UNDERSTANDING SCREEN ADDICTION

"Am I addicted to the internet?"

THE HOPE LINE



TheHopeLine.com

Do you check your phone constantly?

Are you on your phone when you are hanging out with friends?

Do you panic at the thought of having to turn off your phone or when you've accidentally left it at home?

Do you play games online or shop online to relieve stress or as a means to escape?

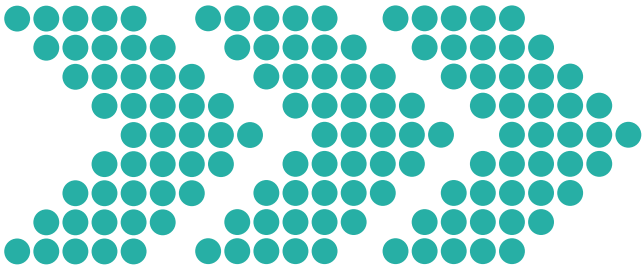
Do you think about being online even when you are doing other things?

Do you grab your phone or computer every time you have a free moment?

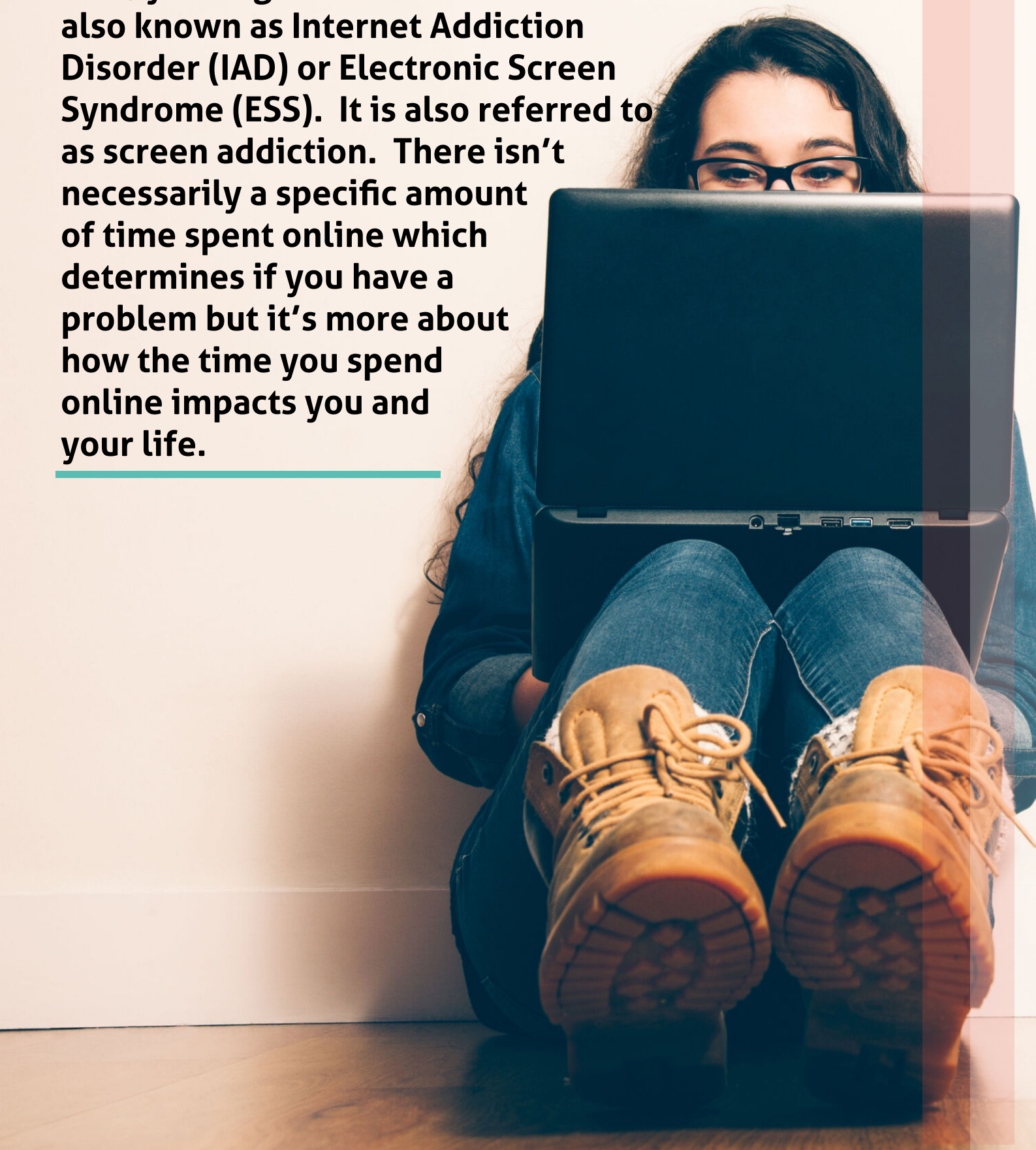
Do you get agitated, moody, or feel depressed or anxious when you're away from your devices?



