

Mild

- Moderate involvement in gaming without significant interference in daily life.
- Recognition of the behaviour as problematic but struggling to establish a balance.
- Experience of mild emotional distress or guilt.

Moderate

- Frequent engagement in gaming, leading to noticeable disruption in personal and professional life.
- Struggling to limit or control the behaviour and experience of increasing cravings.
- Experience in moderate distress, conflict, or negative consequences.

Severe

- Compulsive and excessive engagement in gaming, leading to severe negative effect in life.
- Inability to disengage from games notwithstanding the negative consequences.
- Deep emotional distress, academic or occupational failure, and deterioration of real-life relationships.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.1

Create a Structured Schedule

Rationale:

Having a structured schedule helps to minimize idle time spent on the internet.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Establish a daily routine that includes specific time blocks for various activities, including but not limited to work, physical exercise, hobbies, face-to-face socialising, and relaxation.

Instructions:

- Create a daily schedule dedicating specific time slots for non-internet use related activities.
- Allocate dedicated time for hobbies, exercise, socialising, and relaxation.
- Book a session in a gym.
- Start reading a book

Resources Needed:

- Time
- Planner



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.2

Daily Nature Connection

Rationale:

Reconnecting to nature helps provide a healthy outlet for relaxation.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Commit to spending time close to nature every day, even if it's for a brief moment. Turn digital devices off or in silent mode.

Instructions:

- Commit some daily time to spend outdoors.
- Disconnect or switch off digital devices.
- While outdoors, observe the natural environment deliberately. Utilise your sense to connect with tranquility.

Resources Needed:

- Access to an outdoor space.

Social Media Addiction

Social Media Addiction refers to the excessive and compulsive use of social media platforms comprising a wide range of behaviours, including but not limited to excessive time spent on social media platforms, constantly checking updates and seeking validation through likes and comments.

| *Examples:*

Common Examples of Social Media addiction include but are not limited to:

- **Participating:** Dependency on likes and Comments – Having a compulsive need to share and seek validation, becoming dependent on the positive reinforcement of likes and comments, leading to addictive behaviour to maintain high engagement.
- **Constant Checking and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Feeling compelled to obsessively check social media to ensure they don't miss out on events, news, or experiences, even when it's not necessary.
- **Obsession with Social Media Metrics:** seeking validation and self-worth through social media likes, comments, and shares, leading to addictive behavior to boost online presence.

| *Symptoms*

Common Symptoms related to Social Media Addiction Include:

- **Mood Modification:** Using social media to regulate emotions or escape from real-life problems and seeking validation, support, or a sense of connection through online interactions (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).
- **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Experiencing anxiety or distress when not using social media while feeling compelled to constantly stay updated and be part of online conversations (Przybylski et al., 2013).
- **Mental Distress due to Excessive Use:** Spending a significant amount of time on social media platforms while constantly checking feeds, notifications and updates, resulting in mental fatigue (Hammad & Awed, 2023).

- **Neglect of Offline Activities:** Neglecting real-life responsibilities, hobbies, or relationships and spending less time engaging in face-to-face interactions (Panova & Carbonell, 2022).
- **Self-Image Obsession:** Excessively focusing on self-presentation and image cultivation on social media while seeking validation and comparing oneself to others based on likes, comments, and followers (Ramani & Diwanji, 2023).



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.3 Set Achievable Goals

Rationale:

Working towards goals provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment, reducing the urge to rely on excessive internet use.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Set short-term and long-term goals.

It is important that these goals are not too stressful, achievable and outside the digital realm.

Examples of such goals include but are not limited to Personal growth goals and Skill development goals

Instructions:

- Make a wish list of the things that you would like to do for self development
- Sort the list in order of easiness to achieve
- Set goals to achieve the list
- Start each day in trying to achieve the goals set

Resources Needed:

- N/A



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.4 Establish Technology-Free Zones

Rationale:

Establishing technology-free zones allow the disconnection from the online world and aid in focusing on other aspects of life.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Designate certain areas or periods of time as technology-free zones.

Examples include but are not limited to avoiding using digital devices during mealtimes or before going to bed.

Instructions:

- Make a list of activities during which you normally make use of digital media.
- List a number of activities or areas where you think the use of digital media can be avoided.
- Select one activity or area in which you decide not to make use of digital media.
- Try to disconnect from the online world at least in the selected area or activity.

Resources Needed:

N/A

Degree of Disease Aggravation

Mild

- Moderate involvement in social media without significant interference in daily life.
- Recognition of the behaviour as problematic but struggling to establish a balance.
- Experience of mild emotional distress or guilt.

Moderate

- Frequent and prolonged engagement in social media, leading to noticeable disruption in personal and professional life.
- Struggling to limit or control the behaviour and experience of increasing cravings.
- Experience in moderate distress, conflict, or negative consequences.

Severe

- Compulsive and excessive engagement in social media, resulting in severe negative effects in real-life.
- Inability to disengage from games notwithstanding the negative consequences.
- Deep emotional distress, social isolation, and deterioration of real-life relationships.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.5

Engage in Creative Expressions

Rationale:

Apart from providing a means of self-expression, relaxation, throwing oneself in creative expressions enables oneself to take a break from the online world.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Engage in creative activities such as visual arts, writing and literature. Performing arts, crafts and DIY, and digital art can also be considered.

Instructions:

- Grab a scrapbook and pencil in your thoughts.
- Start a personal journal to reflect on thoughts, experiences and emotions.
- Play a music instrument or sing to express your feelings and emotions.
- Create artworks using sculpting material such as clay.
- Bring ideas into life through the usage of animation software.

Resources Needed:

- N/A

Information Overload

Information Overload refers to the excessive and compulsive use of the internet, trying to deal with the overwhelming amount of information available on the internet resulting in excessive web surfing and database searches. Information overload is experienced when individuals spend a disproportionate amount of time on the internet searching for, collecting and organising information.

Examples:

Information Overload can be **categorised as follows:**

- **Social Media Overload:** Constantly checking multiple social media platforms for updates, notifications, and new content or following a large number of accounts, causing a flood of information from friends, influencers, and news sources. This results in feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of social media posts, stories, and comments to keep up with.

- **News Overload:** Subscribing to multiple news websites, newsletters, and news apps, leading to a constant stream of news articles and headlines resulting in spending excessive time-consuming news content. This causes one to feel compelled to stay updated on the latest news and having trouble in prioritising and filtering relevant news from less important or repetitive information.



Image: Pexels

- **Research Overload:** Engaging in online research for various topics, projects, or personal interests. This often comprises opening multiple tabs and accumulating a vast number of articles, blog posts, research papers, and resources, resulting in continuous struggles to digest and synthesize the information effectively, leading to cognitive overload and difficulty in retaining key insights.

Symptoms

Common symptoms associated with Information Overload are:

- **Cognitive Overload:** Feeling overwhelmed and mentally fatigued due to the constant influx of information resulting in difficulty in processing and organising information effectively (Eppler & Mengis, 2004).
- **Difficulty in Filtering Information:** Feeling overwhelmed and having difficulty discerning relevant and useful information thus being unable to prioritise or focus on specific topics or tasks (Eppler & Mengis, 2004).
- **Decreased Productivity and Decision-Making:** Spending excessive time, consuming information without accomplishing tasks efficiently resulting in difficulties to make decisions due to the overwhelming choices and information available (Maqsood & Arshad, 2019).
- **Increased Stress and Cognitive Fatigue:** Feeling stressed, anxious, or mentally exhausted due to the constant influx of information hence struggling to concentrate and process information effectively (Hwang & Jeong, 2009).
- **Fragmented Attention and Multitasking:** Engaging in multitasking behaviours to cope with the overwhelming information often switching between multiple sources of information without fully engaging with any of them (Junco, 2012).

Degree of Disease Aggravation

Mild

- Occasional difficulty in managing information overload.
- Mild impact on productivity, decision-making, and overall well-being.
- Occasional feeling of overwhelming by the amount of information but still effectively manageable and prioritisable.

Moderate

- Frequent episodes of information overload with noticeable impairment in daily functioning.
- Occasional struggle to keep up with information influx
- Increased stress levels, decreased productivity, and difficulty in decision-making.

Severe

- Persistent and severe difficulties in managing information overload.
- Significant impairment in multiple areas of life, including work, relationships, and well-being.
- Higher levels of stress, cognitive fatigue, and reduced quality of life.



Image: [Pexels](#)

Computer Addiction

Computer Addiction refers to an excessive and compulsive use of computers and related technologies where individuals spend an overbalanced amount of time using computer technologies at the cost of work performance or family obligations. Computer Addiction includes a wide range of behaviours, including online gambling, shopping or stock.

Examples:

Common examples of Computer Addiction include but are not limited to:

- **Extreme Internet Browsing:** Engaging in online activities, such as surfing websites, reading articles, or watching videos and spending a significant amount of time exploring the vast information available online.
- **Excessive Online Gaming:** Playing computer games, whether single-player or multiplayer, for extended periods while getting immersed in virtual worlds and experiencing the thrill of competition.
- **Disproportionate Online Communication:** Using instant messaging platforms, email, or social media for communication and interaction often engaging in online forums, chat rooms, or virtual communities.

Symptoms

Computer Addiction is evident through the **following symptoms:**

- **Impaired Interpersonal Relationships:** Experiencing difficulties in forming or maintaining real-life relationships resulting in strained relationships with family, friends, or romantic partners due to excessive computer use (Caplan, 2002).
- **Excessive Usage and Preoccupation:** Spending a significant amount of time using the computer and neglecting other responsibilities while feeling a strong urge or compulsion to use the computer frequently (Young, 1998).
- **Neglect of Personal Life:** Neglecting personal hygiene, social interactions, or academic/work responsibilities due to excessive computer use often resulting in spending less time engaging in face-to-face interactions with family and friends (Lam & Peng, 2010).
- **Withdrawal Symptoms:** Experiencing restlessness, irritability, or anxiety when unable to use the computer and physical symptoms such as headache or insomnia upon computer use cessation (Beard & Wolf, 2001).
- **Escapism:** Using the computer to escape from real-life problems, stress, or negative emotions and seeking comfort and distraction through computer-related activities (Davis, 2001).

Degree of Disease Aggravation

Mild

- Moderate daily use of computers or related technologies causing disruption in daily life.
- Recognition of the behaviour as problematic but struggling to establish a healthy balance.
- Experience of mild distress or interference in social and academic/work function.

Moderate

- Frequent and prolonged engagement with computers leading to noticeable impairment in various life domains.
- Difficulties in controlling computer use and increased cravings for online activities.
- Experience in moderate distress, social isolation, or negative consequences.

Severe

- Compulsive and excessive engagement with computers, resulting in severe disruption of personal, social, and occupational functioning.
- Inability to disengage from computer activities despite negative consequences.
- Profound emotional distress, isolation, and deterioration of real-life relationships.



Image: [Pexels](#)



Image: Pexels



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.6 Plan a Digital Detox Day

Rationale:

A digital detox day helps break the cycle of constant online engagement and allows oneself to reset their online habits.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Choose and plan a specific day when you'll completely disconnect from the internet and digital devices. Eventually this exercise can be extended to more days.

Instructions:

- Choose a day and plan your digital detox in advance.
- Inform friends, family, and colleagues about your detox day.
- Plan alternative offline activities to perform during your digital detox day. These may include but are not limited to reading physical books, going for a hike, or engaging in a hobby or sport.
- Turn off all digital devices, including smartphones, tablets, computers, and smart TVs for a full 24 hours (or more as planned)

Resources Needed:

Calendar / Planner



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.7

Set Phone-Free Meal Times

Rationale:

Avoiding to use one's smartphone during meals promotes mindful eating and in-person interactions, thus strengthening personal connections.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Switch off smartphone during meal times or designate a phone-free zone during meals. One can also switch off any internet connection during this time.

Instructions:

- Designate a specific location at home, such as the dining table, where phones are not allowed during meal times.
- Turn off or completely remove smartphone during meal times.
- Inform family, friends and colleagues about this rule and encourage them to participate.
- Use meal times for conversation, enjoying your food, and being fully present in the moment.

Resources Needed:

None



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.8

Set a Digital Sunset

Rationale:

Turning off one's screens or any digital connections at least an hour before bedtime reduces exposure to blue light, improving sleep quality.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Set a daily time where you switch off all digital resources (digital sunset) and start winding down.

Instructions:

- Set a daily "digital sunset" time, ideally at least one hour before your planned bedtime.
- Use an alarm clock or timer to remind you when it's time to start winding down.
- Replace screen time with relaxing activities such as reading physical books, taking a warm bath, or practicing relaxation techniques.

Resources Needed:

- Alarm clock / Timer



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.9

Unsubscribe and Unfollow Unimportant or Irrelevant Threads

Rationale:

Reducing digital clutter minimises distractions and the urge to continuously check notifications, ultimately reducing screen time.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Review any irrelevant or unimportant email subscriptions and social media accounts and unsubscribe or unfollow accordingly.

Instructions:

- Take some time to review your email subscriptions and social media accounts.
- Unsubscribe from newsletters or promotional emails that are no longer relevant or useful.
- Unfollow or mute accounts on social media platforms that trigger excessive internet use or negative emotions.

Resources Needed:

Computer / Smartphone / Tablet



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 2.10

Track Your Screen Time

Rationale:

Tracking one's screen time increases self-awareness, helping in setting realistic limits and reduce excessive internet use.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Use smartphone apps or keep a journal to record the amount of time spent on digital devices.

Instructions:

- Download a screen time tracking app on your smartphone or keep a journal to record the amount of time spent on digital devices each day.
- Set a daily screen time limit based on your goals and needs.
- Regularly review your screen time data and adjust your limits as necessary to align with your recovery goals.

Resources Needed:

- Tracking app or journal

CONCLUSION

Through our greater adoption of technology, the matter of Internet Addiction Disorder has become increasingly more prevalent, leading to the appearance of internet related behaviours that are compulsive or troublesome. Shaw and Black (2008), together with Salicetia (2015), have delineated distinctive types of IAD; these include Cyber Sexual Addiction, Cyber-Relational Addiction, Net Compulsions or Net Gaming Addiction, Social Media Addiction, Information Overload, and Computer Addiction. The severity of these addictions can be further categorised as being mild, moderate or severe. Moreover, IAD is exhibited through an array of symptoms; such as preoccupation, loss of control, neglect of responsibilities, escalation, withdrawal symptoms, impaired social functioning, and emotional disturbances. Recognising these signs whilst also comprehending the gravity of IAD is essential to addressing the impact on the individual's mental health, relationships, and quality of life. Developing one's awareness and implementing intervention methods is crucial in mitigating the adverse effects of such addictions.

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Module 3

Ways & Principles of Talking with an Addicted Adult

INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a complicated mental disorder that has an impact on both the brain and behaviour of the addict. When you don't comprehend the demands or circumstances of an addict, it might be challenging to interact with them. You could feel helpless, irritated, hurt, or enraged when you try to talk to them. However, communication is crucial for creating a sense of trust, demonstrating support, and assisting in their recovery.

The methods and guidelines for effectively connecting with adults who use the internet excessively will be covered in this module. It is crucial to comprehend the difficulties faced by people who struggle with excessive internet use to interact with them helpfully and constructively in our increasingly digital society.

"Managing time online in a digitally healthy and balanced way requires highly sophisticated cognitive skills that don't fully develop until we reach the age of 25." (What Is Internet Addiction Disorder? n.d.)

You will discover some useful techniques and guidelines for communicating with an Adult with addiction. Applying these techniques might strengthen your bond with the person with addiction and aid in their recovery.



Image: [Canva](#)



DEFINITION: Communication

Definition of Communication According to 5 Authors, n.d.)

"Communication can be defined as a process by which one person is in contact with another through a message and expects the latter to be a response, an opinion, an activity or a behaviour."

Show empathy and understanding



Image: Canva

Understanding and empathy are cognitive abilities as well as emotional ones. They entail both feeling and considering another person's opinions and experiences. Various theoretical frameworks attempt to explain how understanding and empathy function in the brain and behaviour, as well as how they may be impacted by addiction. Differentiating between affective and cognitive degrees of empathy is one strategy.

Cognitive empathy is the capacity to surmise or conjure up the thoughts and beliefs of another person. (Yalçın & DiPaola, 2019)

Affective empathy is the capacity to relate to or share another person's emotions. (Yalçın & DiPaola, 2019)

The insula, amygdala, prefrontal cortex, and mirror neuron system are some of the various brain areas and mechanisms on which both types of empathy rely. When compared to cognitive empathy, affective empathy is more automatic and intuitive (ScienceDirect, 2022).

Developing a dimensional model of empathy, such as the perception-action model (PAM), is an additional strategy. According to this paradigm, there is a continuum of processes that make up empathy, ranging from low-level ones like emotional contagion and mimicry to high-level ones like perspective-taking and theory of mind.

According to the PAM, a shared brain network mediates our ability to sense other people's actions and feelings and map them onto our representations. This network includes the insula, anterior cingulate cortex, somatosensory cortex, and mirror neuron system. The PAM also highlights the significance of top-down modulation by more advanced cognitive processes such as executive control, memory, and attention.

Both theories concur that empathy and understanding are intricate, diverse phenomena that can be influenced by a range of elements, including motivation, personality, culture, and situation. Depending on the type, extent, and length of substance use as well as the unique features of the addict, addiction can also have varying effects on empathy and understanding.

Corresponding to certain research, addiction can impair affective as well as cognitive empathy, which

results in decreased emotional awareness, recognition, and regulation as well as diminished perspective-taking, mentalizing, and moral reasoning. Some characteristics of empathy, such as emotional resonance or empathic concern, have been shown in other studies to be enhanced or preserved by addiction, particularly for those with comparable experiences or histories.

As a result, demonstrating empathy and understanding when speaking with an adult with addiction necessitates considering their needs and situation, as well as their possible capacities for empathy. Additionally, it necessitates being conscious of one's prejudices and emotions to modify one's communication approach. By doing this, one can develop a friendly and helpful relationship with the person with addiction, assist them in overcoming their obstacles, and encourage their pursuit of recovery.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.1 Empathy Exercises

Rationale:

Empathy-building improves interpersonal relationships and lessens reliance on online social networks.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Look for ways to promote empathy, such as by volunteering, participating in support organizations, or going to neighborhood events.

Instructions:

- Do some local volunteering, support group, and community event research.
- Schedule consistent time each day to engage in these activities on your own.

Resources Needed:

information on community events, support groups, and volunteer opportunities in the area.

Choose the right time and place

The autonomy principle, a fundamental idea in moral and political philosophy, can be regarded as being applied in the process of deciding when and where to talk with an adult with addiction. Being autonomous means having the ability to control oneself in accordance with one's own goals and objectives, free from influence or coercion from others. Respecting others' autonomy entails recognising their right to do as they like and respecting their autonomy as well.

When and where you speak with an adult with addiction can have a significant impact on how they hear and react to your message. To have an honest and courteous talk free from interruptions, you need to create a safe and comfortable environment.

You may demonstrate that you value your relationship and trust and that you want to keep the lines of communication open and positive by picking a time and location that is considerate of both parties.



DEFINITION: Safe Space

Staff (2020) describes the term safe space as generally meaning:

"a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment or any other emotional or physical harm."

You can use the following advice to help you pick the ideal time and location:

- Talking when you're sad, furious, or stressed out is best avoided. This may make you sound antagonistic or accusing by changing your tone of voice, body language, and word choice. Wait until you are composed and cool and prepare your speech beforehand.
- Talking in front of others or in public areas is not recommended. They may get defensive, vulnerable, or ashamed as a result, which may hinder them from discussing or confessing their issue. Select a quiet, secluded location where you can maintain your privacy and secrecy.
- In times of difficulty or controversy, refrain from speaking.

