

## From the Counseling Center: Addicted to the Internet?

Have you hugged your Internet today? If you have, you're in good company. I hugged my Internet today along with millions of others. Over 600 million people are connected to the Internet worldwide.

We all know the Internet is a useful, often necessary tool for research, providing users the ability to acquire information on virtually everything. The Internet can be used for recreational purposes, educational pursuits and in business, among other things. Personally, I enjoy using the Internet for recreation.

As students, professors and other employees of Rider, many of us are required to use the Internet. Some of us feel more comfortable on the Internet than others. Is it possible, however, to feel too comfortable? Is it possible to feel so drawn to the Internet that it almost becomes an addiction?

Unlike smoking cigarettes or drug and alcohol addictions, the Internet doesn't directly introduce a foreign chemical substance into the body having addictive properties. Gambling doesn't directly introduce chemicals either, but some feel a strong compulsion to

gamble or compulsively shop. Excessive gambling or compulsive shopping can have a disruptive effect on people's lives. But what about the Internet; can that have disruptive effects?

There is growing evidence that addictive or compulsive Internet usage, however you want to phrase it, is affecting and disrupting the lives of a growing number of people throughout the world. Compulsive Internet use is thought to affect tens of millions and has recently been receiving more research and attention from counselors and related professionals.

An interesting question regarding nonessential Internet usage is how does one individual become a compulsive user while another individual does not? Again, we have the gambling parallel. A person might go to a casino in Atlantic City once every few years spending or winning a modest amount while another might lose his or her life's savings.

Excessive Internet use might involve a compulsion with the Internet in a general sense or it might be more interest specific. For example, one might be compulsively attracted to computer games on the Internet, web surfing,

hanging out in chat rooms, Internet shopping, sports, gambling or day trading with stocks or social contacts. Almost anything can be an attraction. All these lures are only a click away.

There are observable signs indicating one may be using the Internet in an unhelpful way. Consider some of the following signs should they be applicable: Do you find yourself using the Internet as a means to escape from problems or responsibilities? Has Internet use negatively interfered with or jeopardized other aspects of your life such as academics, job productivity or relationships? Are you depriving yourself of sleep because of excessive or odd hours of nonessential Internet use? Do you feel unable to control your Internet use? Are you irritable when not online? Is your nonessential Internet use increasing? Would it be difficult to stop or reduce nonessential Internet use? Do you feel guilty about the amount of time you spend on the Internet?

The effects of compulsive Internet usage can be serious and quite varied if not addressed. For example, you could find yourself spending long periods of time communicating online to someone

totally different from who they said they were. In another situation, a student's academic standing could be compromised.

Some employees get fired for unauthorized Internet usage. It's no secret companies are using Internet monitoring technologies with increasing frequency to uncover unauthorized Internet use in the work place.

Who is potentially vulnerable to compulsive Internet usage? We all are at risk. Computers are everywhere. A compulsive user could be a computer programmer, housewife, husband, university student, retiree, psychiatrist, lawyer, elementary school student, a judge or anyone.

Do you feel in touch with your inner Internet? If you have questions or concerns about your Internet use habits or any other concerns, feel free to visit myself or anyone else at the Counseling Center.



Charles Link

## Times are Changing: Weight report cards

Grade school was a safe haven for me. It was a place that introduced me to the magic of reading books, showed me the beauty of writing what my heart felt and helped me become more secure as I became older. I also learned the basic reading, writing and arithmetic that went along with the outrageous tuition my parents slaved to pay for nine years.

Recently in several states, schools have just added a new subject for kids that I never had to deal with: weight. Considering that America has one of the highest obesity rates in the world, Congress has to be more involved in stopping obesity in children before it becomes a life-threatening situation. They have started distributing weight report cards in several states to monitor children's weight. In other words, if Johnny ate two cookies and then ate three more, how much would Johnny weigh?

In these weight report cards, parents are informed of their children's Body Mass Index (BMI) and their fitness level in detail. BMI is based on the height and weight according to the age and the sex of the child. With the report card, they also slip in sheets with tips on healthy habits, snack ideas and plenty of physical suggestions to keep the children on a healthy path.

So why report cards? It seems that nothing else has

worked considering 15 percent of six to 19 year olds are overweight or obese, which is double the amount from 20 years ago. So far, schools in Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Massachusetts have challenged this experiment and are satisfied. Ninety percent of the parents who receive a card are happy with it and expect to see this continue the following year. This new trend was approved by the legislature this year, which requires the state public schools to provide the annual report on BMI, starting in Arkansas.

Although I applaud the effort, I look down upon this method. It is understandable that Congress is concerned about the health of the future generation, considering that obesity leads to heart disease, strokes and diabetes. But there are many other ways to stir a child's motivation to lose weight. First of all, children as young as six should not worry about their appearance or what they choose to eat. It is up to the influence of parents and trusted adults to introduce them to the world of sports. Not only would they get exercise, but a better chance to practice social skills. Children must be informed of the importance of eating right at an early age. I remember being in the fifth grade and eating Nutella sandwiches, which was an Italian chocolate spread with white bread, while

my friends ate a healthy turkey sandwich with slices of carrots and celery. This most likely contributed to my non-slender frame, but thanks to playing volleyball like my parents suggested, I did have a balance of some sort of physical activity. And this is what children need—not a report card.

It was reported that the kids who had weight report cards were very uncomfortable with it. Who can blame them considering that the adolescent years are difficult to live through? This will just be another factor that raises the pressure to look thin. It is a proven fact that many adolescents teased about their weight suffer from depression and, sadly, contemplate suicide. It is enough that the media pounds on innocent victims about how to look; we don't need the government to act upon it as well.

This utopian idea of everyone having the perfect weight is a difficult task. I think the government should sit down with a box of jelly filled donuts and rethink its choice of action.



Sara Scotto

## 'HUNGER' FROM PAGE 8

the resources?

There are many people who do donate during the holidays, which is excellent, but the problem is that people are hungry 365 days a year. They are not only hungry and homeless during the holidays. People are hungry during the summer, too.

The homeless don't get a vacation or holiday from being hungry and homeless. Poverty does not take a day off. So donating around the holidays is a great help but consider donating during the off-season as well.

Some think that donating is only going to go so far and that this problem is never going to be solved. This problem is vast and growing but people

are willing to tackle balancing the government's budget, which is also vast and ever increasing. So why can't we put the same dedication to feeding people?

It is not a problem that cannot be solved but it is a problem that you have to want to solve. I challenge you, students, faculty and administrators, to care and to think. Knowing is half the battle. Caring enough to get off your butt and do something about it is the next step. Remember, it won't get solved in one day but every little bit helps, no matter how small. Do what you can, but the key is to actually know and to do.

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY...

Nov. 21, 1694 - Voltaire was born.

Nov. 22, 1963 - Pres. John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

Nov. 24, 1963 - Lee Harvey Oswald was killed.

Nov. 25, 1846 - Andrew Carnegie was born.

Nov. 26, 1716 - A lion was first exhibited in America.

Nov. 27, 1095 - Pope Urban II called for a crusade.

Nov. 27, 1901 - The Army War College was authorized.

Nov. 27, 1910 - NYC's Pennsylvania Station opened.