If your answer is yes to any of these questions then you may have an internet addiction. Keep reading to find out more.



If you've downloaded this Guide, you might realize you spend a lot of time online, whether you are gaming, on social media, watching shows, watching videos, texting, googling, gambling, shopping, or something else, you might have an internet addiction also known as Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) or Electronic Screen Syndrome (ESS). It is also referred to as screen addiction. There isn't necessarily a specific amount of time spent online which determines if you have a problem but it's more about how the time you spend online impacts you and your life.



Screen Addiction

Internet addiction (aka screen addiction) is defined as any online-related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment.


GONE GIRL













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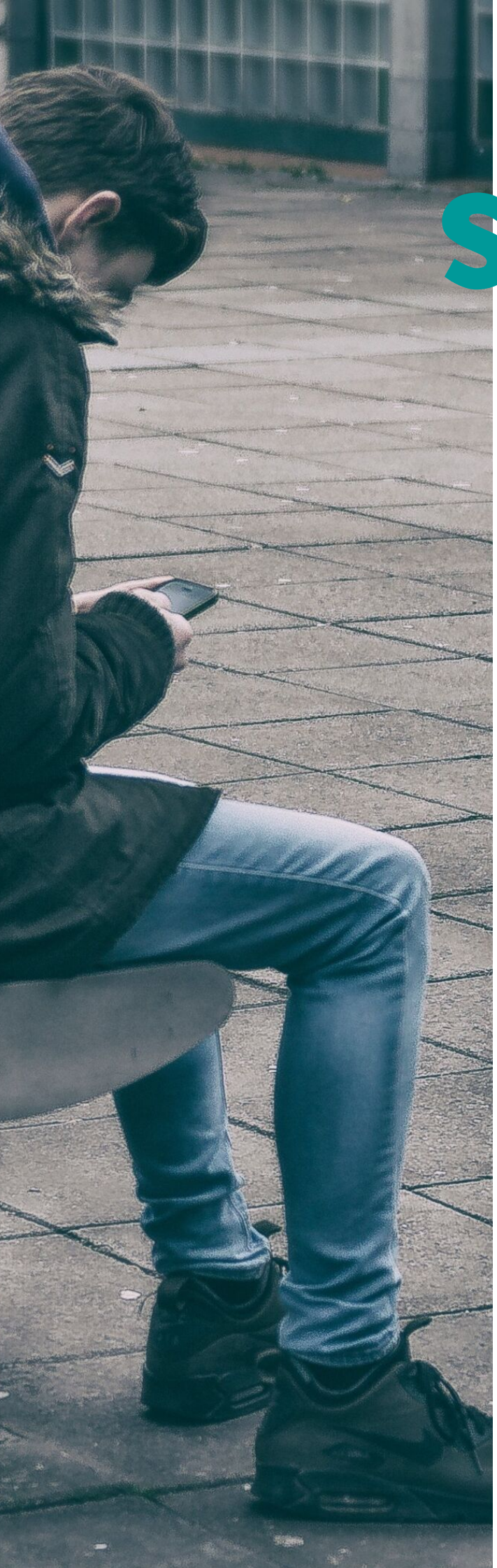
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statistics

Each day, 13- to 18-year-olds average about nine hours (8:56) of entertainment media use, not including time spent at school or for homework.