This may cause adults to feel helpless, in danger, or cornered and set off their fight-or-flight reaction. Pick a time when things are generally stable and tranquil, and when there are no pressing issues or demands. Consequently, request for their availability and consent. This can demonstrate to them that you respect their privacy and personal space and that you are not attempting to compel or exert undue influence. Ask them if they would be open to speaking with you, then offer a time and location that is convenient for both of you.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.2 Phone-Free Zones

Rationale:

Creating phone-free zones in your home encourages in-person conversation and reduces digital distractions.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Set boundaries for when and where you can use your phone at home.

Instructions:

- Decide on times or places (such as the dining room) where phones will not be used.
- During these times or in these places, encourage free communication and connection with family or roommates.

Resources Needed:

None required.

Use Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

When speaking with an adult with addiction, using Nonviolent Communication can be considered a strategy to encourage successful communication, reciprocal respect, and constructive transformation. Nonviolent Communication transmits empathy, compassion, support, and understanding rather than aggressiveness, criticism, blame, or judgement. Person-first language, which emphasises the person rather than their circumstance or behaviour, can also be used in Nonviolent Communication.

There are several advantages to using Nonviolent Communication for both parties participating in the dialogue. The following are some benefits of utilising NVC for the person with addiction:

- They need to be less protective and resistant while being more cooperative and open.
- Reduce their shame and guilt while raising their sense of self-worth and self-efficacy.
- Encourage them to admit their issue and ask for assistance.
- increase the audience's sense of comfort and rapport with the speaker.



DEFINITION: Non-Violent Communication

Importance of Communication Skills in Recovery from Addiction, n.d.

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a communication framework that helps people to connect with themselves and others through empathy and communication using a four-stage process of observation, identifying feelings, identifying needs, and making requests.

One of the many ways Nonviolent Communication (NVC) has blessed my life is that it has helped me learn to relate to an addictive substance user in a clearly non-shaming, non-coercive manner.” (Importance of Communication Skills in Recovery From Addiction, n.d.)

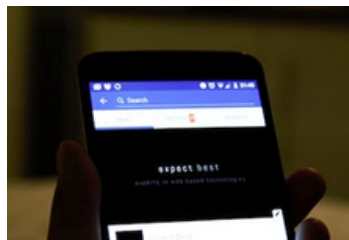


Image: [Canva](#)

The speaker's aggravation and wrath can be reduced and their tranquilly and patience can be increased by utilising Nonviolent Communication.

- Make sure they are more accurate and precise, and less ambiguous.
- Conserve their integrity and uphold their boundaries and principles.
- Keep in touch and maintain a relationship with the addict.

The following are some illustrations of Nonviolent Communication:

- "I'm here to encourage you and listen to you. How may I be of assistance? rather than "You're always finding reasons not to. Get your act together, you need to.
- "I am aware that addiction is a complicated mental disorder that influences both behaviour and the brain. You are not to blame." rather than "You're an addict. You lack willpower."



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.3 **Offline Conversations**

Rationale:

Speaking with people in person promotes more meaningful personal ties and lessens reliance on electronic communication.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Engage in meaningful communication without the use of technology.

Instructions:

- Plan frequent face-to-face encounters with family, friends, or workplace.
- Focus on significant topics and active listening during these discussions.

Resources Needed:

If necessary, use planning instruments like a planner or calendar.

Listen actively and attentively

It is possible to show how improving communication, comprehension, and rapport can be achieved when speaking with an adult with addiction. To effectively communicate, one must be able to do more than just hear what another person says.

One must also actively listen to comprehend the meaning and purpose behind what they are saying. getting completely present and concentrated during the conversation, without getting sidetracked or diverted by other things, is a communication skill known as attentive listening.

Both parties involved in the dialogue can gain from active and attentive listening. Actively and attentively listening to someone with an addiction can:

- Reduce their loneliness and isolation by making them feel heard and respected.
- Assist them in refining their ideas and emotions so they can communicate more clearly and forcefully.
- Develop a helpful relationship and win the trust and confidence of the listener.
- Encourage them to examine their needs and circumstances, as well as their objectives and possibilities.



DEFINITION: Active Listening

What Is Active Listening? n.d

Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. It is an important first step to defuse the situation and seek solutions to problems

Active and careful listening by the listener can:

- Help them understand the addict better so they can avoid making snap decisions or assumptions about them.
- Avoid offering unwelcome advice or criticism and instead assist them in responding more appropriately and constructively.
- Help them control their own emotions and reactions so they don't lose their temper or become annoyed.
- Encourage them to uphold their principles and limits while avoiding codependent or enabling behaviours.



Real-life fictional examples

Miscommunication and Sarah's Internet Research Addiction

Sarah has been addicted to continually searching for information online. Although it is admirable that she is so curious and eager to learn, her fixation causes misunderstandings in her personal relationships. As she is more interested in gathering information to support or refute others' claims, Sarah frequently interrupts or completes others' sentences during conversations without completely grasping their ideas. Sarah takes advice from a communication coach who helps her improve both active listening skills and research habits because she recognises the need to achieve a balance.

Following are some instances of active and focused listening abilities:

- Observing verbal and non-verbal clues, such as voice inflexion, posture, facial expressions, etc.
- Making sure to maintain eye contact, showing attention and involvement by nodding, grinning, leaning forward, etc.
- By posing open-ended queries like, "How do you feel about that?" or "What do you think you need?" to elicit further comments.
- To ensure understanding and demonstrate empathy, paraphrase, and reflect on what has been stated. For example, "So you're saying that you feel hopeless and scared?" or "It sounds like your addiction is getting the better of you."
- Using phrases like "Let me see if I got this right. ", you can summarise the key aspects of the discussion to review what has been discussed and decided upon. You want to stop using drugs, but you're not sure how. You worry about the possibility of relapse and withdrawal symptoms. You're willing to attempt a few other types of treatments, but you need my backing.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.4 Mindful Listening

Rationale:

Developing the skill of mindful listening improves communication with others and promotes open dialogue.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Make a commitment to listening with awareness whenever you connect with others.

Instructions:

- Give the other person in the conversation your whole attention when you're conversing.
- When someone else is speaking, refrain from responding or interrupting.

Resources Needed:

None required.



Image: Canva

Encourage self-reflection

To facilitate understanding, awareness, and transformation when speaking with an adult with addiction, it can be argued that self-reflection should be encouraged. Self-reflection is the practice of looking inward and analysing one's ideas, feelings, behaviours, and experiences to determine how they have been affected and what they have led to. To recognise their problem, comprehend their motives and triggers, grasp their strengths and limitations, and examine their options and aspirations, a person with addiction may benefit from self-reflection.



DEFINITION: Self-Reflection

Self-Reflection: Definition and How to Do It, n.d.

Self-reflection is defined as a mental process you can use to grow your understanding of who you are, what your values are, and why you think, feel, and act the way you do. When you self-reflect and become more conscious of what drives you, you can make changes that help you more easily develop yourself or improve your life

Encouragement of self-reflection can be advantageous for both sides of the communication in several ways. Self-reflection for someone with an addiction can:

- Assist them in ending the cycle of denial and justification so they may take ownership of their actions and accept accountability.
- Increase their self-esteem and self-efficacy while assisting them in acquiring a sense of agency and empowerment.
- Improve their coping and problem-solving abilities by assisting them in learning from their failures and triumphs.
- Encourage them to make their acts more meaningful and purposeful by helping them to match them with their values and objectives.

Inspiring self-reflection in the listener can:

To promote self-reflection, for instance:

- Help them accept the addict's autonomy and decisions rather than pushing their opinions or solutions on them.
- Help them by offering advice and constructive criticism but refrain from being critical or judgmental.
- Help them refrain from enabling or codependent behaviours and instead encourage the recovering addict.
- Help them develop a cooperative and trustworthy connection with the person with addiction to prevent conflict.
- Posing open-ended queries like, "What do you think is causing your addiction?" encourage the addict to reflect extensively on their circumstances and needs. or "How do you feel about the way of life you currently lead?"
- Using journaling or other artistic pursuits that enable the person with addiction to communicate and explore their ideas and emotions, such as "You could try journaling every day. This may aid in improving your self-awareness."



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.5 Written Communication

Rationale:

Pen and paper communication is encouraged as a substitute for internet engagement and stimulates self-reflection.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Promote textual communication on paper and using a pen.

Instructions:

- o Give yourself a certain amount of time every day or every week to write letters, keep a journal, or put your emotions and thoughts on paper.

Resources Needed:

Writing instruments like pens, notebooks, or a diary.

Taking Care of Yourself

One method to protect one's well-being, support one's boundaries, and improve one's relationship is to take care of oneself when speaking with an adult with addiction. Knowing your own needs, feelings, and limitations is an important part of taking care of yourself. You should also learn good coping mechanisms for dealing with the stress and difficulties that come with communicating with a person with addiction. You can support him more capably and compassionately if you take care of yourself.

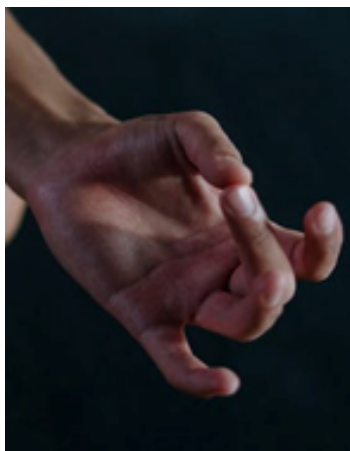


Image: Canva

Healthy Coping Mechanisms for Withdrawal

Specifically, most treatment centres incorporate coping techniques to help a person learn new practices. One of the first things a person can learn is how to focus on positive things. However, negative thinking can put them closer to relapsing. They can avoid a downward spiral by finding the silver lining to any sort of situation. This is different from trivializing negative things. Rather, the person is encouraged to acknowledge the negative. (Crest View Recovery Center, 2018)

For all people involved in communication, taking care of yourself can offer several advantages. The benefits of taking care of oneself for someone with an addiction include:

- Help them to respect your independence and freedom of choice, and to refrain from abusing or controlling you.
- Encourage them to seek treatment or make a change by assisting them in understanding the impact and repercussions of their addiction.
- Helping them to trust you more will help them to appreciate your love and support.
- Help them develop better coping mechanisms by modelling them after yourself.

Self-care has the following benefits for you:

- Assist you in safeguarding your emotional, mental, and physical health and avoiding burnout or tiredness.
- Help you establish definite, consistent limits and to assert your rights and values.
- Assist you in pursuing your interests and ambitions while also enjoying your life and relationships.
- Help you develop a hopeful and upbeat mindset, as well as a sense of meaning and purpose.



Real-life fictional examples

Emma's Dependence on social media and Poor Emotional Health

Emma regularly scans social media, evaluating herself against others, and looking for approval from online connections. Her emotional health and sense of self-worth have been badly harmed by her addiction. Emma resolves to limit her social media use and instead concentrate on things that foster her mental health, such as practising mindfulness, journaling, and spending quality time with loved ones. She does this because she recognises the need to prioritise self-care. Through this change, she starts to put her mental health before virtual approval.

Taking care of oneself includes things like:

- Seeking out professional assistance or joining a self-support group where you may share your experiences, gain knowledge from others, and receive direction and inspiration.
- Taking care of yourself by engaging in activities that nourish your body, mind, and soul, such as eating healthily, working out frequently, getting enough sleep, meditating, and relaxing.
- Reading, writing, art, gardening, and other activities that you find enjoyable and fulfilling.
- Avoiding those who deplete or injure you and spending time with those that love and support you, such as family, friends, mentors, etc.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.6 Social Events

Rationale:

Attending in-person social events and gatherings improves offline relationships.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Participate actively in social gatherings, community events, and other face-to-face contacts.

Instructions:

- Find neighborhood clubs, charities, or hobbyist groups that share your interests and join them.
- Regularly participate in social activities and events.

Resources Needed:

Information on neighborhood activities, social gatherings, and hobby groups.

Offer support and resources

Social support is defined as:

"The perception and actuality that one is cared for have assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network" (Dellve & Eriksson, 2017).

This can be delivered through providing resources and support when speaking with an adult with addiction. Social assistance can improve a person's physical and mental health, as well as the quality and satisfaction of their relationship with the recipient.

Social support comes in a variety of forms and serves a variety of purposes, including emotional, instrumental, informational, appraisal, and belonging assistance. For the individual with an addiction, each sort of assistance can fulfill a variety of requirements and fulfill a variety of functions. Consider this:

- To provide emotional support, one must show concern, empathy, care, and respect for the person with addiction. It can improve self-esteem, lower negative emotions, and assist individuals in coping with stress.
- Giving the addict informational support entails offering suggestions, counsel, criticism, or referrals. They may be able to gain the information, abilities, or resources they need to solve their issue, come to a decision, or contact a professional.
- Giving the addict tangible or useful aid is referred to as instrumental support. It can assist individuals in overcoming obstacles or difficulties, achieving their goals, or gaining access to services or therapy.
- Giving the person with an addiction companionship, inclusion, or involvement is referred to as belonging support. They may receive a sense of connection, acceptance, or support from individuals who understand their struggles or experiences.

Depending on the person's preferences, needs, stage of development, or preparedness for therapy, a person's preferred style and amount of assistance may change. As a result, it's critical to cater the support and resources to the person's unique condition and objectives. In addition, it's crucial to think about the resources' context, quality, and potential advantages and disadvantages before giving or receiving them.



Image: [Canva](#)

Providing resources and assistance to an adult with addiction during a conversation can be considered a sort of social support that can benefit both parties. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider the kind and quantity of resources and support that are suitable and efficient for each person's circumstances and objectives. Furthermore, it's crucial to consider the standard and situation of the resources and help that are offered or received. Completely, it's crucial to think about the advantages and disadvantages of providing or receiving assistance and resources.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.7 Screen Time Limits

Rationale:

Limiting screen time promotes the replacement of digital activities with in-person interactions and aids in gradually reducing internet usage.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Use software or device features that track your screen time and let you limit it regularly.

Instructions:

- o To track your usage, select screen time tracking apps or modify device settings.
- o Reduce your screen time gradually and substitute it with activities that encourage social interaction.

Resources Needed:

Apps or device settings for screen time tracking.

Supporting Recovery

Supporting addiction recovery can be considered a process of assisting people with substance use or other disorders in overcoming their physical, psychological, and social obstacles and achieving their personal objectives and well-being.

The nature and intensity of the addiction, the accessibility and calibre of care, the readiness of the patient for change, and the social and environmental scene are all variables that might have an impact on recovery.

Additionally, recovery can be understood from a variety of angles, including the medical, psychological, social, or personal models. The peer support model is one theoretical framework that can help with understanding and practice of assisting addiction recovery. Peer support is described as

"The process of giving and receiving nonprofessional, nonclinical assistance from individuals with similar conditions or circumstances to achieve long-term recovery from psychiatric, alcohol, and/or other drug-related problems" (Hameed Shalaby & O Agyapong, 2020)

Peer support can be given by people who have personally dealt with addiction and recovery and who can aid others who are going through similar problems with empathy, hope, direction, and useful support. Peer support can come in many ways, including mutual aid groups, coaching, advocacy, and education.

Both the peer supporters' well-being and the outcomes of recovery for those with substance use disorders can benefit from peer support. Peer assistance, for instance, can:

- Enhance self-efficacy, self-esteem, and empowerment through offering opportunities for learning and skill development, feedback, and role models.
- By fostering a sense of community, acceptance, and mutual respect, we can lessen stigma, exclusion, and prejudice.
- Facilitating access to knowledge, recommendations, and neighbourhood services will boost social support, connection, and network resources.

- Encourage self-reflection, goal setting, and meaning-making to promote personal transformation.

To develop an all-encompassing and holistic approach to rehabilitation, peer support can also be combined with other kinds of institutional or professional help. Examples include:

- To improve the quality and effectiveness of care, peer support can work with healthcare professionals by exchanging information, opinions, and feedback.
- By bridging cultural differences, promoting communication, and resolving issues, peer support can act as a mediator between clinical professionals and service users.

Internet addiction recovery is a process that needs continual assistance and motivation. Continually check in with the person and express your appreciation for their accomplishments.

Keep in mind to be patient and empathetic, and to provide help and support when required. Throughout their rehabilitation journey, congratulate them on their accomplishments and stay by their side with love and support.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.8 Reducing the Impact of Technology Within Your Environment

Rationale:

Making an area devoid of technology offers a respite for offline pursuits like writing, reading, and meditation.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Your home should have a designated "technology-free" space.

Instructions:

- o Make it very clear that no electronic devices are permitted in this particular area.
- o Use this space for offline activities like reading, writing, and meditation.

Resources Needed:

Rules for setting up and keeping a tech-free environment.

Set boundaries & establish goals

Setting limits and establishing goals is one technique to assist someone who is addicted to the internet. Boundaries are the restrictions you place on what you are willing and unwilling to do, accept, or tolerate for yourself and others. Goals are the precise, quantifiable results you hope to obtain or assist another person with obtaining.



Image: [Canva](#)

“Boundaries are limits we identify for ourselves and apply through action or communication. When we define what we need to feel secure and healthy, when we need it, and create tools to protect those parts of ourselves, we can do wonders for our well-being at work and at home — which, in turn, allows us to bring our best selves to both places.” (A Guide to Setting Better Boundaries, 2022)

You can assist the individual in setting limits by, for instance, helping them establish an internet usage plan or budget, discovering satisfying offline alternatives to online activities, getting expert advice, or joining a support group, and tracking and rewarding success. A person with internet addiction can restore control over their life, lessen their reliance on technology, enhance their well-being, and improve their relationships by setting limits and developing goals.



DEFINITION: Goal-Setting

What Is Goal Setting? Definition, Process & Examples (Mindmesh, n.d.)

“Goal setting is the process of defining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives that an individual or organization aims to achieve. It involves identifying the desired outcomes and developing a plan for achieving them.”

It might be difficult to create boundaries and set goals, particularly if the person with internet addiction is resistive, defensive, or in denial. It's critical to listen to the other person's viewpoint and sentiments as well as to express your concerns and expectations clearly, gently, and respectfully.

Negotiation and compromise can also be involved in setting boundaries and defining goals. You might need to strike a balance between being encouraging and firm, honouring the person's autonomy and holding them responsible, and promoting change and acknowledging the facts.

Setting boundaries and establishing goals can require patience and persistence. You may not see immediate or consistent results, and you may encounter setbacks or relapses. It is important to acknowledge any progress, no matter how small, and to celebrate achievements. It is also important to be flexible and adaptable and to adjust your boundaries and goals as needed.



Image: [Canva](#)



Real-life fictional examples

Career Advancement and Laura's Internet Distractions

Laura is frequently sidetracked by her use of the internet to check her emails, read news items, and participate in forums. She finds it difficult to maintain concentration on her work and accomplish her career goals as a result. To handle this, Laura sets up clear limits by establishing set hours for checking emails and participating in online chats. She establishes career-related goals, such as finishing crucial duties before engaging in online activities and giving top priority to skill development via online courses or professional networking.

Be a role model

Providing a healthy and balanced example of technology use, relationship management, and emotional regulation is part of being a role model for someone who struggles with internet addiction.

Role Model: *Someone that an individual patterns their behaviour after for a particular role. (Bell, 2014)*



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.9 Outdoor Activities

Rationale:

Outdoor activities that aren't digital encourage social connection and lessen reliance on the internet.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Participate in outdoor pursuits that don't involve using the internet frequently.

Instructions:

- Pick outdoor pursuits like walking, riding, hiking, or joining a team for a sport.
- During these activities, concentrate on interacting with others in a non-digital environment.

Resources Needed:

Details on the sports teams and outdoor activities in your community.

Being a role model also entails upholding your boundaries and goals and acting in a way that doesn't conflict with or undermine them. Being an example for someone with internet addiction can help them develop new habits, abilities, and coping mechanisms, improve their self-efficacy and self-esteem, and lessen their isolation and reliance on technology.



Real-life fictional examples

Parenting and John's Addiction to Social Media

John, a parent, is aware that his excessive use of social media is having a bad effect on his connection with his kids. He observes that his children are imitating his behaviour by using screens excessively. John chooses to spend less time on social media and has more meaningful contact with his kids to set a good example for them. John sets a good example by spending time with them, engaging in activities, and maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline involvement. This encourages his kids to form better online habits.



