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

Have you hugged your Internet today? If you have, the 500 million people in your company. I hugged my Internet today along with millions of others. Over 600 million people are connected to the Internet worldwide.

While 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 behaviors, such as excessive 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, or to the Internet as a use resource? 'HUNGER'

The effects of compulsive Internet use 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 feel 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.

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**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 learned the basic reading 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 student's weight. In other words, if Johnnie ate two cookies and then ate three more, how much would Johnnie weigh?

In these weight report cards, parents are informed of their children's Body Mass Index (BMI) and their influence of parents and trusted adults to introduce appearance or what they choose to eat. It is up to the government to act upon it as well. For example, you could find yourself spending long periods of time communicating online to someone totally different from who they said they were.

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**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.