1 in 8 Americans suffer from problematic Internet use.

In China, Taiwan, and Korea, it's estimated that 30% or more of the population suffer from problematic Internet use.

71% of office workers abuse the Internet during work hours visiting social networking sites, shopping online, reading personal email, gaming, and visiting pornography or gambling sites.

How do you know if you have internet addiction?



Compulsive use of internet – spending more time online than with family and friends

Preoccupied with being online – you think about the internet even when you are not online

Lying about being online - hiding the extent or nature of your online behavior

Inability to control or restrict your online behavior – unsuccessful attempts to control, cut back or stop internet use

Use internet to regularly alter your mood – use internet as a way of escaping reality

You can take the quiz to see if you are addicted:

Watch this!



At TEDxBuffalo, Dr. Kimberly Young talks about what you need to know about internet addiction.

Answer these questions from the Internet Addiction Diagnostic Questionnaire (developed by Dr. Kimberly Young). If you answer "yes" to 5 out of the 8 questions, it means you are addicted:

1. Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet (think about previous online activity or anticipate next online session)?

2. Do you feel the need to use the Internet with increasing amounts of time in order to achieve satisfaction?

3. Have you repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop Internet use?

4. Do you feel restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop Internet use?

5. Do you stay online longer than originally intended?

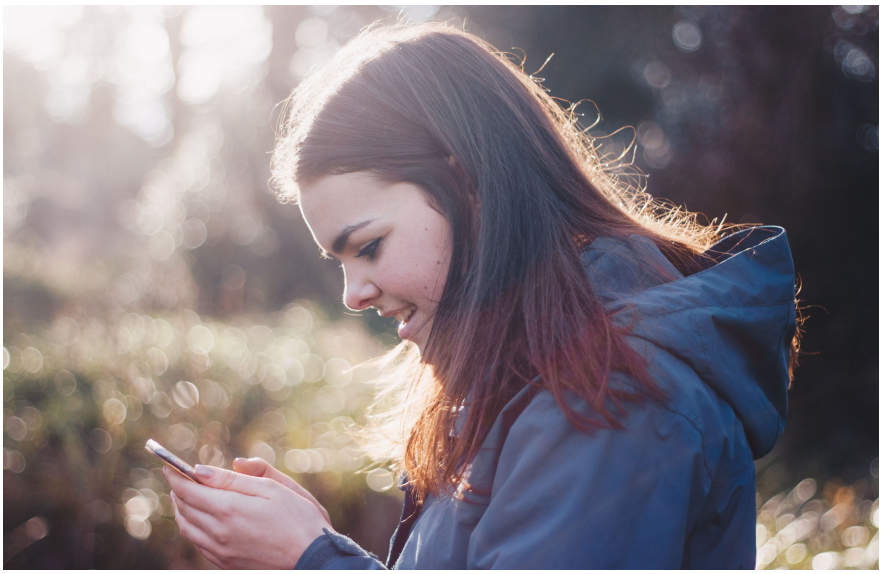
6. Have you jeopardized or risked the loss of a significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity because of the Internet?