Image: [Pexels](#)

Being a role model does not include being flawless or forcing your beliefs or preferences on someone who is addicted to the internet. It entails being sincere, encouraging, and compassionate; while also owning your virtues and flaws. This is also beneficial for yourself, as it encourages you to take care of your own needs, seek assistance when necessary, and take pleasure in offline activities and relationships.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 3.10

Phone-Free Mealtimes

Rationale:

Meaningful conversations and connections with others are fostered when at least one meal a day is phone-free.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Make it a habit to put your phone away during meals.

Instructions:

- Every day, pick a lunchtime when you won't use any electronics.
- Spend this time connecting with family, friends, and coworkers and having insightful talks.

Resources Needed:

- None required.

CONCLUSION

If you adhere to some fundamental guidelines and concepts, conversing with an adult who is hooked on the internet can be a difficult but rewarding experience. These consist of demonstrating empathy and understanding, picking the appropriate time, and setting, employing nonviolent communication, listening actively and attentively,

promoting self-reflection, encouraging self-care, taking care of yourself, providing support and resources, assisting recovery, setting boundaries, and establishing goals, and serving as an example. You can assist someone who suffers from internet addiction in resolving their issue and enhancing their relationships by using these techniques and skills.



Image: Canva

By improving your relationship with the person, you care about, your ability to communicate and cope, and your self-care, you can also benefit. We may assist people battling with internet addiction on their road to recovery by demonstrating empathy, actively listening, and providing support. Keep in mind that their road towards a happier and more balanced existence can be greatly impacted by open communication and support.

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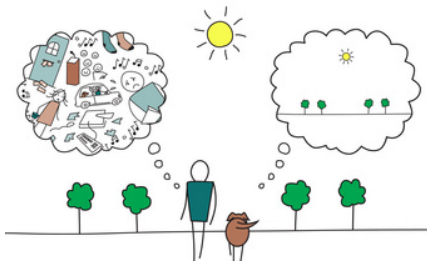
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Module 4

Mindfulness

INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness is all about maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Image: [Waterford Counseling](#).

When we think about mindfulness, we think about acceptance and this means that we pay attention to our feelings, thoughts and body sensations without judging them. And this is about not considering as right or wrong the way we think or feel in a certain moment.

"Many people are alive but don't touch the miracle of being alive."

Thích Nhất Hạnh - a Buddhist monk, author, & mindfulness teacher, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Practicing mindfulness means that we channel our thoughts on what we are experiencing in the present moment rather than thinking about the past or making scenarios about the future.



Image: [Pexels](#)

“Mindfulness is the awareness that arises by paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally”

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Professor of Medicine Emeritus and creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School



Image: [Pexels](#)

WHAT IS NOT MINDFULNESS?



Image: [Canva](#)

Mindfulness is:

- *not a religion*
- *not magic*
- *not paranormal*
- *not Zen*
- *not Nirvana*
- *not easy*
- *not hard*

We are not mindful when:

- we break things or spill them, we hit ourselves due to lack of attention or attention focused on something else (multitasking is our enemy)
- we rush and go through activities without paying attention to them
- we yell at our child or partner, we say words that we later regret
- we find ourselves worried about the future or trapped in the past, sometimes depressed
- we eat, without being aware of food and how much we eat
- we do not notice the subtle sensations of physical tension or discomfort accumulated in the body, in certain muscles or muscle areas.

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

According to an increasing number of scientific studies, mindfulness can improve both mental and physical health, helping to treat, manage, or reduce a multitude of symptoms:

- **Reduces Stress:** Recent studies indicate that mindfulness techniques reduce stress and improve stress-related health outcomes. Taren et al. (2015) conducted a study on 133 stressed, unemployed adults, and demonstrated that only a three-day intensive mindfulness meditation intervention reduced activity in the brain region that triggers the release of stress hormones.
- **Improves Cognition:** In a study conducted by Zeidan et. al (2010), the researchers concluded that practicing mindfulness for just 20 minutes a day for four days significantly reduced fatigue, anxiety, and improved visuo-spatial processing, working memory, and executive functioning, and last, but not least, enhanced the ability to sustain attention.
- **Boosts Immunity:** According to Davidson et al. study from 2003, after an eight-week measuring brain electrical activity before and after mindfulness meditation, the researchers discovered that this type of training plays a role in boosting brain and immune function.
- **Improves Quality of Sleep:** Sleep disturbances are most prevalent among older adults and are usually not properly treated. In the study from 2015 of Black at al., the researchers tested 49 adults in their 60's experiencing sleep problems and concluded that, after going through a structured mindfulness meditation program, they improved their sleep quality in the short term with direct impact on the quality of life.



Image: [Pexels](#)

- **Helps Manage Chronic Pain:**

A pioneer in the mindfulness area, John Kabat-Zinn, PhD, conducted a research in the 1980s and concluded that this type of training can ease coping with chronic pain. Same results have been obtained by researchers Hilton et al. in a meta-analysis from 2017: mindfulness meditation interventions are efficient and safe for the treatment of chronic pain in adults.

- **Increases Empathy:** In their study from 2015 Bibeau et al., have shown that the idea of mindfulness meditation training increasing overall empathy levels is scientifically supported and is important for psychotherapists in their need to develop more empathy toward clients and reduce negative effects of empathy for pain.



Image: [Canva](#)

- **Reduces Rumination:** In the study that Chambers et al. conducted in 2008, the participants at a 10-day intensive mindfulness retreat experienced fewer depressive symptoms and less rumination, also significant improvements in self-reported mindfulness, and performance measures of working memory and sustained attention.
- **Decreases Emotional Reactivity:** A 2007 study by Ortner et al. demonstrated that individuals undertaking mindfulness meditation disengaged easier from emotionally upsetting situations and better focused on cognitive tasks, reporting increased well-being.
- **Improves Relationship Satisfaction:** Another study from 2007, conducted by Barnes et al., showed that mindfulness training helps people respond better to relationship stress and improves one's skills to better communicate emotions to their partner, protecting against the stressful effects of relationship conflict.

- **May Help Lower Blood Pressure:**

A 2019 study of Loucks et al. carried out on a sample of 48 participants, 80% of whom had high blood pressure, provided evidence that a mindfulness-based program adapted to participants with elevated blood pressure is acceptable and feasible. The link between mindfulness-based programs and blood pressure was made by focusing on attention control, self-awareness and emotion regulation. The results were long-lasting: participants' blood pressure remained lower than the baseline taken at the start of the study, a year before.

- **Bolsters Cognitive Flexibility:**

Moore & Malinowski conducted a study in 2009 investigating the link between meditation, self-reported mindfulness and cognitive flexibility. Overall the results suggest that attentional performance and cognitive flexibility are positively related to meditation practice and levels of mindfulness. Meditators performed significantly better than non-meditators on all measures of attention.

- **Restores Child-Like Wonder:** We do not pay attention to small details around us like grass or bugs or birds as we used to do as a child, This is what a 2015 study conducted by Antonova et al. investigated. The conclusion of the research was that practicing moderate mindfulness meditation can weaken sensory habituation and help us start noticing things around us and seeing the world with fresher eyes.



Image: Pexels

IS MINDFULNESS A TREATMENT FOR INTERNET ADDICTION?

Internet addiction has been formally recognized by the American Psychological Association, and countries such as China and South Korea in addition to the World Health Organization, as a significant threat to public health.

Scientists across the world are researching how our growing habits and perpetual involvement with smartphones and other gadgets causes cognitive loss and weakens our ability to critically think, respond, focus and regulate emotions.

Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and others are considered to be highly addictive. Every time an individual receives a “like,” “follow” or “comment”, the individual’s brain releases feel-good neurotransmitters, and this ends up in wanting more engagement.

Especially **Social media** offers a false sense of social engagement and when not involved in, individuals feel isolated and alone. Endless scrolling of Social media unrealistically gives the impression to be an effective way to fight off loneliness, boredom and fill psychological voids.

Research has discovered that people who have a regular habit of being plugged into Social media, screens and the internet can develop new types of psychological syndromes that eventually end up in anxiety with negative impact on the quality of life, emotional stability and overall well-being - FOMO “fear of missing out” & FOLO “fear of being left out”.

In the study #Being13, conducted in 2015 by the clinical psychologist, Marion Underwood, the researcher warned about the highly addictive trait of Social Media with teens checking accounts over 100 times a day out of the fear of losing their peer confirmation.

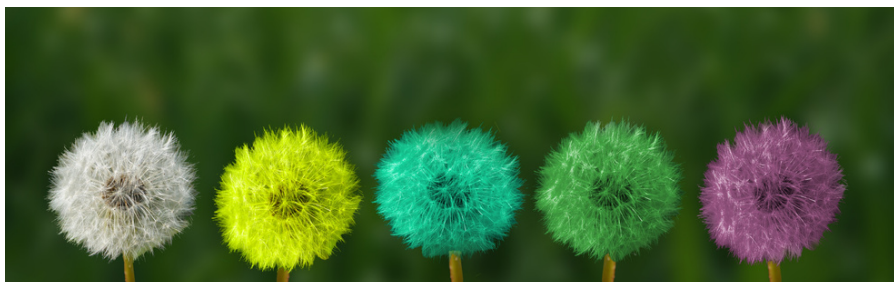


Image: Canva

Recent developments and research on tech addiction prove that **contemporary mindfulness practices** are a potential cure for addictive tech behavior.

Cultivating **higher mindfulness traits** allows a person to maintain a sense of calm and balance in the midst of difficult environments.

HOW CAN MINDFULNESS HELP PEOPLE WITH INTERNET ADDICTION?

Mindfulness allows a person to increase self-awareness and improve the ability to focus on current moments.

Mindfulness promotes self-compassion and confidence which allows a person to accept themselves as they are and not to have to hide behind the screens or look for the online gratifications and social validations.

Mindfulness stops tech dependability and allows a person to exercise their “cognitive strength” which supports in spanning out from compulsive behaviors and addictive obsessions.

Mindfulness helps people regulate their emotions and organize their thoughts and this increases emotional intelligence. And when people are evolved from emotional and cognitive point of view, they start building healthy habits and have a superior lifestyle.

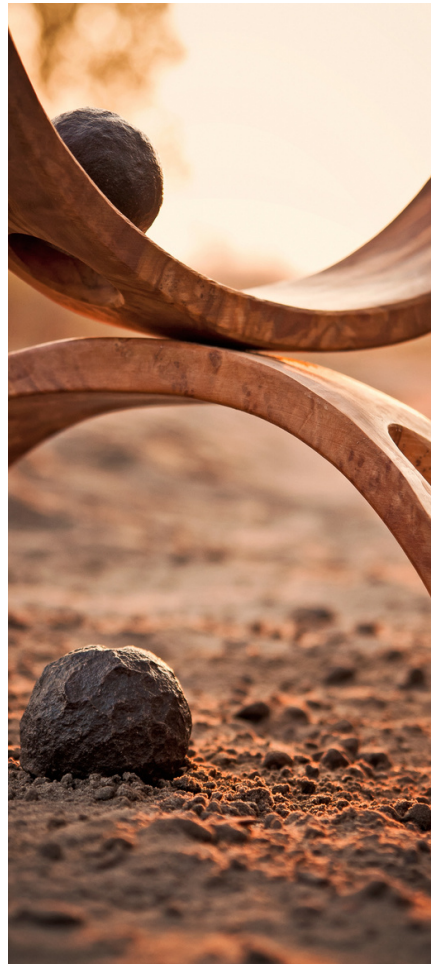


Image: Canva

Lee et al. conducted a study in 2019 on the **effect of mindfulness** and Zen wisdom **on the internet addiction** of college students. The students participating to the research attended a 9 days' intensive mindfulness meditation practice. The finding showed that mindfulness training appeared to be an effective approach significantly reducing students' Internet addiction and improving self-awareness, self-control, concentration, sleep quality and duration, thus helping students develop a more positive lifestyle.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.1 Mindfulness Meditation

Rationale:

The goal of the exercise is quite simple. You have to pay attention to the present moment, without judgement. During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. Your mind will start wandering which is normal, but you will be able to bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing on your breathing, again and again.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Aim to practice daily for 15-30 minutes. Frequency and length of the practice will influence the quality of your results. Find a time and place where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Silence your phone and other devices. Set a timer for your desired practice length.

Instructions:

- Sit in a chair, or on the floor with a cushion for support.
- Straighten your back, but not to the point of stiffness.
- Let your chin drop slightly, and gaze downward at a point in front of you.
- If in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the ground. If on the floor, cross your legs.
- Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs.
- If your pose becomes too uncomfortable, feel free to take a break or adjust.

Resources Needed:

Timer or clock to keep track of your exercise length
Silent room, chair or floor with comfortable cushion

Do we really know how to breathe?

Breathing is such a common activity that we do not think about it at all. In Mindfulness, breathing is a fundamental facet and acknowledging our breaths can influence thoughts, emotions, and promote calm. Also, different types of breathing techniques have been linked to numerous health benefits.

But before going further, let's learn how to breathe as an entry point into deeper Mindfulness understanding.



Image: Pexels

Mindful Breathing

It is just about being aware of its natural occurrence. Begin by breathing normally and start paying attention to your breath. When your mind naturally wanders, notice it and simply return to the occurrence of each inhale and exhale.

Counting Breaths

It is about counting each breath which it will be surprisingly difficult. But for people working in a busy environment with a lot of tasks on their mind, this technique will help them decrease stress and anxiety, and better manage negative emotions.

Deep Breathing

It is also called belly breathing or diaphragmatic breathing. Breathing very fully into the belly, then exhaling completely, help reduce stress and promote a sense of calm.

2-4 Breathing

It is about extending the exhale so it is longer than the inhale. Inhaling for two counts and immediately exhaling for four counts slows breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and metabolism with direct impact on reducing extreme stress.

Energizing Breaths

It is about boosting your energy and alertness through inhaling in four counts and exhaling in one long breath so that your lungs are completely empty.

PILLARS OF MINDFULNESS

These **seven principles of mindfulness** were introduced by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., the creator of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme.

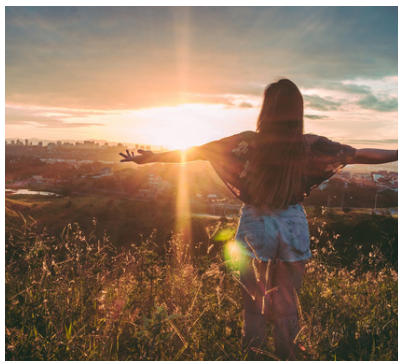


Image: Pexels

Non-judging

The world is a colorful place. We cannot think at it as being black and white. It is common to hear we should be non-judgmental of others. But what about ourselves? Mindfulness teaches us not to be so hard on ourselves or others who have perhaps relapsed or have different ways of coping.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.2 **Self-Compassion Break**

Rationale:

For a lot of us, it is easier to cultivate loving, accepting thoughts for another than it is to offer this kindness to ourselves. This practice is an invitation to offer ourselves the same kindness and compassion that we would offer a loved one, helping us to embrace ourselves with love.

How To Apply the Exercise:

You can take a Self-Compassion Break any time you are feeling worried, anxious, stressed, or caught in a negative thought pattern.

Instructions:

- Find a safe space where you can comfortably close your eyes for a few moments.
- Close your eyes, draw one or both hands to your heart, letting them rest flat on your chest.
- Take three full, deep breaths into the body, letting both chest and belly expand.

- Take this time to acknowledge that you are struggling, offering yourself any words of support or compassion that you might offer a loved one. Imagine you are your own friend, you love and hold yourself no matter what the cost, for a few more full breaths.
- Before ending the exercise, take a few moments to repeat the following phrases just for yourself:
I honor and support myself.
I love and accept myself.
I practice peace and patience.
I am worthy of my own compassion and kindness.

Please repeat these phrases as many times as you consider necessary.

- In the end, take your time to tell yourself any other things you need to hear. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes. Take the self-compassion from this exercise with you throughout the day.

Resources Needed:

Timer or clock to keep track of your exercise length
Silent room, chair or floor with comfortable cushion



Image: [Pexels](#)

Patience

There is no need to rush. You should live the moment for what it is and not become too transfixed on the future because the only moment we can live in is the present moment. Mindfulness helps us pay attention to the present and be aware of what it is around us rather than ruminating on the past or wishing on the future to come faster.

Letting go

Free ourselves of worry and focus on the present. Let go of past mistakes we have made, anger towards those in our lives, and trauma in our past. It is humanly much easier to think about things that we cannot change and cause us a great deal of stress. Mindfulness helps us accept the present moment, let go of stress and accept the world as it is.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.3 Being Still

Rationale:

Humans are addicted to movement. Our minds are not used to stand still, do nothing, wait, rest or listen. We get quite uncomfortable. But distraction is what takes us away from the present moment, the only place where we can be really happy and content with ourselves and our lives.

It is in the stillness that we are able to see the true nature of our minds, and to recognize true nature as one of contentment and joy.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Take a comfortable seat in the most quiet place you can find
Set a timer for 3, 5 or 7 minutes

Instructions:

- Close your eyes and draw your attention to your breath
- Give yourself permission to rest, to do nothing, to simply be still
- Rest in the presence of breath and body awareness
- Each time you notice thoughts about the future, or rumination on the past, remind yourself that you have permission to let it go, to stay present, to rest
- Feel your mind relax back into the freedom of spaciousness
- Let your mind take a break and rest in a sense of ease

Resources Needed:

Timer or clock to keep track of your exercise length
Silent room, chair or floor with comfortable cushion



Image: Pexels

Acceptance

From mindfulness point of view, acceptance does not mean approval or compliance, but seeing the present moment as it truly is, not being clouded by your biases. You can accept it or change it, if appropriate to you, because this principle is about letting go of denial or ignorance and accepting the facts as they are.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.4

RAIN Mindfulness Exercise

Rationale:

RAIN is a mindfulness practice that will help you focus on the present and cope with uncomfortable thoughts and emotions.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.

Close your eyes or let your gaze soften.

Take three slow, deep breaths at the beginning and at the end of the exercise.

Continue to be mindful and kind to yourself throughout the day.

Instructions:

Follow the steps below, spending a couple of minutes on each step:

- **(R)ECOGNIZE:** Let yourself feel at ease in the present moment. Slowly acknowledge your surroundings. Become aware of your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations. Try to name your feelings loudly or silently, as you prefer.
- **(A)LLOW:** Watch your present sensations as if watching a movie. Your thoughts and feelings will come and go. Let them be, do not try to control them. Do not make judgments. Everything you are feeling or thinking is ok. You can even tell yourself that *"This is how it is right now."*
- **(I)NVESTIGATE:** Pay attention to the words that are going through your mind right now. Pay attention to the emotions and try to find out their source. Pay attention to the way these feelings are sensed by your body. Identify your most vulnerable part and find out what it needs: love, acceptance, belonging or, maybe, forgiveness.
- **(N)URTURE:** Be kind to yourself and with what you are going through right now. Tell yourself nice things like *"I love you"* or *"you are okay"*, for example. Now think of somebody else - a friend, somebody from your family, your favorite pet, or maybe your idol - and imagine that their love is pouring over you. Let yourself flooded by love and compassion until you feel calm and peaceful.

