

PsychHealth

Volume 13

Number 3, Fall 2003

Resource Newsletter of

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associates**
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Internet Addiction

Karen has taken on the primary role of caring for her home and her three young children. Her husband works long hours and occasionally travels away from home on business. After her children have gone to bed Karen has become a late-night regular of Internet chat rooms as a way to relax and enjoy adult company. She often stays up until 5:00 A.M. while she swaps endless stories about her life with her chat room pals who share similar experiences and offer understanding and support. This



Rick Hancock
Registered Psychologist

“second home” has become more appealing than her real life home. She feels so free and uninhibited, so cared for and desired, so connected. Karen knows she is falling behind in her household responsibilities and is ignoring her husband and children but she simply doesn't have the strength to control or stop her Internet connections.

Karen may not realize that she is addicted because we are used to viewing addiction as an overuse of some substance like alcohol, cocaine, coffee, or food. But like

compulsive gambling or obsessive shopping, people like Karen who get hooked on the Internet are addicted to what they do and the feelings they experience while they're doing it. Through the Internet it becomes possible to escape into a fantasy-

land where one can make instant friends (and lovers) and talk any time of the day or night from the safety of one's own bedroom, office, or kitchen and while maintaining complete anonymity.

The downside, however, is that the escape is temporary. When the computer is turned off for the night and the screen goes dark, real-life problems return and now they're even harder to endure. Loneli-

An Internet addict can be your best friend, your child, your parent, your partner, or your employee.

ness intensifies, depression deepens, and there's the added burden of guilt for neglecting spouse, family, or work. This propels the addict into going online even more often for even longer periods of time to find relief from their painful feelings and to chase after the “high” they remembered from their last walk through a chat room or newsgroup. Unhappiness creates a natural breeding ground for addictions and the Internet is all-to-readily

available. Internet addicts cut across age, gender, social, educational, and economic lines.

An Internet addict can be your best friend, your child, your parent, your partner, or your employee. Maybe even you.

Of course, millions of non-addicts do use the Internet regularly to enhance their lives. Even playing in the chat rooms or with interactive games now and then can be harmless fun if it's not done to excess or does not cause problems in

real life. Those who do fall into habits that constitute addictive behaviour usually experience a craving to return to the Internet for emotional support. They will generally have a tendency to conceal their Internet use and will minimize their use if confronted.

All or some of the following signs are indicative of problematic Internet use and possibly addiction:

- Often spend more time online than intended.
- Often neglect responsibilities such as household chores, work, or homework and performance suffers.
- Internet relationships are more exciting than real-life relationships.
- Attempts to cut-down have been unsuccessful.
- Preoccupied with thoughts of going back online.
- Become defensive or secretive about online activities.
- Often feel depressed, moody, or nervous when off-line.
- Loss of sleep due to late night log-ins.
- Discord with spouse, family, or friends due to on-line activities.

If you or someone you care about appears to be experiencing problems due to Internet use, an addictions counsellor may prove helpful.

Ref: Young, K. S. (1998). Caught in the Net. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ■



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When Is an Affair Not an Affair?

The answer is NEVER. An affair begins when a person who is supposed to be in a committed relationship begins to spend time alone with a third person. Initially, time may be spent sharing a coffee, a chat after work, or even interacting on the Internet. The two find pleasure and excitement just being in each other's company. This sounds innocent but when one or both of these chat partners are committed to another person and these meetings are kept secret from that person, we have Stage One of an affair.



Tena Colton
Registered Clinical
Counsellor

Stage Two begins when these chat partners begin to put emotional energy into the new relationship. This emotional energy should rightly be put into the committed relationship. Two things happen during Stage Two. First, the committed relationship is robbed of the energy, time and caring that should be put into problem solving, communication and relationship building. The second thing that happens is that loyalties begin to shift and bonding between the two illicit partners grows.

There are various excuses that people use to justify putting time and energy into the new relationship: "I haven't been close to my spouse for years.", "I can't do anything right for him/her.", "Whatever I do is never enough.", "We have nothing in common.", or "He/she never listens to me". During this stage, they may feel guilty but they also feel entitled to spend time with someone they think understands, accepts and admires them. Is it an affair yet? They haven't 'slept together'; maybe they haven't even held hands or kissed.

In Stage Three, stimulated by the aphrodisiac of secrecy, they eventually fall into each other's arms. They feel confident that they have found someone who listens to them, understands them, and cares about them. They enjoy their time together so much. There are no bills to pay, meals to cook or children to chauffeur. Bliss. When problems arise in the relationship, they

don't develop problem-solving skills, brainstorm or seek outside help. They are more inclined to flop into bed and solve their problems with sex. Sometimes, affairs 'wear out' after a few months of this activity. Sometimes, the couple moves into a stage where their minds, bodies and hearts are captured.

Perhaps you know of affairs that have not moved through these three stages. Regardless of how the development and life of an affair is conceptualized, it always begins in secrecy and ends with broken hearts. It

Can a marriage be rebuilt after one of the partners has had an affair?

could be the heart of one of the participants, their spouses or their children.

Can a marriage be rebuilt after one of the partners has had an affair? Yes, every

therapist has witnessed this many times. It is not a matter of stabilizing the old marriage but building a stronger one that will be better and more solid so that it can last a lifetime.