7. Have you lied to family members, therapist, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with the Internet?

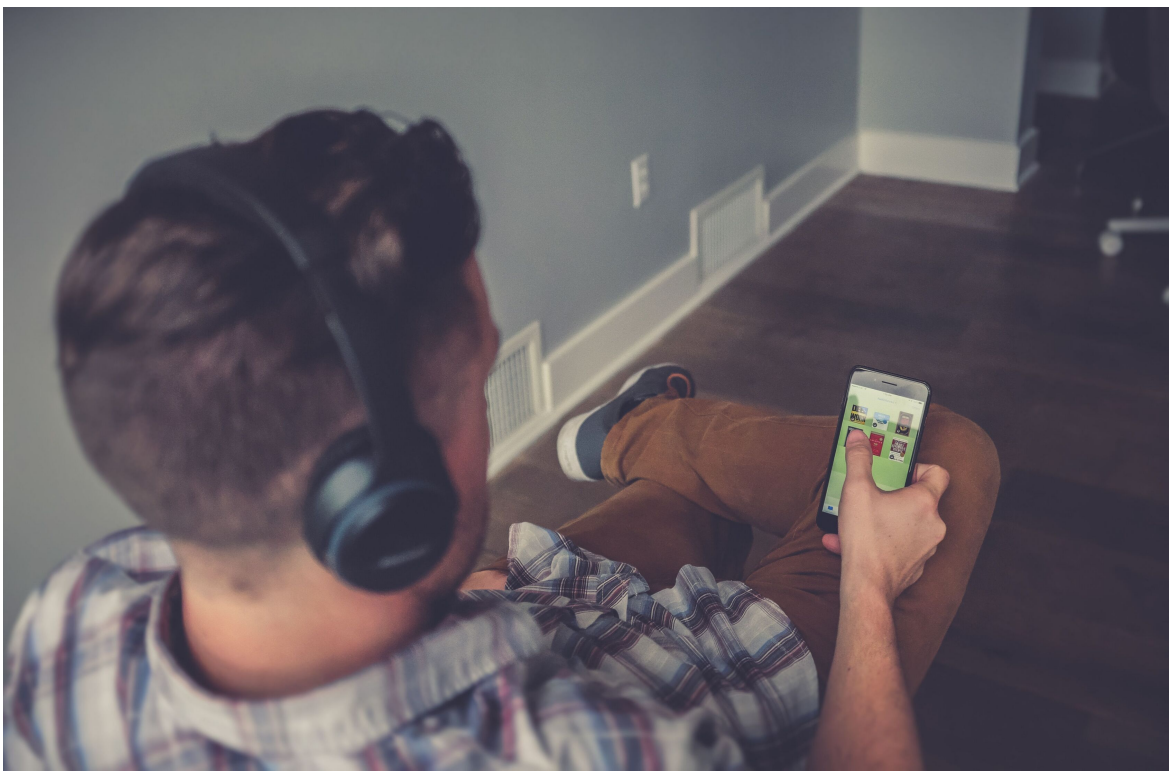
8. Do you use the Internet as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g., feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression)?

What causes internet addiction?

Like a food or drug addiction, the internet provides a type of high and internet addicts are dependent on the internet high to feel good. Whether you are on social media (Snapchat, Twitter, Kik, Instagram, Pinterest, WhatsApp, GroupME, etc.) playing video games, watching shows or videos (Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Video, YouTube), or other online activities, it is a way to escape reality and there are rewards and pleasure involved in what you are doing online, which stimulate your brain and temporarily enhance your mood.




SECURITY
php
git
NODE



Types of Internet Addictions:



Social Media

Spending so much time on social media interferes with other aspects of daily life.



Binge Watching

The practice of watching streaming services or videos in rapid succession.



Video Games and Gaming

Getting so wrapped up in the fantasy world of gaming that you neglect yourself and/or neglect your family, friends, work, and school.



Sexting & Online Sex

This includes sexting, sending explicit photos and messages online, online sexual role-playing, and viewing and downloading pornography.



Compulsive Gambling or Shopping

Obsession with shopping, buying, or gambling that causes negative consequences, such as financial problems.



Information Overload

Just Google it! So much information is available to us on the internet. Spending excessive amounts of time searching for, reading and grasping information off the internet is also a form of internet addiction.

Negative Consequences of Internet Addiction:

Internet/screen addiction damages the brain. Overstimulation can impair brain structure and function, especially when a person's brain is not fully developed which isn't until the mid-twenties. The effects of this are vast but here are some examples:



- Irritability
- Trouble sleeping
- Poor concentration
- Inability to complete tasks, or follow directions
- Trouble organizing
- Stunted creativity
- Easily bored
- Affects ability to develop empathy and compass for others
- Can lead to violent behavior
- Affects quality and depth of personal relationsh
- Can cause cravings similar to drug cravings
- Poor impulse control
- Cause anxiety or stress in small things
- General sense of being overwhelmed

Ways to Stop Screen Addiction:

Calculate how much time you spend online.



How much time do you spend on social media, texting, watching shows, reading, researching, gaming? In order to realize that you might have an addiction and might be spending too much time on the internet, it helps to know how much time you are actually spending doing those things.