Resources Needed:

Silent room, chair or floor with comfortable cushion



Image: Pexels

Non-Striving

It is the practice of recognizing that who you are is enough and that striving to be “different” or “better” can be distracting. Embrace who you are and find comfort in that. This allows you to concentrate on the things that matter in the present moment.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.5 Gratitude

Rationale:

The gratitude exercise opens our awareness to all the good things happening in our lives. It is a technique used to connect to the reality of our current situation. Gratitude opens our eyes to all that is going well in the present moment.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Take a comfortable seat in the most quiet place you can find
Set a timer for 5, 7 or 10 minutes

Instructions:

- Close your eyes and become aware of your breathing
- Notice where you are
- Begin with recognizing your good fortune in having been born in your particular country, a safer place than others
- Zoom in further to your particular region of that country
- How lucky you are to be there, note all the positive qualities of the area around you
- Zoom in then further to your neighborhood, noting all its fortunate qualities
- Zoom in to the house in which you sit. Aware that not everyone is so fortunate to have a roof over their heads
- Notice the clothes you are wearing, your human body. Breathing. Functioning.
- Experience gratitude for each of your senses. Hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, sensing.
- Recognize that you are here right now relaxing, learning, growing, and deepening your awareness.
- Sit with this sense of gratitude until your timer goes off

Resources Needed:

Timer to keep track of your exercise length. Silent room.



Image: Pexels

Beginner's Mind

Life is ever changing. No moment is the same as another. Each one is unique in nature and contains unique possibilities. In the context of mindfulness, this concept is about simplicity. When facing a new situation, act knowing that you do not know everything, not under the burden of past ideas and experiences,



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.6 Everything Fresh and New

Rationale:

The beginner's mind, or childlike mind is a state of mind in which we approach everything with curiosity, as if it's fresh and brand new. In this state of mind, we are free from our habitual judgements, and we are better able to see the infinite potential in all things. This exercise uses the body, not only the mind, to bring awareness to our habits and an increased mindfulness to our daily activity.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Use your home or your office to practice this exercise
Set a timer for 15, 30 or 60 minutes

Instructions:

- Go about your usually day, but do every activity with your non-dominant hand (*if you are left handed, do all activities with your right hand, and vice versa*).
- For example, brush your teeth, grab your coffee mug, lift your phone, or open doors with your non-dominant hand. As you step forward, downward or up, lead with your nondominant foot.
- Stay mindful as you do each of your normal, everyday activities, but in a new way
- Let the awkwardness of each action help you see each action as fresh and new

Resources Needed:

Timer or clock to keep track of your exercise length
Any location you consider appropriate, home or office.



Image: Pexels

Trust

Having trust in yourself, your beliefs and your intuition is necessary to find peace. You have to make your own choices based on your deep thinking about possible options, not on what the others tell you is the correct way to do.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.7 Mindful Wakeup: Start with a Purpose

Rationale:

Intention refers to the motivation for everything we think, say, or do. This practice can help you align your conscious thinking with the unconscious impulses so that your decision-making processes and behaviors during moments of difficulty, mostly, be more mindful and compassionate.

How To Apply the Exercise:

This practice is best done first thing in the morning, before checking phones or email. Take as much time as you need.

Instructions:

- After you wake up, stay in your bed or move to a comfortable chair and relax. Close your eyes and become aware of the sensations in your body. Make sure your back is straight, but not stiff.
- Take three long and deep breaths — inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Then let yourself breathe normally, simply experiencing the breathing process, being aware of the in and out movements of your chest and belly.
- Now ask yourself about the intention you want to set for today
- This intention can be simply being kind to yourself, being generous with others, being present in your life, make something for your soul, go to the gym, eat well, enjoy your friends or anything else you consider important.
- Make a quick check during the day. Just make a pause, take a breath, and remember your set intention.

Resources Needed:

Any silent room, preferably your bedroom.

THE THREE C'S OF ENGAGED MINDFULNESS

The three C's of Engaged Mindfulness are **curiosity, courage & care**. These three qualities contribute to the quality of the mindfulness techniques we use, making them more dynamic and pro-active.

Curiosity

Mindfulness help us replace indifference & boredom with curiosity. There are moments when we cease to feel alive. Indifference & a sense of mental fatigue clouds our capacity to see the opportunity for small joys and connection to life in the moment.



Image: Canva



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.8 Cultivating Childlike Wonder

Rationale:

This exercise will help you go back to your own childlike capacity for presence and curiosity, enhancing your attention to the environment around you.

How To Apply the Exercise:

You can practice this exercise wherever you are and for as long as you need.

Instructions:

- Take a moment to pause wherever you are – whether seated, standing, or lying down.
- Close your eyes and invite your open and curious inner child to come to the surface.
- When you open your eyes again, imagine as if you are experiencing everything around you for the first time. For a few minutes, scan your environment for colors, textures, aromas, any movements, feeling the earth, chair, bed, or other surface beneath you
- Hold your attention on one particular object of your awareness that pleases your senses for one minute and notice how the mind and body feel in this moment
- You can repeat this exercise in a variety of locations and at different points of the day.

Resources Needed:

- None

Courage

Bringing mindful courage to our lives means to be aware of our fears and insecurities that are a constant presence in our lives and can easily define our behaviors and experiences, if we let them.

Courage, on the other hand, help us think, act and speak according to our values and creative self-expression.



Image: [Pexels](#)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.9 Mindful Walking

Rationale:

Mindful walking is a practice that increases our focus and presence, helping us to tune into the simplicity of one of our most basic daily movements.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Find a space where you will be able to take approximately ten full steps in one. A safe and comfortable outdoor setting would work for this exercise.

Instructions:

- To experience walking with full presence, begin by standing affirmatively in one spot. Notice the sensations of the earth or floor against your shoes or feet. Take three full breaths to settle the mind and to ground yourself in this practice.
- Begin by taking one slow step at a fraction of the speed you would normally take it at.
- With this step (and with each to come), grant the fullness of your awareness to the sensation of the movement.
- As you take about ten full steps in one direction, continue to ground your attention in the experience of walking.
- When you have finished moving in one direction, mindfully turn around to head back to where you began.
- Slowly make your way back to where you began.
- When you return to where you first started, root yourself back into the ground beneath you. Take three full, mindful breaths and then reflect upon your experience of this practice.

Resources Needed:

- Comfortable outdoor setting.

Care

Mindfulness helps you choose care instead of intolerance & harshness. It can be easy to become intolerant of our own or other's imperfections. It can feel safer not to care, also. To practice mindful care means being connected to our own heart, to stay gentle, consistent and affectionate even if easier not to.



Image: Pexels



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 4.10 Noticing your Helpers

Rationale:

We have never been alone, and we're not alone right now. Mindfulness helps us recognize how much we are truly supported and cared for by all the beings in the world around us.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Sit comfortably in a quiet place. No time limit is required.

Instructions:

- Close your eyes, and breathe in and out through your nose
- Bring to mind anyone who has ever helped you in your life
- As you recall each one, imagine that they are seated in the sky ahead of you, looking down and smiling upon where you are right here, and right now
- Think all the way back to your mother, your family, or those who helped raise you, but also teachers, coaches & helpers in your life
- Take as much time as you need to invite all your helpers to the space in the sky in front of you
- Once they are up there, feel their presence
- Feel their support and their love and their care for you
- Imagine that love and support and care shining down on you like rays of light
- Feel it in your body as if you are being held by all that warmth and kindness
- Generate a deep sense of gratitude for each of your helpers, resting in their warmth for as long as you'd like
- When you're ready to close the meditation, thank your helpers in your own words.

Resources needed:

- Comfortable environment.

CONCLUSIONS

In psychotherapy, **mindfulness** training is regularly used as a tool to treat depression, anxiety, stress and mood disorder with long-term effects according to several studies conducted in the last decades (Grossman et al., 2004, Hoffmann et al., 2010)

Some studies also have found that people regularly practicing **mindfulness** and developing a mindful approach of life develop changes in how their brain functions that contribute to emotional regulation, concentration, and cognitive processing speed with long-term positive effects (Davis & Hayes, 2011).

But also individuals who practice mindfulness and are not suffering from any mental illness can see the psychological benefits: an overall sense of wellbeing, improved concentration, and increased morality. There are physical health benefits as well while practicing mindfulness which include improved immune functioning, improved cardiovascular health, overall relationship satisfaction, less emotional stress and better communication.



Image: [Canva](#)

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Module 5

Other Methods of Focus

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this module on Methods of Focus in the context of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD). This module is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of several key methods used in CBT to manage and overcome IAD.

The purpose of this module is to equip you with practical knowledge and strategies that can be applied to mitigate the effects of IAD. The methods we will cover include Practicing the Opposite, External Stoppers, Goal Setting, Reminder Cards, and Personal Inventory. Each of these

methods will be explored in detail, providing a theoretical understanding as well as practical applications.

In our increasingly digital age, the prevalence of IAD has been on the rise, making it more important than ever to understand effective therapeutic approaches. This module aims to contribute to this understanding by providing a comprehensive exploration of key CBT methods for IAD, reflecting the need for such resources as highlighted by recent research (Stawinoga & Marks, 2019).

In the following pages, we will delve into each method, discussing its purpose, how to implement it, and potential

challenges and solutions. We will also provide real-life case studies, additional resources, and daily withdrawal exercises to support your learning journey.

FOCUS AND COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT)

CBT is a widely used therapeutic approach that helps individuals understand how their thoughts and feelings influence their behaviours. It is particularly effective in addressing a range of disorders, including Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD).

Internet Addiction Disorder is characterized by excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations,

urges, or behaviors regarding computer use and internet access that lead to impairment or distress. The focus of CBT in treating IAD is to help individuals recognize harmful patterns of internet use, challenge associated negative thought processes, and develop healthier internet use habits.

In the context of CBT for IAD, the concept of focus plays a crucial role:

- **Focus on the Present:** CBT encourages individuals to concentrate on their current thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to internet use. By focusing on the present, individuals can identify and challenge unhelpful thoughts and behaviors that contribute to excessive internet use.
- **Focus on the Positive:** CBT helps individuals to shift their focus towards positive offline experiences and activities. This can counterbalance the allure of online activities and help to reduce time spent on the internet.



Image: [Pexels](#)

- **Focus on the Specific:** CBT encourages individuals to concentrate on specific problems or challenges related to their internet use. This could be certain triggers that lead to excessive use, or specific times of the day when control seems to be lost. By focusing on these specifics, it becomes easier to develop targeted strategies for change.
- **Focus on the Rational:** CBT helps individuals to focus on rational, evidence-based thoughts about their internet use, rather than irrational or unfounded beliefs. This can help to challenge and change unhelpful thinking patterns that contribute to IAD.

In the subsequent sections, we will delve into several focus-based methods used in CBT for IAD, including practicing the opposite, external stoppers, goal setting, reminder cards, and personal inventory. Each of these methods will be explained in detail, with practical examples and exercises to help you understand and apply them in your own life or in your work with others.



Method #1: Practicing the opposite

This method is based on the principle of behavioral activation, which is a therapeutic process that encourages patients to engage in alternative behaviors that are opposite to their habitual, problematic behaviors. In the context of IAD, "Practicing the Opposite" could involve engaging in activities that are diametrically opposed to excessive internet use. For instance, if an individual tends to spend a significant amount of time on social media platforms, the opposite behavior might involve socializing in person with friends or family, or participating in offline group activities.

Purpose

The purpose of the "Practicing the Opposite" method in managing IAD is to disrupt the patterns of excessive internet use by actively engaging in behaviors that counteract those related to the addiction. By intentionally participating in opposite actions, individuals aim to rewire their habits, reduce internet use, and develop a healthier relationship with technology.

Applications of "Practicing the Opposite" for Managing IAD

1. Behavioral Disruption

- Challenge the automatic and habitual behavior of excessive internet use by introducing deliberate and contrasting actions.
- Identify the specific internet-related behaviors that contribute to IAD and intentionally choose opposite behaviors.

2. Behavioral Activation

- Promote engagement in alternative, meaningful activities that enhance well-being and replace the time spent online.
- Select activities that align with personal interests and values, such as pursuing hobbies, exercising, reading, or spending quality time with loved ones.

3. Novel Experiences

- Cultivate novelty and variety in daily routines, reducing reliance on familiar internet-based activities.
- Experiment with new activities that were previously neglected or unexplored, fostering a sense of accomplishment and discovery.

4. Mindful Engagement

- Increase awareness of the present moment by choosing actions intentionally, fostering mindfulness and reducing impulsive internet use.
- Engage fully in chosen activities, paying attention to sensory experiences, thoughts, and emotions associated with the activity.

5. Behavioral Reinforcement

- Associate positive emotions and rewards with non-internet activities, reinforcing their value.
- Acknowledge the sense of accomplishment and enjoyment gained from participating in opposite behaviors.

6. Breaking Isolation

- Counteract the isolating effects of excessive internet use by engaging in social or community-oriented activities.
- Connect with others through in-person interactions, group activities, or volunteering.



Image: [Pexels](#)

The Process of Applying "Practicing the Opposite"

- **Identify Problematic Behaviours:** Recognize specific internet-related behaviours that contribute to IAD.
- **Choose Opposite Behaviours:** Select activities that directly contrast with problematic internet use.
- **Plan and Schedule:** Incorporate opposite behaviours into daily routines and schedule them intentionally.
- **Act with Intention:** Engage in chosen activities mindfully, focusing on the experience and purpose.
- **Monitor Progress:** Keep track of engagement in opposite behaviours and assess their impact on reducing internet use.
- **Adapt and Refine:** Adjust the choice of opposite behaviours as needed based on personal preferences and outcomes.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.1 Timer Technique

Rationale:

The Timer Technique is an external stopper that uses a timer to limit the duration of internet use. This can be particularly helpful for individuals with IAD who lose track of time while online.

How To Apply the Exercise:

1. Identify the problematic behavior related to internet use.
2. Set a timer for a reasonable duration before starting the internet activity.
3. Stop the internet activity when the timer goes off.

Instructions:

1. Choose an internet activity that you tend to spend too much time on.
2. Before starting the activity, set a timer for a reasonable duration (e.g., 30 minutes).
3. Start the internet activity. When the timer goes off, stop the activity and engage in a different, non-internet activity.

Resources Needed:

A timer (can be a physical timer or a timer app on your phone)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.2

The Opposite Action Plan

Rationale:

Practicing the opposite is a technique used in CBT that involves identifying a problematic behavior and then consciously practicing the opposite behavior. In the context of IAD if an individual tends to isolate themselves and spend hours on the internet, the opposite behavior could be seeking social interaction or engaging in offline activities.

How To Apply the Exercise:

1. Identify the problematic behavior related to internet use.
2. Determine what the opposite of this behavior would be.
3. Make a plan to practice this opposite behavior.

Instructions:

1. Identify a specific behavior related to your internet use that you would like to change.
2. Think about what the opposite of this behavior would be. For example, if you tend to browse social media when you're feeling lonely, the opposite behavior might be to call a friend or family member.
3. Set a goal to practice this opposite behavior the next time you feel the urge to engage in the problematic behavior. Write down your plan and keep it somewhere you can easily see it.

Resources Needed:

- A journal or piece of paper to write down your plan
- Any resources necessary for the opposite behavior (e.g., a phone to call a friend, sports equipment for physical activity, etc.)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.3 The Offline Challenge

Rationale:

The Offline Challenge is an exercise that involves replacing online activities with offline ones. This can be particularly helpful for individuals with IAD who spend most of their free time on the internet.

How To Apply the Exercise:

1. Identify an online activity that you spend a lot of time on.
2. Determine an offline activity that you could do instead.
3. Whenever you feel the urge to engage in the online activity, do the offline activity instead.

Instructions:

1. Choose an online activity that you tend to spend too much time on. This could be browsing social media, playing online games, or watching videos.
2. Think of an offline activity that you enjoy or would like to spend more time on. This could be reading a book, playing a sport, cooking, or any other offline hobby.
3. The next time you feel the urge to engage in the online activity, resist the urge and do the offline activity instead. Try to do this consistently for a week.

Resources Needed:

- A list of online activities that you spend too much time on
- A list of offline activities that you enjoy or would like to try
- A commitment to resist the urge to engage in the online activities and do the offline activities instead



Image: [Pexels](#)



Method #2: External stoppers

External stoppers are tools or strategies that help individuals manage their internet use by providing an external cue or reminder to stop or limit their online activities.

Purpose

The purpose of the "External Stoppers" method in managing IAD is to introduce external cues or prompts that interrupt excessive internet use, promoting greater mindfulness and self-regulation. These stoppers act as tangible reminders to help individuals stay aware of their online behaviour and encourage them to pause or limit internet use when needed.

Application of "External Stoppers" Method for Managing IAD

1) Mindful Interruption

- o Break the flow of mindless internet use by triggering conscious awareness and consideration of online behaviour.
- o Set periodic alarms or reminders to prompt individuals to pause and assess their current internet activity.

2) Physical Cues

- o Utilize physical objects or symbols that serve as cues to stop or reduce internet use.
- o Place a small object on the computer desk or smartphone as a visual cue to remind individuals to take breaks.

3) Environment Modification:

- o Alter the physical environment to create a pause for reflection before engaging in internet activities.
- o Rearrange the workspace or designate specific areas for internet use to establish mental boundaries.

4) Scheduled Breaks:

- o Introduce pre-determined intervals for breaks from the internet, preventing prolonged and continuous usage.
- o Set timers for regular breaks to engage in offline activities or relaxation.

5) **Device Restrictions:**

- Implement software or apps that restrict internet access after a certain time or usage limit.
- Utilize device settings or third-party apps to enforce healthy boundaries on internet usage.

6) **Visual Reminders:**

- Display visual cues in the digital interface to encourage individuals to take breaks or assess their usage.
- Configure screensavers or wallpapers that prompt mindfulness about internet habits.

7) **Post-it Notes or Labels:**

- Attach notes or labels near devices to remind individuals of their goals and intentions regarding internet use.
- Write down brief messages that promote responsible online behavior and stick them in visible locations.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.4 **Behavior and Trigger Awareness**

Rationale:

The Behavior and Trigger Awareness Exercise guides individuals in becoming aware of their behaviors and the triggers that lead to excessive internet use. This heightened awareness aids in breaking habitual patterns.

How to Apply the Exercise:

As you use the internet, pay attention to your actions before, during, and after online activities. Note any external cues, emotions, or situations that prompt you to engage in excessive internet use.

Instructions:

1. Keep a journal or digital document to record your behavioral patterns and trigger observations.
2. At the end of the week, review your documented behaviors and triggers to identify commonalities.
3. Based on your insights, strategize ways to manage or avoid triggers.
4. Use this exercise to make intentional choices about when and how you use the internet.

Resources Needed:

- Journal & writing tools.

The Process of Applying the "External Stoppers" Method

- **Select Appropriate Stoppers:** Choose external cues or strategies that align with personal preferences and lifestyle.
- **Set Up Cues:** Introduce the chosen stoppers in the environment or digital devices to ensure consistent visibility.
- **Consistent Use:** Regularly engage with the external stoppers to establish a routine of mindful interruption.
- **Reflect and Adjust:** Periodically assess effectiveness of the chosen stoppers in promoting self-awareness and positive behavior change.
- **Combine Strategies:** Experiment with combining multiple external stoppers for a comprehensive approach to managing internet use.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.5 Blocking Software

Rationale:

Blocking software is an external stopper that restricts access to certain websites or online platforms. This can be useful for individuals with IAD who struggle to resist the temptation of certain sites.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Identify the websites or online platforms that contribute to your excessive internet use. Install blocking software and set it to block these sites during certain hours. Respect the restrictions set by the blocking software.

Instructions:

1. Make a list of websites or online platforms that you spend too much time on.
2. Install blocking software on your devices. Set it to block access to the sites on your list during the hours when you tend to use them excessively.
3. During the blocked hours, engage in other activities instead of trying to access the blocked sites.

Resources Needed:

- Blocking software (many options are available for free or for purchase online), a list of websites or online platforms to block, and alternative activities to engage in.



Method #3: Goal Setting

Goal setting is a method that involves establishing clear, measurable, and time-specific objectives related to behavior change. In the context of IAD, goal setting can help individuals manage their internet use, develop healthier habits, and make progress towards recovery. The process of goal setting involves identifying a desired outcome, creating a plan to achieve it, and regularly reviewing and adjusting the plan as necessary. This method provides a structured approach to behaviour change and can increase motivation, focus, and self-efficacy.

