

The symptoms of internet addiction

Last week, in a private rehabilitation clinic outside Edinburgh, Leo Edwards, a 19 schoolboy, was going through severe withdrawal symptoms. His body shook violently and uncontrollably, and at mealtimes he regularly threw cups and plates around the dining room. The boy's addiction had nothing to do with alcohol, drugs, gambling or food. His problem was (net obsession) an over dependency on the internet.

An international group of psychologists has recently suggested that anyone who surfs the internet for long periods is clinically ill and needs medical treatment. According to their report, internet addicts should be treated in the same way as alcoholics, drug addicts, compulsive gamblers and people with eating disorders.

Leo Edwards is not an isolated case. Russell Hopkins, aged 15, is a typical online addict. Every day after school, and after dinner until 3 or 4 in the morning, he will be found in his room surfing the net or playing computer games. By the end of the day he will have spent more than 6 hours online. Understandably, his parents are extremely worried. Not only has his school work suffered, but Russell's addiction has also destroyed his social life and his spare time interests. For instance, he has just dropped out of his school's basketball team in order to spend more time at his computer. Instead of spending next weekend having a good time out with friends, he'll be spending indoors surfing the internet.

Russell has recently joined an internet online support group. It may seem ironic that many of the support groups for internet addicts are online but at least Russell has sought help. Not everyone does. Dr. Ann Hoffman, who runs an online support group, says « people don't realise that being online for more than four hours a day amounts to addiction and that they have a serious problem. I predict that the number of people who join online Support groups will have risen dramatically within three years ».

COMPREHENSION 5/PTS

READ THE TEXT AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

1/ How did Leo respond to withdrawal from the internet?

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2/ What do some psychologists compare internet addicts to ?

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3/ How is Russel a typical addict ?

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4/ What two things has he stopped doing ?

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5/ What does Dr.Hofman predict ?

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