Disconnect to Reconnect.

Turn it off, set it aside and be engaged when hanging with friends or spending time with family. Don't allow yourself to keep checking your phone.

Set a time limit.



Set boundaries in your day to day life. Now that you know how much time you spend online. Decide to limit your time and set time restraints for yourself.

Develop a purpose and set goals for your life.

Why are you here and what do you want to do with your life? You have one life to live so consider what you want to do in this one life you have. Some people's purpose is to help others. But you don't necessarily have to know your purpose to set goals. For example, maybe you don't know your purpose but your goal right now might be to graduate high school and go to college. By setting goals and/or understanding your purpose you can focus your time and energy on what will help you accomplish your goal(s).



Find alternatives.

Cultivate other interests in your life. Find hobbies and other things you like to do.

Exercise.

It's important to have an outlet and a way of releasing stress when dealing with an addiction. Exercise is a way to release physical and emotional stress.

Here are 3 reasons to exercise while trying to stop a screen addiction:

1. Exercise relieves and reduces stress, anxiety and depression.

You will feel a range of emotions trying to limit your screen time. You may feel stressed, anxious, depressed, frustrated. Exercise will give you a way of dealing with those building emotions. Exercise uses physical and emotional energy that you might otherwise use in an unhealthy way of escaping.



2. Exercise naturally and positively alters your brain chemistry.

When you exercise, your body releases endorphins and other chemicals which create a natural high. You are used to a high when using the internet. Now, you can have a natural high away from your internet usage.

3. Exercise improves your outlook.

Exercise can increase your feelings of happiness and self-confidence. You've taken time to invest in yourself and by focusing on exercise you've given your brain a break from the internet. Also, seeing your body change and setting goals and reaching them helps with happiness and self-confidence.



Seek Counseling and Support Groups.

Internet addiction can have devastating effects on your health, job/school, personal relationships, finances so don't be afraid to reach out to a mental health professional for help or find a support group to help you with this addiction.

Ways to help your mind recover from too much screen time:

Create solitude.

Allow yourself the chance to be alone and give yourself time to think. Disconnect from your phone and your devices and let your mind reflect. You could take a 24-hour digital detox. This will help your ability to concentrate and take tests. It can help you to be more mindful which can help relieve stress, anxiety and depression.

Allow your mind time to wander.

This gives you time to figure out who you are and who you want to be. It helps you make sense of what you've learned recently. It gives you time to think and reflect on your own words and actions towards others and some studies have shown that the mind can solve tough problems while daydreaming.



Meditate.

There are many ways to meditate. One of those is to find a quiet place, attempt to calm your mind and let all your thoughts go, breathe deeply and find a place of stillness for a few moments. It will be challenging at first but once you are able to let go of what's going on around you, it can have numerous health benefits in addition to helping your mind recover from too much screen time. Another form of meditation is to meditate on a particular thing, for example, if you are a Christian, you can meditate on a scripture or verse from the Bible. The important thing is to take a few moments of time to detach from the internet and allow your mind to rest.

Feed your mind.

Engage in thought-provoking activities which activate and feed your mind (versus passive activities like watching T. V.). Here are some activities that will help you develop the habit of thinking:

Read - Find things to read that will uplift, inspire or educate you. As you read, take moments to stop and think about what you have read.

Keep a Journal - Make time to reflect and then write things down. Write down things that happened, or ideas or creative thoughts you have, write down something you liked that you did that day or something you would change that you did. Write down poetry, songs, prayers, etc.

Engage in a deep conversation with someone.

5 Steps to take to stop checking your phone too much:





Charge your phone and devices in a different room at night.

This will help you to not get distracted right before bed or first thing when you wake up. If you need your phone as an alarm, place the phone down the hall or on the furthest side of the room from where you sleep and put it on silent.



Turn off notifications.

You are trying to work on setting limits for yourself so turn off any notifications that are not necessary. Do you really need to know every time you get a snapchat, tweet, email, etc.?



Give yourself a set time to check social media.

Allow yourself a certain time to check your phone. Check the time when you start on social media and don't allow yourself to be on there for an extended period of time.