Purpose

The purpose of the "Goal Setting" method in managing IAD is to provide individuals with a structured and effective approach to behavior change. By setting clear, measurable, and time-bound objectives related to managing internet use, this method helps individuals establish direction, motivation, and a sense of accomplishment. Goal setting aims to break down the larger challenge of managing IAD into manageable steps, fostering increased self-efficacy, focus, and positive behavioral change.

Application of "Goal Setting" Method for Managing IAD

1. Identifying Desirable Outcomes

- Clarify what individuals want to achieve in terms of managing internet use and establishing healthier habits.
- Define specific outcomes, such as reducing daily screen time or engaging in offline activities.

2. Creating Actionable Plans:

- Develop concrete strategies and steps to work toward the identified outcomes.
- Outline the steps, resources, and timelines needed to achieve the goals, ensuring they are feasible and realistic.

3. Setting Measurable Milestones

- Break down larger goals into smaller, measurable milestones to track progress.
- Define specific checkpoints and metrics to evaluate advancement and stay motivated.

4. **Regular Review and Adaptation:**

- Continuously assess progress, identify challenges, and adjust the plan as necessary.
- Regularly review the established goals, celebrate successes, and modify the plan based on changing circumstances.

5. **Developing Self-Efficacy**

- Build a sense of competence and belief in one's ability to overcome IAD.
- Achieving smaller goals provides evidence of progress, boosting confidence and the belief in making lasting changes.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.6 **Goals For Offline Activities**

Rationale:

This exercise is designed to help individuals with IAD apply goal-setting to replace some of their internet use with offline activities. This can help to break the habit of excessive internet use and develop new, healthier habits.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Identify an offline activity that you enjoy or would like to spend more time on. Set a goal to spend a certain amount of time on this activity each day. Each day, work towards your goal by spending time on the offline activity instead of on the internet.

Instructions:

1. Choose an offline activity that you enjoy or would like to try (e.g., reading, exercising, cooking).
2. Set a goal to spend a certain amount of time on this activity each day (e.g., 30 minutes).
3. Each day, spend time on your chosen activity instead of on the internet. Try to do this consistently for a week.

Resources Needed:

- Any resources necessary for the offline activity (e.g., a book, sports equipment, cooking supplies)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.7 **The Goal-Oriented Use Exercise**

Rationale:

The Goal-Oriented Internet Use Exercise empowers individuals with Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) to regain control over their online behavior by setting specific goals. This approach facilitates a structured plan for gradual behavior change.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Set a Clear Goal, choose a targeted area of internet use to modify, like reducing social media time. Define SMART Goals. Make your goal Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. For example, "I'll cut down daily social media use by 20 minutes within two weeks." Identify enjoyable offline activities to replace the time you'd usually spend online.

Instructions:

- Create a Weekly Schedule: Allocate time slots for offline activities, progressively reducing online time.
- Implement Gradual Change: Reduce daily internet use slightly, allocating time to chosen offline activities.
- Track Progress: Record both online and offline time to gauge adherence and make adjustments.
- Reflect and Adapt: Regularly assess progress, adjust the schedule, and celebrate achievements.

Resources Needed:

- Offline activity materials,
- Digital or physical calendar,
- Tracking tools.



Method #4: Reminder cards

Reminder cards are a practical tool that can be particularly effective in the treatment of IAD. They serve as tangible prompts that remind individuals of their therapeutic goals, coping strategies, or positive affirmations.

Reminder cards are typically small, portable cards that contain written statements or cues. These statements could be reminders of the goals set in therapy, strategies to cope with urges to use the internet excessively, or positive affirmations to boost motivation and self-efficacy.

Purpose

The purpose of using reminder cards in the treatment of IAD is to provide individuals with a tangible and easily accessible tool to reinforce therapeutic goals, coping strategies, and positive affirmations. These cards serve as visual cues that prompt individuals to stay mindful of their treatment objectives and encourage healthier behaviours when it comes to internet use.

Application of Reminder Cards in the Treatment of IAD

1) Goal Reinforcement

- Individuals can write down specific goals related to reducing internet use and regaining control over their online behaviour.
- Reminder cards can be used to keep these goals at the forefront of their minds, especially when faced with the temptation to engage in excessive internet use.

2) Coping Strategies

- Reminder cards can contain prompts for alternative activities or coping strategies to employ when the urge to use the internet excessively arises.
- For instance, a card might suggest taking a walk, practicing deep breathing, or engaging in a hobby as a way to manage the urge.

3) Positive Affirmations

- Writing down positive affirmations related to overcoming IAD can
- Individuals can carry these cards with them and refer to them whenever they need a reminder of their own strengths and capabilities.

4) Distraction Techniques

- Reminder cards can offer suggestions for quick distraction techniques to redirect attention away from the urge to use the internet.
- These techniques might involve puzzles, mindfulness exercises, or engaging in a short physical activity.

5) Trigger Awareness

- Individuals can list common triggers for their excessive internet use on the cards.
- By recognizing and acknowledging these triggers, individuals are better prepared to manage them when they arise.

The Process of Application:

- **Creation:** Individuals work with their therapists to create personalized reminder cards that align with their treatment goals and needs.
- **Content:** The content of the cards can include goal statements, coping strategies, positive affirmations, and other relevant reminders.
- **Design:** The design of the cards can be customized to reflect the individual's preferences. They can be visually appealing and easy to carry.
- **Distribution:** Individuals can place these cards in prominent places where they're likely to see them, such as on a desk, in a wallet, or as a screensaver on their devices.
- **Regular Review:** It's important to encourage individuals to review their reminder cards regularly to keep the content fresh in their minds.
- **Adaptation:** The content of the cards can be updated as progress is made or as new strategies are learned.

Reminder cards are a self-help tool that offers individuals a tangible way to actively work on managing IAD. These cards provide ongoing reminders of intentions and strategies, supporting individuals in their journey to create a healthier balance between online and offline life.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.8

Affirmative Reminder Cards

Rationale:

Affirmative Reminder Cards leverage positive affirmations to redirect focus from excessive internet use to healthier offline activities. These cards act as tangible prompts to reinforce the individual's commitment to change.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Develop affirmations that align with your goals, such as "I choose mindful offline activities" or "I control my internet use." Write each affirmation on a separate card. Make them visually appealing and easy to carry.

Instructions:

1. Start your day by selecting an affirmation card. Read it aloud to set a positive intention for the day.
2. Place the chosen card in a visible spot where you usually use the internet.
3. When you notice the card, pause and reflect on the affirmation's meaning. Consider how it relates to your internet use habits.
4. Throughout the day, let the affirmation guide your choices. Prioritize offline activities aligned with your affirmation.
5. Before bed, revisit the affirmation. Reflect on how well you embodied its message and any positive shifts in behavior.

Resources Needed:

- Blank cards,
- Markers,
- Affirmations.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.9

Activity Cue Reminder Cards

Rationale:

Activity cue reminder cards help manage IAD by redirecting behavior towards healthier activities. They work on the principle of breaking automatic patterns and promoting mindfulness.

How to Apply the Exercise:

First, identify triggers. Is it boredom, stress, or habit? Design cue cards with positive and engaging alternative activities. These should be visually appealing and easy to access. When the urge to surf the internet strikes, grab your cue card immediately. The goal is to disrupt the automatic behavior. Follow this by executing the alternative activity mentioned on the cue card.

Instructions:

1. Design Cue Cards that are visually appealing.
2. Place these cue cards where they are easily accessible.
3. When the urge to surf the internet arises, pick up the cue card, and follow the suggested activity.
4. Track your progress by noting how often you successfully switch to the alternative activity and reflect on how it makes you feel.

Resources Needed:

1. Index cards or something that is digitally their equivalent;
2. Alternative activities
3. Journal for self-reflection



Method #5: Personal Inventory

Personal Inventory is a self-reflective process. It involves taking a comprehensive account of one's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and the situations in which they occur, particularly those related to internet use.

A personal inventory might include:

1. Thoughts: What thoughts are associated with the urge to use the internet excessively? What thoughts arise during and after internet use?
2. Feelings: What emotions are experienced before, during, and after internet use? How does internet use affect mood?
3. Behaviors: What behaviors are associated with internet use? What actions are taken before, during, and after internet use?
4. Situations: In what situations does excessive internet use occur? What are the triggers that lead to excessive internet use?

Purpose

The "Personal Inventory" method serves the purpose of promoting self-awareness and insight into one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and triggers related to excessive internet use. By systematically examining these internal and external factors, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and situational drivers behind their IAD. This heightened self-awareness empowers individuals to develop targeted strategies for behavior change and make informed decisions to foster healthier internet habits.

Application Process of "Personal Inventory" Method for Managing IAD

1. Thoughts

- Document thoughts associated with the urge to use the internet excessively, as well as thoughts that arise during or after internet use.
- Use a journal, digital note-taking app, or a designated document to record these thoughts.

2. Feelings

- Record emotions experienced before, during, and after internet use.
- Create a simple emotional tracking system, such as a daily log or mood chart.

3. Behaviors

- Document behaviors tied to internet use, including actions before, during, and after online activities.
- Use a checklist, diary, or tracking app to monitor and analyze these behaviors.

4. Situations

- Identify and note the specific situations and triggers that lead to excessive internet use.
- Keep a record of environmental cues, moods, and events that coincide with heightened internet usage.

5. Analysis and Reflection

- Regularly review the collected data to identify patterns, connections, and trends.
- Reflect on the insights gained from the analysis to understand the relationships between thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and triggers.

6. Strategic Planning

- Based on the identified patterns, develop strategies to manage triggers and reduce excessive internet use.
- Create a plan that outlines specific actions to counteract problematic thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

7. Behavioral Modification

- Implement the strategies and action steps outlined in the plan.
- Consistently apply the strategies to address triggers and gradually shift behaviors.

8. Progress Tracking and Adjustment

- Regularly assess the effectiveness of the strategies by tracking changes in thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
- Adjust the strategies as needed based on the outcomes observed.

9. Mindful Decision-Making

- Apply the insights gained from the personal inventory process to make more mindful decisions regarding internet use.
- Use the information to choose healthier alternatives when triggered.

The application process of the "Personal Inventory" method involves consistent self-monitoring, analysis, and strategic planning to develop a deeper understanding of one's relationship with the internet. This understanding serves as a foundation for targeted behavior change, leading to improved management of Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) and the cultivation of healthier digital habits.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 5.10

Thought and Emotion Reflection

Rationale:

The Thought and Emotion Reflection Exercise encourages individuals to become aware of their thoughts and emotions before, during, and after internet use. This awareness fosters self-understanding and aids in managing IAD.

How to Apply the Exercise:

Before using the internet, pause and identify your current thoughts and emotions. Write them down. While using the internet, periodically check in with your thoughts and emotions. Jot down any shifts. After internet use, reflect on how your thoughts and emotions may have changed. Document your observations.

Instructions:

1. Identify Patterns: Over time, review your reflections to identify recurring thought-emotion patterns associated with excessive internet use.
2. Alternative Responses: Based on your insights, brainstorm healthier responses to these thought-emotion patterns.
3. Practice Mindfulness: Use this exercise as a mindfulness practice to stay attuned to your inner experiences.

Resources Needed:

- Journal,
- Writing tools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this module has provided a comprehensive overview of various methods used in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to manage Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD). By exploring techniques such as Practicing the Opposite, External Stoppers, Goal Setting, Reminder Cards, and Personal Inventory, participants have gained valuable insights into effective strategies for mitigating the effects of IAD. Through a focus on the principles of CBT and the application of these methods, individuals can develop healthier internet use habits and achieve a better balance in their digital lives. As we continue to navigate the challenges of excessive internet use in our increasingly digital world, the knowledge and skills acquired from this module will be invaluable in promoting overall well-being and fostering a more balanced relationship with technology.

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Module 6

Self-awareness and reliable assessment of the situation

INTRODUCTION

In this comprehensive module on self-awareness and reliable assessment of the situation, we will delve into the crucial realm of self and social awareness, equipping the audience with the knowledge needed to navigate interpersonal dynamics and understand their own thought processes. By exploring different types of mindfulness, you will gain a deep understanding of their importance in personal and professional contexts.



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This module will not only expand your knowledge of the types of awareness, but also strengthen your ability to accurately assess different situations in the context of digital skills as well as digital awareness in general.

To lay a solid foundation, we will delve into the theoretical foundations of self-awareness and its interrelationship with social awareness. Through this, you will understand the basics of self-awareness and its impact on our interactions. In an era dominated by technology, also digital awareness is a key aspect to understand.

The module will also explore the opportunities and challenges of the digital age, shedding light on the dangers that lurk behind excessive use of the internet, ensuring you are well informed about the changing landscape.

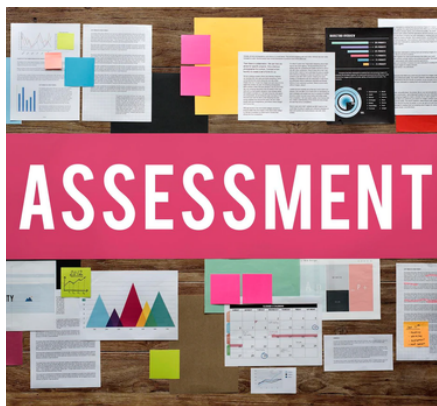


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The backdrop to this module is the worrying rise of Internet addiction (IAD). As the internet becomes more and more integrated into our lives, understanding its addictive potential is essential. By the end of this course you will have a holistic understanding of self-awareness, social dynamics, digital landscapes and their associated risks. Join us on this journey of self-discovery and situational insight that will empower you both online and offline.



DEFINITION: Self-awareness

Gallagher & Zahavi (2008) explain that:

"self-awareness is the conscious recognition and understanding of one's own thoughts, emotions, experiences, and actions. It involves the ability to introspect and reflect on oneself, leading to a deeper understanding of personal motivations and behaviors. This concept has been widely discussed in psychology and philosophy."

Self and Social Awareness

Self-awareness refers to an individual's ability to introspect and recognize their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It involves understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations. Self-aware individuals are more attuned to their inner experiences, enabling them to make informed decisions and engage in effective self-improvement.

Social awareness, on the other hand, involves perceiving and understanding the emotions, needs, and perspectives of others within social contexts. It encompasses empathy and the capacity to accurately interpret nonverbal cues and societal dynamics. Socially aware individuals can navigate interpersonal relationships, collaborate successfully, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.1

Digital Boundaries Check-In

Rationale:

This exercise promotes self-awareness and helps adults combat internet addiction by encouraging them to set and respect digital boundaries in their daily lives.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Incorporate this exercise into your daily routine, preferably in the morning, to start the day with intention and self-awareness regarding your internet usage.

Instructions:

1. Begin your day with a few minutes of mindfulness, focusing on your intentions for the day.
2. Take out a notepad or use a digital note-taking app on your device.
3. Write down your top priorities and goals for the day, both personal and professional.
4. Consider how the internet can support or hinder these priorities.
5. Set specific digital boundaries for the day, such as designating times for checking emails and social media.
6. Be mindful of your online activities throughout the day, and if you find yourself deviating from your boundaries, pause and reflect on the impact.
7. At the end of the day, review your digital boundaries and assess how well you adhered to them.
8. Reflect on how your internet usage aligned with your priorities and goals.
9. Make adjustments to your boundaries as needed for the following day, keeping self-awareness at the forefront.

Resources Needed:

A notepad or digital note-taking app, a few minutes of mindfulness, and a commitment to self-awareness and boundary-setting

In essence, self-awareness focuses on understanding oneself, while social awareness focuses on understanding others and the social environment. Both are crucial for emotional intelligence and healthy interactions.

TYPES OF AWARENESS

In the realm of psychology, the concept of self-awareness encompasses distinct dimensions that shed light on how individuals perceive themselves and their interactions with the world around them. Two fundamental types of self-awareness - **private self-awareness** and **public self-awareness** - unveil the intricacies of our inner and outer selves, shedding light on the intricate tapestry of human consciousness.

Private self-awareness

Private self-awareness delves into the realm of personal feelings and emotions that are often concealed from the external world. It's the quiet introspection that occurs when you find yourself experiencing emotions that you may not readily reveal to others. For instance, feeling unwell before a significant exam or experiencing a mix of excitement and nervousness before a significant event like a date. These emotions are often shared only with those in your inner circle, close family, or trusted friends who understand your private world.

Public self-awareness

On the other hand, public self-awareness shines a light on how one presents themselves to the external world, particularly in social contexts. This aspect is particularly crucial for leaders who often find themselves in the spotlight. Leaders bear the responsibility of setting an exemplary standard of behavior and conduct, even if it does not fully align with their underlying personality. This heightened awareness of how they appear to others is vital for maintaining their role as influencers and decision-makers. It prompts them to adopt behaviors that align with their leadership roles, demonstrating expected behavior and inspiring those around them.

As humans, we navigate the complex interplay between these two facets of self-awareness. The private realm encapsulates our personal vulnerabilities, while the public realm showcases our adaptability and social presentation.

This dynamic interaction between private and public self-awareness ultimately shapes our interactions, relationships, and even our roles as leaders, underscoring the intricate interplay between our internal emotions and the external world.



Image: Freepik

Social awareness



DEFINITION: Social awareness

Goleman (1995) describes social awareness as referring to:

"the ability to perceive, understand, and interpret the emotions, needs, perspectives, and dynamics of individuals and groups within a society. It involves being attuned to social cues, cultural norms, and underlying power structures, allowing individuals to navigate social interactions with empathy, respect, and a broader understanding of the interconnectedness of human experiences."

Social awareness goes beyond just being informed; it implies an empathetic and informed engagement with the complex tapestry of human experiences and the interconnectedness of our global community.

In an increasingly digitized society, social awareness plays a crucial role in maintaining meaningful human connections despite the digital divide. It involves understanding the nuances of online communication, recognizing the emotions conveyed through digital interactions, and acknowledging the diverse perspectives that emerge in virtual spaces. Social awareness helps counter the potential for isolation and misunderstanding caused by digital communication, fostering empathy and inclusive interactions across the digital realm.

Key aspects of social awareness

Social awareness encompasses a range of skills necessary to navigate interpersonal dynamics and understand the complexities of human behaviour in different social contexts.

- **Empathy:** Empathy is a foundational component of social awareness. It entails understanding and sharing the feelings of others, stepping into their shoes, and acknowledging their emotional state. Empathy fosters compassion, helps bridge differences, and promotes healthier relationships.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** In a diverse world, cultural sensitivity is crucial. Being socially aware means respecting and understanding the customs, values, beliefs, and traditions of various cultural groups. It allows for respectful interaction and cooperation across cultures.
- **Inclusivity:** Social awareness involves recognizing and valuing the diversity present within society, including different races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and abilities. Embracing inclusivity promotes equal opportunities and social justice.
- **Understanding social issues:** Being socially aware requires an understanding of the pressing social issues facing our world, such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, environmental degradation, and access to education and healthcare. This awareness is essential for fostering positive change.
- **Global perspective:** Social awareness extends beyond local contexts. It involves recognizing the interconnectedness of global issues, such as climate change, migration, and economic disparities. A global perspective encourages collaboration and cooperation on a larger scale.



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DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.2

Digital Detox Reflection

Rationale:

This exercise aims to raise awareness about the dangers of internet addiction among adults by prompting self-reflection on their online habits and their impact on well-being.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Facilitate this exercise in a group setting or individually, ideally as a daily practice.

Instructions:

1. Set aside 10-15 minutes of uninterrupted time.
2. Find a quiet, comfortable space, free from digital distractions.
3. Reflect on your daily internet usage, considering the platforms, duration, and purpose of your online activities.
4. Write down your thoughts and feelings about how your internet use affects your daily life, relationships, and overall well-being.
5. Identify areas where you believe your online habits may be negatively impacting your life.