4 Put your phone out of sight while doing other things.

Leave your phone in your book bag, purse, pocket or put in a different room. Then turn off the sound and put it to non-vibrate mode.



5 Limit reasons for needing to use your phone.

You don't have to google everything. You don't have to check for texts or check social media every few minutes. Use your phone when needed and for fun, over set time periods and then disconnect from it the rest of the time.



How to help a friend or loved one with a screen addiction:

Find a way to bring up the subject that they may be addicted to their screens.



Since most people may not even realize they have a screen addiction, you may need to find a way to mention to your friend or loved one the possibility that they have a screen addiction. You can do this by sharing this guide with them or by mentioning that you are starting to track your own device usage to see how much time you spend online and ask if they want to do that as well.

Be supportive but have tough love.



This is considered an addiction after all. Tell them the truth about the situation to help them make the changes in their life that are needed. Screen addiction has a major effect on the brain and it can have long term negative effects.

Let them know they are not alone.



This is a worldwide phenomenon and it's something we all need to work on and help each other with. Let your friend know this and that you can hold each other accountable. You could each set screen time restrictions for yourselves but then you can try to help each other stick to them.

Ask them to spend time with you without being on their phone.

For example, when eating out, try placing all your phones face down in the middle of the table. Place them on silent. Whoever checks their phone first, must buy dessert for everyone else. There is a life to be lived and so many things to do so put down your phone and ask your friend to do the same and then go and have some adventures.



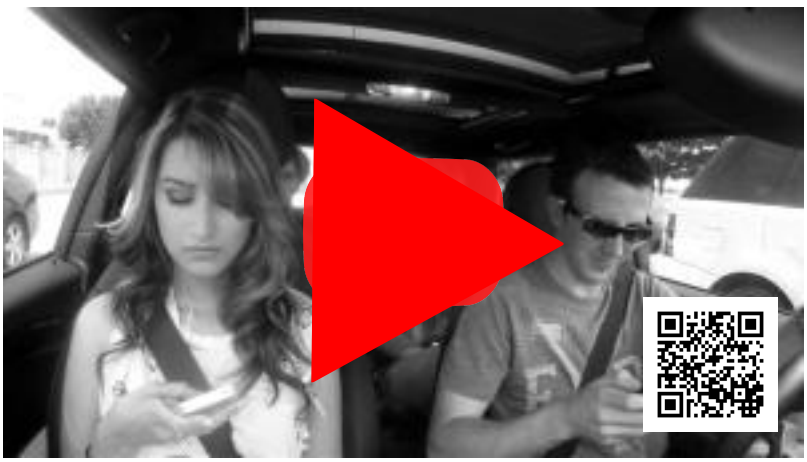
Let them know about TheHopeLine.

Our HopeCoaches are here to listen, guide you through issues; as well as, give encouragement. Let your friend or loved one know they can chat 24/7 at: www.TheHopeLine.com.



Watch this!

"We should be doing this... instead we are doing this."



Is it time for a digital diet?



There are people who decide a digital detox is right for them...it's where they give up their devices for a certain period of time. If you are at the point where you feel you need to do that then definitely go for it BUT....

You don't have to give up your screen time entirely. Think of it like food. If you go on an extreme diet then you are more likely to give in and start eating foods which are bad for you. If you cut off all screen time and say you are not going to go online at all then you are more likely to go back to overuse.

A digital diet is about **being mindful** of what you are doing online and **how much time** you are spending doing it. It's about **embracing the good** it brings and using it for work, school, and fun without over-consuming. (You do tell yourself you can't eat the whole package of Oreo's don't you?) It's about **moderating yourself** and spending the time you do spend online on **quality things** that are good for you.

If it's time for a digital diet for you then start right now by writing down some of the boundaries and online limits you will set for yourself when it comes to screen time (and yes that does include social media). It helps to sit down with a friend or family member and talk out what is the best and most practical boundaries for your life.

A Spiritual Perspective

God asks us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. He also tells us to love our neighbor as our self. He says no other things are greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31)

How can we accomplish this?

It's not by checking out of life and constantly looking at a screen. In order to love someone, you have to know them, right? So you can accomplish these things by first knowing God. To get to know God and draw closer to Him: study God's Word, pray and talk to Him, worship Him and praise Him.