Resources Needed:

pen and paper or a digital note-taking device for recording reflections

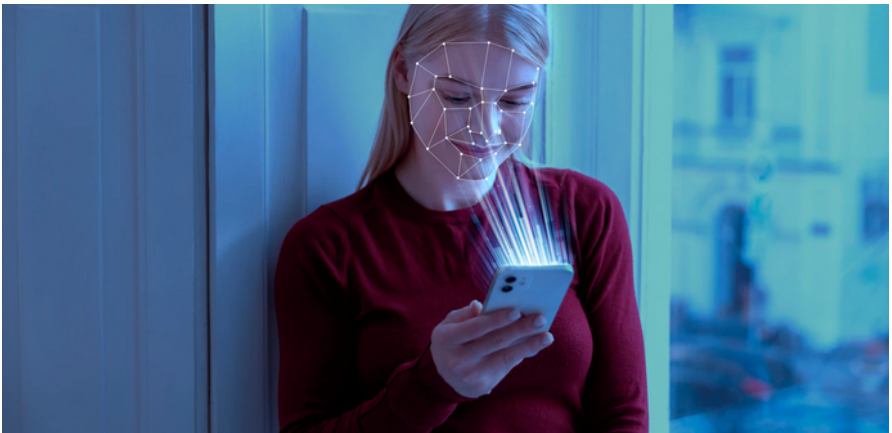


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Benefits of social awareness

Social awareness has innumerable benefits that enrich both personal and social interactions. By nurturing an understanding of the emotions, perspectives and cultural contexts of others, individuals can develop empathy and build stronger bonds in a diverse and interconnected world.

- **Enhanced relationships:** Socially aware individuals are more attuned to the needs and emotions of others, leading to more effective communication and stronger relationships. They are skilled listeners who can provide support and understanding when needed.
- **Conflict resolution:** Social awareness helps navigate conflicts by promoting empathy and understanding. It allows individuals to address disagreements with respect and patience, leading to more productive resolutions.
- **Personal growth:** Developing social awareness encourages personal growth and self-reflection. It challenges individuals to confront their biases and expand their worldview, leading to a deeper understanding of themselves and others.
- **Effective leadership:** Socially aware leaders are more adept at motivating and inspiring their teams. They understand the diverse strengths and challenges of their team members and can create an inclusive and collaborative work environment.
- **Social impact:** Socially aware individuals are more likely to engage in social activism, volunteer work, and efforts to create positive change. They contribute to solutions for societal issues and inspire others to join the cause.
- **Civic engagement:** Social awareness drives active participation in civic life. Informed citizens are more likely to vote, engage in public discourse, and hold their leaders accountable.
- **Reduced prejudice and discrimination:** Increased awareness of diverse experiences and backgrounds helps combat prejudice and discrimination. It challenges stereotypes and promotes a more inclusive and just society.



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Social awareness is a cornerstone of a compassionate, inclusive, and just society. It involves understanding the complexities of human experiences, empathizing with others, and actively engaging with the challenges and opportunities our world presents. By cultivating social awareness, individuals can contribute to positive change, nurture meaningful relationships, and become informed and responsible global citizens.



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Empathy



DEFINITION: Empathy

According to Hoffman (2000):

"Empathy is the capacity to understand and share the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another individual, often leading to a sense of emotional connection and a desire to alleviate their distress or enhance their well-being. It involves the ability to step into someone else's shoes, perceive the world from their perspective, and respond in a compassionate and supportive manner."

Empathy, a profound and integral aspect of human interaction, lies at the heart of social awareness, creating connections and enriching our understanding of the world. It is the ability to go beyond oneself and resonate with the emotions, perspectives and experiences of others. Empathy fuels the flame of compassion and enables individuals to navigate the complex tapestry of human relationships with depth and sensitivity.

The interconnection between empathy and social awareness is the basis of a society that thrives on mutual understanding and cooperation. It is the bridge that connects people from different backgrounds, allowing them to cross cultural divides and embrace the rich mosaic of human diversity. Empathy increases our social consciousness, fostering a sharpened awareness of the needs, struggles and joys experienced by those around us.

Empathy is a mirror that reflects not just our shared humanity but also the unique intricacies that make each individual who they are. It demands that we listen with intent, observe with an open heart, and respond with kindness. In doing so, we acknowledge the stories that have shaped others and extend a hand of genuine connection.

Through empathy, we offer a asylum for vulnerability. When we truly understand the emotional landscapes of others, we create safe spaces for them to express themselves without fear of judgement. Such an environment nurtures trust and opens the door to authentic conversations. It paves the way for constructive dialogues that address social issues as well as personal concerns.

Image: [Freepik](#)

Empathy, the gift we give to others, is a powerful force that removes the barriers of misunderstanding and prejudice. It breaks down the walls built by ignorance and intolerance, replacing them with bridges of respect and acceptance. In a world where divisions often flourish, empathy emerges as a light of unity, reminding us of the common dreams, fears and aspirations that unite humanity.

When empathy is present, relationships flourish. Friends, families, communities and nations flourish because they are based on a deep sense of empathy. It is an essential ingredient in conflict resolution, supporting the humility to look beyond one's own point of view and seek common ground. Through empathy, we learn that solutions can emerge when we truly consider the needs of all parties involved.

Empathy also supports personal growth. By immersing ourselves in the experiences of others, we broaden our own perspectives. We learn to see the world through different prisms, recognising the richness of diverse cultures and backgrounds. This expansion of awareness contributes not only to our individual development, but also to society as a whole.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.3

The Daily Empathy Connection

Rationale:

This exercise aims to combat Internet addiction among adults by fostering empathy and strengthening emotional connections with others in the digital realm.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Integrate this exercise into your daily routine to develop empathy skills while navigating the online world.

Instructions:

1. Choose a friend, family member, or online contact with whom you'd like to strengthen your connection.
2. Set a specific time each day for a brief online check-in, ideally through a video call or voice message.
3. Prioritize active listening during the conversation. Focus on their words, tone, and emotions.
4. Ask open-ended questions about their day, experiences, and feelings to encourage deeper sharing.
5. Practice empathy by acknowledging their emotions and validating their experiences.
6. Share a personal story or reflection that relates to their experiences, showing that you understand and can relate.
7. Offer support or assistance if appropriate, showing that you care about their well-being.
8. Conclude the conversation by expressing gratitude for their time and openness.
9. Reflect on the meaningful connection you've fostered and how it positively impacts your digital interactions.

Resources Needed:

Access to a communication platform (e.g., video call app, messaging app), a willingness to engage with others empathetically, and a commitment to daily "check-ins"



Image: [Pexels](#)



Image: Freepik

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is a complex and multifaceted skill that develops gradually throughout life. It involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes that allow us to connect with the experiences of those around us. Empathy development can be categorized into three stages: **emotional empathy**, **cognitive empathy**, and **compassionate empathy**. Each stage builds upon the previous one, enhancing our capacity to connect with others on a deeper level.

1. Emotional empathy

Emotional empathy, often referred to as affective empathy, is the earliest and most basic form of empathy. In this stage, individuals instinctively feel what others are feeling. When someone experiences joy, sadness, anger, or pain, individuals with emotional empathy feel a similar emotional response. Emotional empathy has its limitations. It can be overwhelming and potentially lead to emotional contagion, where individuals become immersed in others' emotions to the point where they lose their own emotional boundaries. This can lead to burnout or difficulty in maintaining one's emotional well-being.

2. Cognitive empathy

Cognitive empathy, also known as perspective-taking or intellectual empathy, involves understanding and recognizing the emotions and perspectives of others without necessarily sharing those emotions. Individuals in this stage can mentally step into someone else's shoes, seeing a situation from their point of view. While cognitive empathy allows for a more controlled and objective understanding of others' experiences, it can sometimes lack emotional resonance. People may understand how someone else feels, but they might not feel a strong emotional connection themselves. This can potentially lead to a superficial or detached response to others' emotions.

3. Compassionate empathy

Compassionate empathy, also called empathic concern or empathic distress, is the highest form of empathy. It combines emotional resonance with the cognitive understanding of another person's feelings and experiences. It goes beyond understanding to actively wanting to alleviate the suffering of others.

Compassionate empathy, while powerful, can lead to emotional fatigue and distress if not managed appropriately. The emotional investment in others' struggles might take a toll on an individual's mental and emotional well-being. Additionally, compassionate empathy might lead to favoritism or biased decisions if someone's emotional distress influences their judgment.

Limits of empathy development:

- Empathy tends to be stronger for individuals who are perceived as part of one's own social group. This can lead to limitations in understanding and connecting with people from different cultural, social, or demographic backgrounds.
- High levels of empathy can result in emotional overload, where individuals become overwhelmed by the emotions of others, leading to decreased effectiveness in helping or providing support.
- Individuals might struggle to empathize with those they perceive as responsible for their own circumstances, such as people facing addiction or criminal behavior. This selective empathy can hinder comprehensive understanding.
- Continuous exposure to others' suffering, such as in professions like healthcare and social work, can lead to empathy fatigue, where individuals experience emotional exhaustion and reduced capacity for empathy.
- The ability to set emotional boundaries is crucial for empathetic individuals. Overextending oneself can lead to neglecting personal needs and emotional well-being.

In conclusion, empathy development progresses through emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, and compassionate empathy, each stage contributing to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of others. However, empathy has its limits, including potential emotional overload, biases, and fatigue. Recognizing and managing these limitations is essential for cultivating healthy and effective empathetic connections.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.4 Empathetic Tech Timeout

Rationale:

This exercise aims to foster empathy among adults struggling with internet addiction by encouraging them to disconnect from digital devices, enabling them to better connect with their own emotions and the emotions of those around them.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Designate a specific time slot each day to effectively disconnect from digital devices, fostering self-awareness and empathy through meaningful interactions.

Instructions:

1. Choose a consistent daily period, free from work commitments, for an empathetic technology break.
2. Begin by setting an intention for the break time, such as self-discovery or understanding the emotions of others.
3. Create a technology-free space during your break by reducing the desire to use digital devices.
4. Engage in mindfulness exercises, meditation or focused breathing to encourage introspection.
5. Get in touch with someone - a friend, family member or colleague - by phone or message, listening empathetically to their feelings.
6. Spend some time outdoors, reconnecting with nature and grounding yourself in the present.
7. Use this time for a creative outlet, such as drawing or playing an instrument, tapping into emotions and other perspectives.
8. After the break, write down reflections on the experience, highlighting newly discovered insights about empathy and self-awareness.

Resources Needed:

Timer or clock to keep track of break time, designated technology-free area, journal or paper to record reflections, optional art materials for creative expression

DIGITAL AWARENESS

The rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has ushered in a new era characterized by unprecedented connectivity and accessibility to information. This transformation has led to the emergence of what is commonly referred to as the "knowledge economy," where the generation, distribution, and application of knowledge become central drivers of economic growth and societal progress. However, while this digital revolution offers immense opportunities, it also brings forth a pressing challenge: the need for digital awareness.



DEFINITION: Digital Awareness

According to Smith (2020):

"Digital awareness refers to the ability of individuals to possess a conscious understanding of the digital world, encompassing the internet, online platforms, social media, digital devices, and their implications on various aspects of life. It involves being cognizant of both the opportunities and challenges presented by digital technologies, as well as understanding their impact on privacy, security, information consumption, and interpersonal communication. This awareness enables individuals to make informed decisions, navigate the digital landscape responsibly, and engage critically with digital content."

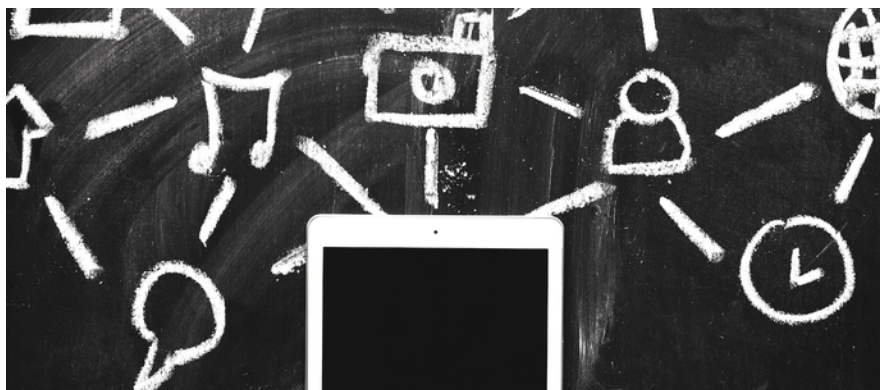


Image: [Freepik](#)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.5

The Challenge Of Digital Awareness

Rationale:

This exercise is designed to combat internet addiction among adults by fostering awareness of online habits and promoting practical actions to reduce its risks.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Integrate this challenge into your daily routine to actively engage with your digital life and take meaningful steps towards a healthier online presence.

Instructions:

1. Before reaching for your phone or computer in the morning, take a moment to reflect on your intentions for the day.
2. Jot down three key tasks or goals you want to achieve, unrelated to social media or excessive online browsing.
3. Set a timer for every hour during your workday or leisure time.
4. When the timer goes off, step away from your screen for at least five minutes.
5. Use this time to stretch, take a short walk, or engage in a non-digital activity.
6. Before opening a social media app or website, pause and ask yourself why you're doing it.
7. Limit your social media sessions to a specific duration (e.g., 15 minutes) and set a timer.
8. Be mindful of your emotions and reactions while scrolling. If you notice negative feelings, consider unfollowing or muting sources that trigger them.
9. Before bedtime, review your digital interactions throughout the day.
10. Reflect on moments when you felt in control or out of control regarding your internet use.
11. Journal about any insights or challenges you encountered and brainstorm strategies for improvement.
12. Designate specific areas in your home where digital devices are not allowed, such as the dining room or bedroom.
13. Create opportunities for face-to-face interactions or analog activities in these zones.
14. Reserve the last 30 minutes before sleep for screen-free activities.
15. Read a book, meditate, or engage in a relaxing bedtime routine.

Resources Needed:

A timer or smartphone app to track hourly screen breaks, a journal or notepad for reflection, and a commitment to practicing digital awareness daily

ICT development encompasses the proliferation of digital technologies, the internet, cloud computing, and various forms of digital communication. This interconnected landscape has transformed industries, governments, and societies, giving rise to a knowledge-based economy. In a knowledge economy, the ability to create, manipulate, and leverage information becomes a key determinant of success. Innovation, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving are driven by the availability of information and the ability to analyze it effectively.

The knowledge economy hinges on the idea that information is not just a resource but a critical asset. Countries and organizations that invest in ICT infrastructure and digital literacy are better positioned to harness the potential of this economy. They can create hubs of innovation, attract foreign investment, and develop a highly skilled workforce that can navigate the complexities of the digital age.



Image: Freepik



Image: Freepik

The digital awareness challenge

While ICT development presents transformative opportunities, it also raises concerns about digital awareness. Digital awareness encompasses a range of skills and knowledge, including digital literacy, online safety, privacy protection, critical thinking, and responsible digital citizenship. Many individuals, particularly in under-served communities, might lack access to digital tools and training, exacerbating digital divides and inequalities.

Digital awareness is vital for several reasons:

- The ability to navigate digital platforms, understand and evaluate online information, and use digital tools effectively is essential for participating in the knowledge economy.
- As more aspects of life move online, individuals need to be aware of cybersecurity risks, phishing attacks, and how to protect their personal data.
- The abundance of information online requires individuals to critically evaluate sources and distinguish between credible information and misinformation.
- Digital awareness includes promoting respectful and ethical behavior online, combating cyberbullying, and contributing positively to digital communities.
- Many jobs now require digital skills, and the lack of digital awareness can limit individuals' employability and career prospects.

Digital Skills



DEFINITION: Digital Skills

According to the European Commission, Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp),

"Digital skills refer to the abilities and competencies required to effectively navigate, utilize, and communicate through digital technologies and platforms. These skills encompass a range of proficiencies, from basic tasks like using email and internet search engines to more advanced abilities such as programming, data analysis, and online collaboration. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, cultivating strong digital skills is essential for participating in modern society and the workforce."

Digital skills encompass a broad set of abilities that enable individuals to effectively use digital tools, technologies, and platforms for various purposes. As the world becomes increasingly digitized, these skills have become essential for personal, educational, professional, and societal engagement. Digital skills empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape with confidence, communicate efficiently, critically evaluate online content, and harness technology for productivity and innovation.

Components of digital skills

Digital skills encompass a diverse range of abilities that enable individuals to effectively navigate the digital landscape and utilize technology for various purposes. These skills include:

- **Digital literacy:** At the core of digital skills is digital literacy. This involves understanding the basics of technology, including how to use computers, mobile devices, and software applications. It encompasses skills like typing, using operating systems, navigating file structures, and managing data.
- **Information literacy:** Digital skills extend to the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information from various online sources. Information literacy includes knowing how to perform effective internet searches, assess the credibility of websites, and discern reliable information from misinformation.
- **Communication skills:** Effective digital communication is vital. This includes proficiency in using email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and social media platforms. Digital communication skills encompass understanding netiquette (online etiquette), tone, and the appropriate use of language for different contexts.
- **Cybersecurity awareness:** With the rise of cyber threats, individuals need to be aware of best practices for online safety. This includes recognizing phishing attempts, creating strong passwords, and understanding the importance of software updates to protect against malware.
- **Data management:** Digital skills involve knowing how to manage and organize digital files and data. This includes creating folders, using cloud storage, and ensuring data backup to prevent loss.
- **Basic coding and programming:** Familiarity with coding basics enables individuals to customize applications, understand technology infrastructure, and even create simple programs. This skill can enhance problem-solving and critical thinking abilities.
- **Online collaboration:** In the digital era, collaboration often happens online. Proficiency in using collaborative tools, such as cloud-based document editing and project management platforms, is essential for teamwork and remote work scenarios.
- **Critical thinking and media literacy:** Digital skills include the ability to critically evaluate online content, recognizing biases, spotting misinformation, and discerning credible sources. This is crucial in an age of information overload.
- **Problem-solving skills:** Proficiency in using digital tools to solve problems is a hallmark of digital skills. This could involve troubleshooting technical issues, using software for data analysis, or finding creative solutions through digital means.

- **Adaptability and continuous learning:** Given the rapid pace of technological change, digital skills also encompass the ability to adapt to new tools and technologies. Being open to learning and staying updated on digital trends is essential.
- **Digital citizenship:** Being a responsible digital citizen is part of digital skills. This involves respecting others' privacy online, practicing ethical behavior, and understanding the potential impact of one's online actions.

Importance of Digital Skills

In today's rapidly evolving world, the acquisition of digital skills is no longer a choice; it's a necessity that empowers individuals to thrive in an increasingly digitized environment. Digital skills, encompassing a spectrum of proficiencies, are vital for personal growth, educational advancement, professional success, and active participation in society.

Digital skills serve as the bridge to effectively engage with the vast realm of digital media. They enable individuals to harness the potential of digital tools, platforms, and content for a multitude of purposes. Whether for professional, educational, or recreational activities, digital skills equip us to navigate the complexities of digital media with confidence.

Basic digital skills are indispensable for participating fully in the modern social landscape. Communication, access to information, and engagement with digital services have become integral parts of everyday life. From staying in touch with friends and family to accessing government services and educational resources, digital skills enable us to navigate these activities efficiently and with confidence.



Image: [Freepik](#)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.6

Digital Awareness Challenge

Rationale:

This exercise aims to raise awareness about the dangers of internet addiction among adults while promoting the development of essential digital skills necessary for responsible online behavior.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Participants should commit to a daily 30-minute "Digital Awareness Challenge" for a set period (e.g., one week) during which they will consciously reduce their Internet usage.

Instructions:

1. Set a specific time each day for your Digital Awareness Challenge, ideally when you are most prone to excessive internet use.
2. Before starting, create a list of essential online tasks or responsibilities that you must attend to during this challenge (e.g., work emails, communication with family).
3. Identify non-essential or time-wasting online activities you'll avoid during the challenge (e.g., social media, mindless browsing).
4. During your daily 30-minute challenge, focus solely on your essential online tasks and avoid distractions.
5. Use this time to improve your digital skills, such as learning a new software program, researching a topic, or practicing online security measures.
6. Keep a journal to record your progress, feelings, and any insights gained from this exercise.

Resources Needed:

- A timer/clock or smartphone with a timer function
- A journal or notebook for recording thoughts and progress

Three crucial aspects of digital skills



Image: Freepik

Using digital media

This pertains to the ability to interact with digital technologies, from operating systems to applications. Mastery over these skills empowers us to create, consume, and manipulate digital content seamlessly.

Understanding and critical evaluation

Digital skills encompass the capacity to comprehend and critically assess various facets of digital media. This involves discerning the accuracy and credibility of online information, recognizing biases, and distinguishing between reliable sources and misinformation.



Image: Freepik

Effective communication

Proficiency in digital skills facilitates communication across diverse contexts. The digital age demands the ability to communicate via various digital channels, be it through emails, social media platforms, video conferencing, or collaborative tools.



Image: Freepik

Additionally, as digital skills become more prevalent and advanced, they are becoming key determinants of economic development. The ability to use technology for innovation, entrepreneurship and productivity has transformed industries and market dynamics. Individuals equipped with advanced digital skills are better equipped to make significant contributions to the global economy. Essentially, digital skills serve as an enabler of modern life, underpinning various dimensions of our existence. They bridge the gap between individuals and the vast digital universe, enabling us to communicate, learn, create and contribute effectively. Ignoring or neglecting the development of these skills can lead to isolation, lost opportunities and limited personal and professional growth.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.7

Digital Skills Development

Rationale:

This exercise aims to address Internet addiction among adults by fostering crucial digital skills and promoting mindful online engagement.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Incorporate this exercise into your daily routine to develop essential digital skills while reducing the risk of Internet addiction.

Instructions:

1. Choose a specific digital skill you want to improve (e.g., time management, online privacy, critical thinking).
2. Allocate 20-30 minutes each day to actively work on this skill while using the internet.
3. Start by researching and identifying reputable online resources (articles, courses, videos) related to your chosen skill.
4. Dedicate focused time to study and practice the skill, applying what you've learned.
5. Reflect on your progress and challenges encountered during the session.
6. Create a brief journal entry summarizing your experience and insights.
7. Consider how applying this skill can enhance your online interactions and reduce time spent on non-essential internet activities.
8. Set specific goals for the next day's practice to continue your skill development journey.
9. Gradually expand your repertoire of digital skills over time.

Resources Needed:

- Access to the Internet.
- A device for research and practice.
- A notepad or digital note-taking app for journaling.
- A commitment to daily skill development

As digital technologies continue to evolve, investing in digital skills is akin to investing in one's own capacity to adapt, learn, and succeed in the dynamic digital age. It's a pathway to active citizenship, educational achievement, career advancement, and holistic engagement with the world around us. In a world where digital literacy is synonymous with empowerment, digital skills are the passport to thriving in the 21st century.

Image: [Freepik](#)

DANGERS BEHIND INTERNET USAGE

The Internet, a vast and interconnected realm of information and connectivity, offers boundless opportunities, but it also harbours an array of dangers that demand vigilant awareness and precaution. The unregulated nature of the online sphere means that users cannot afford to be complacent. Amidst the allure of digital landscapes, lurking risks such as data theft, virtual violence, and other negative phenomena underscore the imperative of cautious online behavior. Each one of us, regardless of our digital activities, stands as a potential target for these virtual threats.

Cybersecurity threats

The digital landscape is riddled with cybersecurity vulnerabilities that can lead to grave consequences. Hacking, the unauthorized access to computer systems, leaves users vulnerable to identity theft, financial loss, or dissemination of personal information. Phishing, a deceptive technique, tricks users into revealing sensitive data. The distribution of malware, harmful software designed to infiltrate systems, can compromise data security and disrupt operations. Identity theft, the malicious acquisition of personal information, can lead to financial ruin and profound privacy invasion.

Online scams and fraud

The Internet is fertile ground for scammers. Users can inadvertently fall prey to schemes that promise financial gain, lottery winnings or charity, leading to significant financial loss or identity theft. The anonymity of the digital world emboldens fraudsters, making it challenging to distinguish legitimate opportunities from fake ones.

Privacy invasion

Privacy, a cornerstone of personal freedom, is susceptible to invasion in the digital era. The extensive collection of user data by online platforms and advertisers raises concerns about the potential misuse of personal information. The boundary between convenience and surveillance blurs as algorithms track online behaviors to tailor advertisements and recommendations.

Cyberbullying and harassment

The Internet provides a platform for connectivity, but it can also amplify negative behaviors. Cyberbullying, the use of digital communication to harass or intimidate, affects users of all ages. The virtual world's detachment from physical presence emboldens bullies, and the psychological impact on victims can be severe.

Exposure to inappropriate content

The borderless nature of the Internet means that users may encounter explicit, violent, or otherwise inappropriate content, which can have adverse effects on mental and emotional well-being, particularly for young users.

Addiction and excessive screen time

The alluring digital world can foster addictive behaviors, resulting in excessive screen time and neglect of real-world activities. Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) underscores the struggle to strike a balance between online and offline life, often leading to social isolation and diminished mental health.

Addiction to Artificial Intelligence

Addiction to artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the emerging concern of individuals becoming overly dependent on AI-driven technologies and services. As an escalating consequence of excessive internet usage, this phenomenon is fueled by the convenience, personalized experiences, and instant gratification that AI-powered platforms offer. People may develop compulsive behaviors, spending excessive amounts of time interacting with virtual assistants, social media algorithms, or immersive virtual realities, leading to social isolation, decreased physical activity, and neglect of real-world responsibilities. This addictive reliance on AI highlights one of the dangers stemming from the pervasive use of the internet and underscores the importance of promoting balanced and mindful technology engagement.

Disinformation and fake news

The rapid dissemination of information online makes the Internet a breeding ground for disinformation and fake news. Misleading or false information can spread rapidly, influencing public perception, decision-making, and undermining the pursuit of truth.

In this complex digital landscape, the responsibility to protect oneself and others rests on the shoulders of every Internet user. Striking a balance between the advantages of digital connectivity and the risks associated with it requires not only technological solutions, but also a collective commitment to promoting a safer online environment.

The ubiquity of the Internet poses many risks that require vigilant awareness. The digital sphere, while offering tremendous opportunities, is fraught with dangers such as data theft, virtual violence and cyber threats. The unregulated nature of the online sphere underscores the need for cautious online behaviour. Cyber threats, such as hacking, phishing and identity theft, have serious consequences, compromising data security and personal information. Online scams and fraud schemes exploit users' vulnerability, leading to financial losses and identity theft. Invasion of privacy, cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content and the addictive potential of excessive time spent in front of a screen are also common threats. The rapid dissemination of information on the Internet intensifies misinformation and fake news. Navigating this digital landscape requires education, awareness and the adoption of cyber security practices to ensure a safer online space for all.



Image: [Freepik](#)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.8

Disconnecting From Disinformation

Rationale:

This exercise addresses Internet addiction while helping adults become more discerning consumers of online information, reducing the risk of falling for disinformation and fake news.

How To Apply the Exercise:

It is best to incorporate this exercise into your daily routine of internet and social media use to develop critical thinking skills and build resilience to misinformation.

Instructions:

1. Select a specific time each day to dedicate 15-20 minutes to this exercise, preferably before engaging with social media or news websites.
2. Start by choosing a recent news article or social media post.
3. Read the selected content critically, paying attention to the source, language used, and any potential biases.
4. Fact-check the information presented using reputable sources or fact-checking websites.
5. Reflect on the reliability of the original source and the accuracy of the information.
6. Consider the potential consequences of believing and sharing false information.
7. If the content proves to be disinformation or misleading, make a mental note of it.
8. Share your findings or concerns with a trusted friend or family member to foster a sense of responsibility in countering disinformation.
9. Conclude the exercise with a commitment to being more vigilant about the information you consume and share online.

Resources Needed:

- Access to the internet for research and fact-checking, a device to read online content, and a willingness to critically evaluate information



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.9

Digital Risk Reflection

Rationale:

This exercise is designed to address internet addiction among adults by highlighting the potential dangers of excessive internet use, fostering a heightened awareness of its negative impacts. Through this exercise, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of the potential dangers associated with excessive internet use, empowering them to make more mindful and balanced choices regarding their online behaviours.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Participants engage in a daily practice of reflecting on the potential risks associated with their internet usage, encouraging mindful consideration of their online behaviours.

Instructions:

1. Dedicate a few minutes each day to reflect on how your Internet use may be impacting your mental health, relationships, and overall well-being.
2. Consider the specific activities, apps, or websites that consume most of your online time and how they might contribute to feelings of isolation, stress, or reduced productivity.
3. Assess whether your digital habits are hindering your ability to engage in face-to-face interactions, pursue hobbies, or maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Resources Needed:

A journal or digital note-taking app for reflection

SUMMARY

Self-awareness involves recognising one's own thoughts, emotions and behaviours, while social awareness refers to understanding the feelings, needs and perspectives of others. Both are central to emotional intelligence and healthy interactions. Private self-awareness involves introspection of personal feelings, while public self-awareness refers to how someone presents themselves in a social context.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 6.10

Careful Reflection On The Internet

Rationale:

This exercise aims to promote mindful Internet usage among adults by encouraging them to reflect on their online habits and make conscious choices to mitigate the potential dangers of excessive internet use.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Incorporate this exercise into your daily routine, preferably at the end of the day, to reflect on your digital interactions and take proactive steps towards a healthier online experience.

Instructions:

1. Set aside a few minutes in a quiet, comfortable space where you won't be disturbed.
2. Begin by taking a few deep breaths to relax and center yourself.
3. Reflect on your internet use throughout the day, thinking about the websites, apps, and activities you engaged with.
4. Consider the reasons behind your online interactions. Were they productive, informative, or merely habitual?
5. Identify any moments when you felt your internet usage might have crossed a boundary or negatively affected your well-being.
6. Ask yourself how you can adjust your online habits to better align with your values and goals.
7. Plan specific actions to improve your internet use, such as setting time limits for certain apps or dedicating screen-free moments in your day.
8. Visualize the positive impact these changes can have on your daily life, including increased productivity, enhanced well-being, and improved relationships.
9. Conclude the exercise with a sense of purpose and a commitment to implementing the changes you've identified.

Resources Needed:

A quiet space, a journal or notepad, and a willingness to reflect on your internet habits with mindfulness

Social awareness is discussed as the ability to understand social dynamics, practice empathy and embrace diversity. It encompasses aspects such as cultural sensitivity, inclusivity and understanding social issues on a global scale. There is a strong link between empathy and social awareness, which highlights the role of empathy in fostering understanding and collaboration.

Digital skills are listed as essential competences for navigating the digital age. These skills include digital literacy, communication, online safety, critical thinking and responsible digital behaviour. It is now emphasised that digital skills are not only about technical proficiency, but also about adaptation to new technologies and ethical online behaviour. Despite the benefits of the digital landscape, light is increasingly being shed on its risks. Cybersecurity threats, online fraud, invasion of privacy, cyberbullying and exposure to inappropriate content are all potential risks for any internet user. The spread of misinformation and fake news online emphasises the importance of a critical approach.

In conclusion, the module underscores the significance of self-awareness, social awareness, digital skills, and cautious online behavior in the contemporary world. It highlights the need for individuals to be well-equipped with these skills and aware of the potential risks associated with internet usage to thrive in the digital age while maintaining a healthy balance between virtual and real-life experiences.

Self-awareness and reliable assessment of the situation play a crucial role in understanding and addressing addiction resulting from internet use. Individuals need to recognize their own patterns of behavior, emotional triggers, and the impact excessive internet use has on their well-being. Developing self-awareness enables them to make a reliable assessment of the situation, identifying when their internet use becomes compulsive and detrimental. This awareness empowers individuals to take proactive measures, set boundaries, and seek appropriate support to manage and overcome internet addiction effectively.



Image: [Freepik](#)

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Module 7

Internet Addiction Disorder Prevention

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course you will have learnt various methodologies and strategies that you can implement to reduce and help overcome IAD in adults with difficulties.

As you know internet addiction is considered new and there is still debate and discussion about what can be considered internet addiction and its effects. Thus, there are several studies on this new addiction and professionals and experts in the field show numerous strategies and steps to follow to help overcome it.



Image: [Pexels](#)

Despite this and the incessant popularity of social networks and new technologies, there are no studies based solely and exclusively on the prevention of this type of addiction. We might think that the effort to prevent addiction is greater than the effort to overcome and treat it, but this is not the case. That is why in this module we are going to provide you with several strategies that you can implement to help prevent internet addiction.

As you have studied previously in other modules, there are different factors and symptoms of this addiction so we will not go too much into them. However, as you will see throughout the module, social factors play an important role in the prevention of internet addiction. There are 2 main types of prevention, universal and selective. In the following, we will go into a little more detail on each of these two types.



DEFINITION: Universal Prevention

Universal Prevention is prevention that applies to the general population with no emphasis on a specific sector of the population with a disadvantaged background and in a difficult situation either professionally or personally, as it focuses on reducing future risks of developing IAD in populations with no apparent risk factor.

However, we can link this prevention to the young adults in the form of early prevention.

You may be wondering, then, what kind of strategies are included in universal prevention? Well, for example, health promotion campaigns advertised through traditional media such as television.

Harmful Content

It may exert a negative impact on the mental health or psychosocial development of children due to exposure to inappropriate violent or sexual content

Excessive and maladaptive use

Excessive time online at the expense of real-world activities jeopardize interpersonal relationships, career opportunities, and the health of people with this addiction

Financial costs

Online gambling, excessive expenditure on game items, or pornography

SOLUTION

- Providing media education to children
- Education and the heightening of parental media literacy

- Limiting screen time
- Self-blockage options by means of hardware or software

- Ban on the use of credit cards
- Self-measured options



Image: [Pexels](#)

As we have mentioned before, our final target audience is adults in disadvantaged situations, so from now on we will focus on selective prevention that focuses on this specific sector.

Selective prevention is reserved for at-risk sub-populations with some of the following factors:

- Psychopathological factors (ADHD, depressive and anxiety disorders, social phobia).
- Personality characteristics
- Physiological characteristics
- Socio-demographic factors (family economic disadvantage)
- Current situation of the affected person (loneliness, stress)



DEFINITION: Selective Prevention

Elisardo Becoña Iglesias (2002) describes selective prevention as "that which is aimed at a subgroup of the target population who have a higher risk of being drug users than the average person of that age. It is therefore aimed at at-risk groups".

To this end, we propose 8 different strategies to prevent Internet addiction:

1. Set clear limits on Internet use
2. Encourage offline activities and hobbies.
3. Encourage face-to-face social interactions.
4. Establishing tech-free zones or times
5. Educating about responsible internet use and online safety
6. Identify triggers
7. Build a support system
8. Practice self-care and stress management

SET CLEAR LIMITS ON INTERNET USE

Setting boundaries has proven to be crucial in self-care and prioritising our needs. They are essential for knowing ourselves and help others to know us. They allow us to forge healthy and balanced relationships, whether with other people or, as in this case, the relationship we have with new technologies.

Setting limits on the amount of time we can spend on the Internet and on activities that involve the use of a screen helps to create a good habit of use and a routine that favours and enhances the benefits of using the Internet rather than highlighting its disadvantages.

A good idea to develop this strategy is to create a schedule that includes designated periods for Internet use as well as offline activities. Blocking off a time in the schedule when the user can use the Internet encourages creativity and a sense of dependence on internet-enabled devices.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.1 Create a schedule

Rationale:

Set specific time slots for internet use and stick to them. Allocate specific periods for important tasks like work, studying, and personal development.

How To Apply the Exercise:

By structuring your time, you'll be less likely to mindlessly wander online. This can be achieved by first prioritising your daily tasks.

Instructions:

1. Create a long list of all your tasks
2. List them by degree of importance
3. Time slot appointments and due dates
4. Be flexible, write the tasks in your planner & keep it handy

Resources Needed:

- Agenda or notebook
- Pens

ENCOURAGE OFFLINE ACTIVITIES AND HOBBIES

Numerous studies have shown the benefits of outdoor activities such as sports, creative activities such as painting, dancing, singing, etc. One of the main benefits of spending time outdoors, especially if it is surrounded by nature, is the reduction of stress, which as we have seen previously is one of the key factors in the development of Internet addiction. In this way, we would be directly addressing one of the causes of this addiction.

Focusing on the practice of sport, several studies have shown the benefits it has for both our physical and mental health. Exercise improves the ability to get to sleep and reduces the possibility of suffering from depression and anxiety, among others. Physical activity stimulates different brain chemicals that help you feel happier and more relaxed, as well as giving you a sense of achievement and pride in reaching new goals. All this increases your self-esteem and mental health which has a direct effect on the development of addictions such as internet addiction.



Keeping active should not be a difficult task. Make it fun, dance, get your friends involved, sign up for a martial arts class, etc. There are plenty of options!



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.2 DIY Project- Paint Candles

Rationale:

Engage in do-it-yourself (DIY) projects around your home or explore hobbies that involve hands-on activities. Whether it's refurbishing furniture, gardening, or building something from scratch, these projects keep you occupied and provide a sense of accomplishment.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Use a clean cloth to wipe your candles with rubbing alcohol. This will remove lint and debris for a smooth surface. Use paint markers or craft paint to draw a series of dots, flowers and patterns.

Instructions:

- Work on one side and let it dry completely before moving to another side.

Resources Needed:

- Candles & paint

ENCOURAGE FACE-TO-FACE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Social relationships have also been affected by the age of digitalisation, creating a drastic change in the way we communicate. Meeting for a coffee with your friends while telling each other what you did over the weekend has been replaced by a WhatsApp message or, in the best case scenario, a quick video call. This has not only damaged communication between people, giving rise to anger or misunderstandings that in the worst case ends with the end of the relationship, be it love, friendship or family. But it has also affected the prioritisation of activities in our daily lives, leaving aside face-to-face social interactions and replacing them with a digital conversation.



Image: Pexels

If we stop and think about it, how many times have you heard, I'm sorry I can't meet for lunch this Saturday, I have too many things to do; And really, how many hours a day do we spend on Instagram or watch a series? The truth is that human beings are sociable by nature and face-to-face social interactions provide us with countless benefits such as getting out of the routine, strengthening our bonds, fostering our ability to communicate and avoiding unnecessary conflicts.

On the other hand, "digital conversations" or interactions that take place through a screen limit the information we get when communicating with another person, as non-verbal language and empathy are aspects that are not predominant in the digital world. Thus, we tend to neglect our relationships which leads to a feeling of loneliness and lack of support that we try to find on social networks and the internet. Eventually, this can spiral into the development of internet addiction disorder. Therefore, cultivating and maintaining offline relationships with friends, family and the community is essential to prevent this type of addiction. Actively engaging in face-to-face interactions and social activities, as well as prioritising quality time with loved ones, are crucial tools for maintaining our mental wellbeing.

ESTABLISHING TECH-FREE ZONES OR TIMES

The digital era seems to be here to stay, bringing about the normalisation of practices involving the use of new technologies on a global scale. Activities such as the use of mobile phones or iPads at the dinner table do not go unnoticed and have become established as common practice among families.

It is true that there is a general concern about the use of these technologies by children and the harmful effects they can have on their personal and social development. Despite this concern, we cannot find any guidelines that establish strategies for the implementation of limits and technology-free zones to alleviate this trend.

What is a technology-free zone, you may ask? And what are the benefits for me and my environment? Well, a technology-free zone is one in which you cannot find devices with internet access or devices considered to be technological, such as video game consoles, mobile phones with games, tablets, etc. In this way, activities that do not require the use of a device with internet access are promoted, such as reading, spending time with the family, playing sports, etc.

Technology-free zones can be established in both our personal and professional lives

Personal Life

We can designate different rooms in our homes, such as the kitchen, as technology-free rooms to encourage communication between family members at dinner or lunchtime.