To love your neighbor, you also have to get to know them. When we have our heads down, buried in a game or messaging on social media, we are not connecting with our neighbors and the people around us.

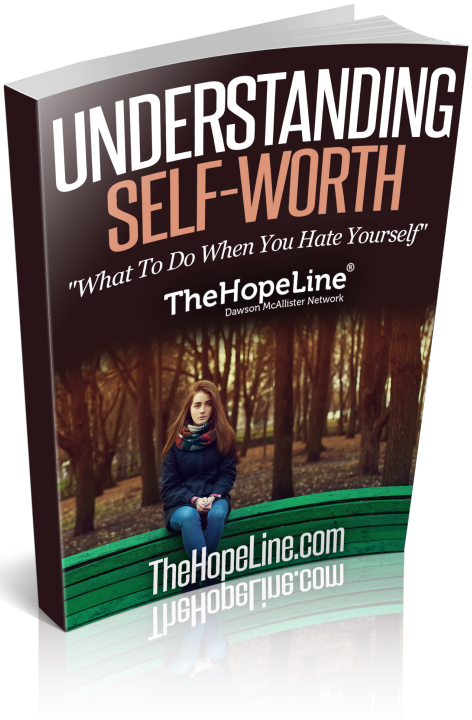
Obviously, technology can be really great, but as with anything else, we must use self-control. Part of using self-control is to say no to things in excess.

You don't have to do this alone. God says where we are weak, He is strong. (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). He says He will help us in our times of trouble and temptation (I Corinthians 10:13).

Ask God to help you to have self-control. Ask Him to help you to limit your screen time and put Him first in your life. Ask Him to be the Lord of your life so that you can love Him will all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.

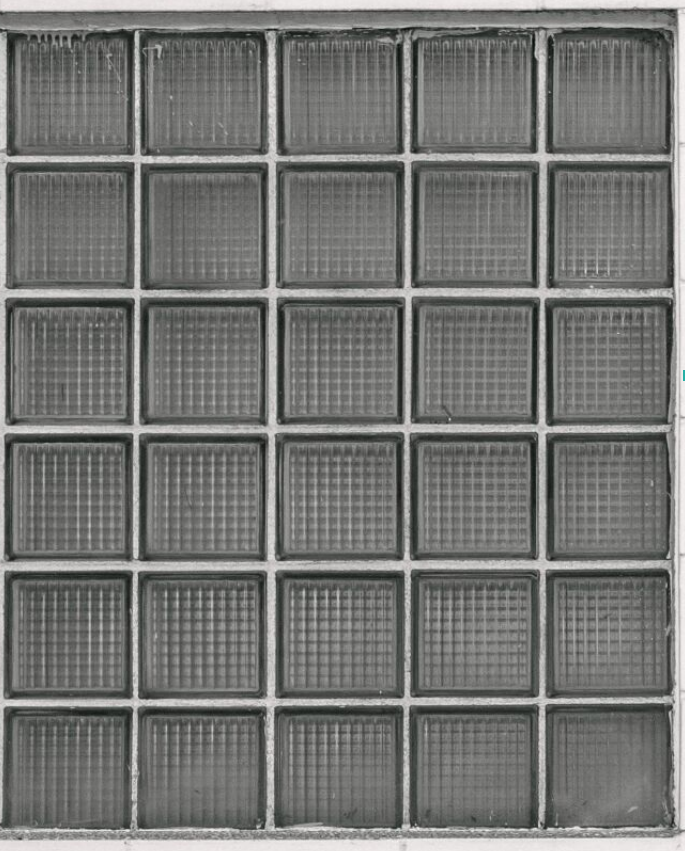


If you want to know more about having a relationship with God or have questions about screen addiction, chat online anytime with a HopeCoach at TheHopeLine.com.



Struggling with an addiction can affect your self-esteem. If you're struggling with your self-worth, check out our Guide: Understanding Self-Worth.

Or to find more of TheHopeLine's Guides, on Depression, Forgiveness, Suicide, Eating Disorders, Anxiety, Lying, etc. visit us at: http://www.thehopeline.com/guides/



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