Professional Life

There are companies creating areas in offices where mobile devices are not introduced and where decision-making and communication between colleagues is encouraged face to face.

The benefits of this practice are easily observable, such as a direct improvement in communication and intrapersonal relationships, an increase in creativity and critical thinking, a decrease in stress levels, etc.

EDUCATING ABOUT RESPONSIBLE INTERNET USE AND ONLINE SAFETY

When we talk about a online safety, we mean using Internet that is free of violence, where users understand their rights and responsibilities, and where democratic mechanisms for participation are in place. Educating about a safe digital environment requires understanding its enormous potential as well as remaining alert to its risks, both of which require our attention and proactive behavior.

The responsible use of the internet entails knowledge, skill development, and the formation of an ethical stance that allows adolescents and adults to interact in the digital space as they would in any other area of their lives. Children and young adults are more likely to understand the risks, report abusive situations, and seek help when they need it if they are informed and have the necessary judgment to act. Educating about the negative effects of excessive Internet use and promoting healthy digital habits plays a crucial role in preventing Internet addiction.

Family, friends and educational institutions are key factors in the educational process of responsible internet use. Being an example of a balanced use of the internet from a young age allows them to learn about technology in their immediate environment and to be able to ask questions and raise doubts with confidence.

It is important to create a safe space and encourage a fluid and healthy dialogue with adults in disadvantage situations, making them aware of the risks they face when managing their personal information on the Internet, where their digital identity develops.

It is not necessary to create an irrational fear of the internet and the possibilities it offers, because if it is used properly, the advantages and opportunities are immeasurable. It is simply necessary to educate objectively and impartially about the advantages and disadvantages of the internet.



Image: Pexels



How to educate on responsible internet use and online safety

1. Holding necessary discussions on reliable sources of information
2. Discuss the digital footprint we leave behind with every internet action. This includes remembering that any content (messages, photos, personal information) we share on the internet can be viewed by anyone.
3. Inform about the importance of what you download. One of cybercriminals' primary goals is to trick you into downloading malware, which are programs or applications that contain spying software or attempt to steal information.
4. Promote checking that their Internet connection is protected. When you connect in a public place via a public Wi-Fi network, you have no direct control over your security.
5. Educate on cyberbullying, how to identify it and avoid it.
6. Implementation of security measures such as passwords, security questions, etc.
7. Control of contacts on social networks to prevent intrusion by outsiders.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.3 Digital detox

Rationale:

Dedicate some time in creating a safer digital space in your devices. Pay attention to what you are consuming, documents you have download, contacts that are not needed in your contact list, apps that are not beneficial, etc. Make sure to de-clutter your digital space.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Create a list of everything you want to include in your digital detox. Plan and time block activities you will carry out for your digital detox (delete social media accounts, turn off notification,

Instructions:

- Adjust your phone settings to limit certain apps)
- Update your progress in a checkbox
- Enjoy the process and embrace spending time offline

Resources needed:

- Journal & writing materials

IDENTIFY TRIGGERS

The first thing to know is what an addiction trigger is. Well, some risk factors that lead to addiction, can be thoughts, feelings, memories, life experiences, social groups, etc

At the moment we cannot speak of a single cause of Internet addiction. Everything would be easier if we could find the cause of this addiction, because if you know who is responsible, you can implement specific solutions to alleviate the problem. Numerous and diverse causes have been identified that facilitate or promote the development of Internet addiction. As mentioned above, some of these include underlying mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression, genetics and even environmental factors.



Image: [Pexels](#)

Environmental triggers

- Spending time with people who actively abuse of internet use
- Experiencing financial problems or stress from work or academy;
- Experiencing conflicts such as romantic breakups and divorce;
- Seeing internet-related marketing on social media, movies, or TV shows



Image: [Pexels](#)

Emotional triggers

- Feeling lonely or isolated
- Feeling overwhelmed by activities and responsibilities
- Facing rejection or criticism from others
- Reduced self-esteem due to the unrealistic portrayal of real life on social media
- Frustrated with their progress in recovery

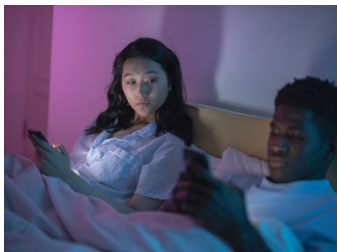


Image: [Pexels](#)

Behavioral triggers

- Having too much idle time without meaningful projects or activities
- Not maintaining healthy eating and sleep routines
- Skipping therapy sessions or meetings
- Not having a plan for how to cope with stressful situations or triggers

Knowing the triggers of addiction can be of great help to be able to put preventive or palliative methods in place. Knowing yourself, your environment and the emotions you feel in your daily life is crucial to understand your attitude and responses to problems. As we have mentioned, the environment plays a very important role in the development of possible addictions, so pay attention to your closest circle and how you feel when you spend time with them. Do they make you feel relaxed and at peace? Do they annoy and irritate you? Do your friends have attitudes that you don't like and pressure you to do something? Peer pressure has been identified as a trigger for negative and reckless attitudes, so we recommend that you learn to say no and set limits.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.4

Journaling

Rationale:

Instead of turning to the internet for entertainment or emotional release, try keeping a journal. Write down your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Journaling can serve as a productive and therapeutic outlet while minimizing your reliance on online platforms.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Topics you can journal about: How has your day gone? What have you accomplished so far? What is something new you have learnt? You can also express gratitude and self-love with positive affirmations, write about what makes you happy. With who have you spent your day? How did it make you feel? what emotions have you felt? What did you like and what didn't you like?

Instructions:

- Journaling is a good method to identify triggers and emotions.
- Write whatever is going through your mind on a piece of paper or notebook. It does not have to make sense, be pretty or have the perfect handwriting. You just have to put your thought on paper

Resources Needed:

- Journal
- Pen

BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Having a support system, your family, friends, peers, who support you and want the best for you is crucial as individuals, but it is especially important if we want to prevent addiction. Having a circle where you feel safe and comfortable and can talk about what you are feeling and what is causing you problems helps to normalise talking about "taboo" subjects such as addictions.

This is even more important when it comes to Internet Addiction, as due to the nature of the Internet, it tends to alienate us from our loved ones and isolate us socially to the point of minimising or eliminating social relationships from our lives. Therefore, having a group of friends or family to encourage us to get out of the house and make plans reduces the likelihood of internet addiction. Social relationships generate a feeling of wellbeing and some studies even comment that "social interaction is often more effective in releasing endorphins than exercise. At the same time, the quantity and quality of our social relationships affect our physical and mental health". Similarly, social relationships improve communication skills which are essential to prevent any type of addiction by facilitating the identification of causes and the subsequent process of communication and treatment, either with professionals (psychologists, teachers, coaches) or with a person in your environment (family and friends).



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.5 Find your people

Rationale:

Make an effort to engage in face-to-face interactions with friends, family, and colleagues.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Go on a walk, enroll in a cycling class, go to the beach with some friends, cook a new recipe with your family, catch up with a friend and have a coffee

Instructions:

Organize outings, meetups, or social events that encourage real-life connections. Having a close circle you can trust is essential to prevent addictions.

Resources Needed:

- Dependent on face-to-face interaction.

PRACTICE SELF-CARE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stressful life experiences mixed with inadequate coping skills may increase the likelihood of addiction by increasing impulsive behaviour. While it may be impossible to avoid stress, we must learn to handle it.

The stressful event or circumstance is not damaging in and of itself. What counts is how the individual interprets the stressors and copes with it. Reappraisal can be used as a coping method by interpreting things differently, for example, by believing it is no longer a major concern. High levels of emotional stress are connected with a loss of impulse control and an inability to delay gratification. The more pressures an individual is exposed to, the more likely addiction will develop later in life.

Instead of grabbing for your smartphone or laptop when you're worried, consider one of these relaxation techniques: deep breathing, walks in nature, calling a friend, yoga or meditation, etc. Social media apps are considered "stress triggers". You may find yourself scrolling through videos or photos of people living their "best life" and that puts pressure on yourself to start living to those standards.

"Stress is a key risk factor in addiction initiation, maintenance, relapse, and thus treatment failure" (Sinha & Jastreboff, 2013)

Some neuroscientists and expert on digital addiction address that life stresses cause cravings for behaviours and escape mechanisms. The pandemic has increased stress in people's lives, and using entertainment digital media, such as gaming and social media, is a convenient way to escape. Excessive use of internet to relieve stress is a risk factor for developing addictive behaviours.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.6 Website blockers

Rationale:

Website blockers help you limit your screen time and it makes you aware of the time you spend on a daily basis on the internet. Learn to stop "scrolling" through social media which is directly correlated with high levels of stress.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Identify problematic websites in which time is being mismanaged or lost. Set a desired target in terms of time limits for each website or complete abstinence.

Set the website blocker in order to help restrict your use of the identified websites.

Instructions:

1. Install a website blocker app or browser plugin.
2. Set it to block distracting or time-consuming websites during chosen focus hours or as needed for productivity.

Resources Needed:

- List of distracting websites,
- Website blocker app or browser plugin.

As you have been able to see there are different strategies to prevent Internet Addiction Disorder and all of them share a common ground based on the personal wellbeing. Taking care of our mental and physical health plays a crucial role on preventing addictions. Prioritizing our social life and personal development through the practice of different hobbies and physical activities will decrease the tendency of irresponsible internet use. Linked to this aspect, there is a term we should explain to better understand IAD prevention, and that is “digital wellbeing”.

Our online choices, the content we view, the interactions we have with others, and even the amount of time we spend engaging with technology and the Internet can all have an impact on our digital well-being. That is why Digital well-being strategies seek to help us regain control of our smartphone use by establishing useful boundaries that allow for space and downtime.

**How to use technology to protect our digital well-being:**

- Take breaks and actively consider how much time you spend on the Internet and how you spend it.
- You should use digital technology with awareness and purpose: pay attention to the feelings it evokes in you and the impact it has on your daily life.
- Single-tasking can increase your concentration level as well as increases your focus and quality of the work
- Avoid getting into aggressive situations and hurtful content
- Avoid the instant reaction of posting and updating out of FOMO

Digital wellbeing is based on four pillars:

- 1 Mental Wellbeing:** We have a tendency to idealize other people's lives, viewing them as role models or successful people, and this influences our perception of our own lives. The truth is that daily life is barely glamorous, which is something we should keep in mind when using the Internet as a mean of escapism.
- 2 Emotional Wellbeing:** Do you ever get concerned when you can't find your phone? Or do you spend your entire day checking social media to ensure you are not missing anything? If this has become an automated behavior, the long-term consequences may be negative. Especially because they give you a false sense of connection while actually disconnecting you from the real world.
- 3 Social wellbeing:** While the internet can help people connect and learn new things, it can also empower and encourage extremist views and aggressive attitudes toward "different" viewpoints. Similarly, spending long hours connected to the Internet diminishes face-to-face social interaction and the many benefits it brings (mentioned above).
- 4 Physical wellbeing:** As many people work in offices and spend great amount of time connected to the Internet, exercise and time spent outdoors is greatly reduced



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.7

Habit tracker

Rationale:

Instead of eliminating internet usage, set realistic goals for reducing it and improve your digital well-being.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Set a target, for instance, you can aim to limit social media browsing to 30 minutes per day or restrict online entertainment to weekends only.

Instructions:

1. Establish your own realistic goal
2. Create a habit tracker (digital or paper)
3. Colour the days that you accomplish your previous goal set

Resources Needed:

- Habit tracker
- Colour pencils

THE ENVIRONMENT

One of the characteristics of addiction is the separation of the individual from family and friends. Furthermore, the person loses interest in things that once piqued his or her interest. Addicts frequently lie to their family and friends about their habits. They become secretive, avoidant, and deceptive about their actions.

The environment plays a crucial role in the development of possible addictions. The people you surrender yourself with and the social relations are critical to prevent and help overcome addictions. One of the strategies to prevent addiction mentioned before was having a support system. It has been proven that having the support and help of friends and family reduce the appearance of addictions. As you know, social media and the internet gives us the opportunity to socialize online with people all around the globe. Although that can be a great advantage of new technologies, face-to-face interaction has multiple benefits.

"Poor relations with parents and lack of parental emotional connectedness, is reported as a risky predictor of young people's Internet addiction" (Kalaitzaki & Birtchnell, Citation2014).

Individuals' social support is a significant source of power. They overcome their problems through social support mechanisms. According to research, when the level of perceived social support is low, people are more likely to engage in problem behaviors that can develop on addictions, such as Internet Addiction. Unless social support is insufficient, the internet can be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication.

So, as explained showing support to your loved ones is essential to prevent addictions such as IAD. Here are a list of things you can do to help prevent them:

- Establishing rules regulating the content of online activities
- Mediation of Internet use (discussions and joint Internet use)
- Use of restrictive strategies with regard to Internet use
- Adoption of adaptive norms of Internet use and consistent adherence to them among members
- Diversify leisure activities (outside activities, social time, etc)
- Locate electronic devices in common places

Internet addiction is related to social and emotional dysfunction in daily life (Yung et al., Citation2015)



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.8

Mindfulness Apps

Rationale:

Engage in activities that promote mindfulness, such as meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises. These practices can help you become more aware of your habits and make conscious choices.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Research and select a mindfulness app that resonates with you. Search for guided meditation or breathing exercises within the app and implement activities within your routine.

Instructions:

Select a mindfulness application offering guided exercises that help to mindful breathing. Identify a quiet and comfortable space where you won't be disturbed. Whenever you feel the urge for excessive internet use, pause for a moment and breathe mindfully. Track your progress and note any changes

Resources Needed:

- Mindfulness apps (Balance, Headspace, Calm, 10% Happier)

The working environment is also a critical part in preventing addictions such as IAD. The digitalisation era, powered by the pandemic and the transition to an online education and working environment has increased the amount of hours that adults spend working online. Being exposed to the Internet for that long can cause serious problems in the mental and physical health of the employees. Because of this, co-workers and managers also have some responsibility and impact on the development of IAD. Some of the things that can be improved in the work environment to encourage social interaction without the intervention of the Internet are:

- Encouragement of brainstorming and decision-making in rooms without Internet access devices.
- After-work activities not involving the Internet (coffee breaks, sports activities, etc.)
- Offering educational seminars and the monitoring of Internet use by employers.
- Offer the possibility to get professional help in case of symptoms of addiction.

Due to the fast pace of our lifestyle, sometimes we do not pay attention to our surroundings. It is important to check in with your co-workers and offer your help and support. Sometimes it is enough to just be there for them and listen, this will improve the working environment and at the same time personally help the person concerned.

As you have seen, the environment plays a key role in everyone's life; the people we surround ourselves with and spend most of our time with implicitly dictate our actions and behaviour. Therefore, it is important to be aware of how we act towards people in disadvantaged positions with regard to the possible occurrence of IAD. When an addicted adult refuses treatment, it is impossible to coerce him or her. They have the final say, and loved ones can only encourage or reinforce their initiative to seek assistance. As mentioned before, showing support and understanding is essential to help prevent the development of internet addiction. But even more important is the way in which we do so. Open and clear communication is essential in order to normalise and promote dialogue about online habits. When dealing with a person in a difficult situation or showing signs that they may be developing IAD, it is important that the person feels comfortable to open up about their experiences but to do this we need to create a reassuring environment.

Here are some suggestions for communicating and interacting with someone who is at risk of developing Internet Addiction:

- Avoiding value judgement, try to understand the situation and the possible causes so that the other person does not feel judged.
- Avoid behaviors, places, and stimuli in general that may act as triggers for that person's addictive behavior.
- When you are angry, helpless, angry, try to express yourself assertively. Avoid raising your voice, making snap judgments, or making threats. Instead, express your concern for the individual's health and future.
- Don't let them become isolated. Addicts who are socially isolated are more likely to relapse. As a result, one critical area to focus on is social relationships.



DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.9

New Hobbies

Rationale:

Discover and engage in activities that don't involve the internet such as reading books, painting, playing a musical instrument, gardening, or spending time with friends and family. This can have a major impact in preventing an IAD

How To Apply the Exercise:

Reflect on your passions or interests and spend a few moments to research one new hobby that sparks your interest. Look for articles, videos or guides that help you gain a better understanding of them.

Instructions:

Set aside a few minutes each day to explore for hobbies that interest you. Dedicate at least 15 minutes to engage with or learn more about that hobby.

Resources Needed:

Books, articles, videos or online content for research.

If you put into practice everything offered in these modules, you will find that your lifestyle changes completely, you will have much more free time and sometimes this change can be overwhelming. Despite being a change that will improve your quality of life, transforming it into a more active, social and positive one, the changes tend to be uncomfortable and even overwhelming. That's why we present a series of steps to follow to make this transition more bearable.

The first thing is to establish the life you want to achieve, your new habits and routines, hobbies you want to learn, jobs you want to do, and so on. In other words, it is time to set personal goals and commit to them. A very effective exercise for this is to create a Mood Board.

**DAILY WITHDRAWAL EXERCISE 7.10**
Mood Board**Rationale:**

Identifying your goals and priorities in life sets you up for success. Having a clear sense of what you want to achieve will help you stay focused and reduce the time you spend aimlessly browsing the internet.

How To Apply the Exercise:

Gather visuals that represent your goals and aspirations. These can be photos, colours, words, or quotes. Arrange these on a board to help you remember your objectives and facilitate staying focused.

Instructions:

1. Print photos and quotes that inspire you to achieve your goals.
2. Paste them into a cardboard or piece of paper.
3. You can also draw, write or paint in it to make it more colourful, easy to interpret or carry a more personal meaning to you.

Resources Needed:

- Photos
- Cardboard
- Pens

Now that you have new resolutions it is time to take action. Sometimes this is the hardest step because we don't know where to start. Something that has proven to be very effective is to share your goals with a friend, let them know about your new routine so they can help you keep yourself accountable.

Making any change and having so much time on your hands will create uncomfortable and difficult situations, which is why you should be flexible with yourself and not put too much pressure on yourself. It is not every day that you will achieve everything you set out to do, nor will you feel motivated to take on new challenges, but it is important that you remember your ability and worth and try to do your best.



Image: Pexels

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Throughout all the modules you have learned about what Internet addiction is, what symptoms and consequences it has and different techniques and methodologies to reduce its impact and overcome the addiction. Finally, in this last module you have learned about how to prevent IAD, because if we manage to prevent the development of IAD we will not have to focus our efforts on how to overcome it.

So, what is the most important part of the whole module? One of the most important factors in addiction prevention is having a supportive group and family to motivate you to do different activities. Social interactions decrease stress levels (a trigger for addiction) and improve communication, which is essential to improve open dialogue about the advantages and disadvantages of new technologies. Another factor, related to the previous one, is to have hobbies and outdoor activities. Diversifying our free time is essential in order not to fall into the "scrolling" of social networks, while at the same time investing time in something creative that motivates us and generates endorphins.

Another important factor is learning about the benefits and drawbacks of spending too much time on the internet. It is necessary to normalize a nonjudgmental dialogue about new technologies, as well as to learn how to set clear limits on their use and online safety. There are numerous threats on the Internet, and knowing how to respond to them and what to do to avoid them encourages responsible use of new technologies, positioning them as tools that facilitate certain tasks in our daily lives without requiring them to become a part of our lives.

Finally, identifying the causes of irresponsible Internet use can aid in identifying areas to focus on in order to prevent the development of IAD. Avoiding situations that require extensive Internet use, as well as online-based activities, can significantly reduce irresponsible Internet use. If you are a family member or friend of a loved one who may be prone to IAD, pay attention to their environment and habits and encourage them to adopt healthier ones.

Key takeaway: preventing an Internet addiction is difficult in this day and age, when social media has become an extension of our own lives, but real life is not found through a screen, so we invite you to find yourself and spend time doing what truly makes you happy.

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Co-funded by
the European Union



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the National Agency (NA). Neither the European Union nor the NA can be held responsible for them.

Project number: 2022-1-RO01-KA220-ADU-000087209



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