In order to build a new relationship, the couple needs new information. There are many places where this information can be obtained. The couple may choose to work with a marriage counsellor or their pastor. They may choose to attend workshops on relationship building and communication. Another possibility is to attend a weekend course such as Marriage Encounter or Retrouvaille where couples can begin the process of healing and learn the skills that will enable them to rebuild trust and become confident that the mistakes of the past need never be repeated. There are many books and tapes that can be helpful. Look on the Internet or call our office for information regarding these workshops, weekends, books or tapes. ■

WORKSHOP

MARRIAGE CAN BE GREAT!

A three hour workshop which offers practical suggestions on how to enrich a relationship.

Topics include:

- Making Peace with the Past
- Growth Within Marriage
- Listening, Consulting and Co-creating
- The Ultimate Means of Reducing Stress
 - The Value of Co-operation
- Time-out Strategy to Alleviate Conflict
 - Unconditional Love
- The Importance of Playtime
- Self Esteem as a Product of Relationship
 - And More

Presented by **Denis Boyd** (*Registered Psychologist*)

Denis has been counselling couples to healthier marriages for 24 years.

He has a practical and relaxed presentation style.

Monday, February 16, 2004 - 7:00 to 10:00 PM

202-1046 Austin Avenue, Coquitlam, BC - Phone: 604-931-7211

Cost: \$25.00 (\$40.00 per couple)

(Handouts and refreshments included in the registration) Limited Enrollment

What Do I Think of My Life Overall?

Erik Erikson, a psychoanalyst of the middle twentieth century, developed a scheme of human life in which he saw people at each new age-stage of life confronting new and different sorts of life challenges. It is interesting to examine his views about the last stage of life, when a person has retired and is addressing the question, "Has my life been happy and worthwhile?"



Simon Hearn
Registered Psychologist

To ask myself how I feel about my life overall is a big question. How does one respond to such a question? At one level, all of us ask, "How am I doing?" all the time. Erikson said that in mulling over one's history it is important to address the sad things, the mistakes, the failures and the disappointments; we should not wallow in them, but ask if we have really gotten over them and come to peace with them. All of us have negative memories. The big ones,

move on with the thought that a lesson of some kind came out of the experience.

There's another reason why I hold on to bad memories, though, and that is that I want to understand them. What happened? Why did things go wrong? Who hurt whom and why? It is a lot easier to let go of things and move on when I see what forces were at play, and what moved the people involved to act as they did. In the same way, Erikson said it is important to understand that one's parents were

people in their own right who probably did the best they could at the time. With understanding comes forgiveness.

Erikson said that it is easier to set a

I can help myself move on with the thought that a lesson of some kind came out of the experience.

positive seal on one's life if one can feel that, overall, one contributed to the world, and if one was a member of good standing in the community of one's family, friends and work associates. Ultimately, I have to see that the world is a big place, that life goes on, that life itself is sacred, and that we are all part of something bigger. The validity and meaning of any individual life comes from having humility and seeing that we are all worthwhile, we all have our part to play, we all are doing the best we can, and that my life, despite its many harsh moments, is still valuable and lovable. ■



Has my life been worthwhile and happy?

however, are the ones that render me seriously uneasy about whether I have been a good person, a loving, helpful person, and a constructive person—or whether I have hurt people, damaged myself, violated my own personal values.

Let's face it; we have all disappointed ourselves at times. Erikson said one way to cope with such letdowns is to grieve them. That means mourning and accepting that one made mistakes, however well-intentioned one was, and that they are in the past now—there is sadness, which needs to be felt and respected and given its time, but ultimately, it does little good to cry endlessly. I can help myself

Endings are Beginnings

An 8 - Week Workshop

Has your relationship (or that of someone you know) ended in separation, divorce or death and are you wondering how to begin again? No one should walk away a broken person or allow rejection, betrayal, hurt, loneliness or disappointment to scar them forever. This 8-week workshop will show you how an ending can be a beginning and help put you back together, so you can let go of the pain and love again.

Evelyn Wright, a Career Practitioner, who works with clients suffering from loss, will facilitate the weekly Wednesday sessions, for both men and women.

Next Session: October 22 – December 10, 2003

Time: 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Address: #202-1046 Austin Ave, Coquitlam (across from Safeway)

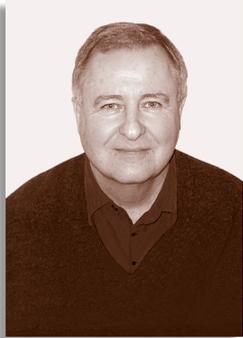
Cost: \$ 260.00

Facilitator/Contact: Evelyn Wright 604-728-6032

Email: endingsarebeginnings@shaw.ca

Communication – Clear and Clean

"He doesn't talk about his feelings... maybe he doesn't have any. I just give up and shut down." "She talks on and on...it overwhelms me, and I just back off." "He won't say what he's thinking." "She just talks about feelings...touchy-feely stuff." "I have trouble once I start talking and I follow him from room to room and keep going on and on." "I have trouble figuring out what to say." "We both need some 'tools' to help us to communicate better."



Farrell Hannah
Registered Psychologist

Some people have trouble communicating because they are not sure how to say things, or what to say. Others may have difficulty because they say too much or blurt out just one part of the message that seems the most important to them, leaving the partner overwhelmed.

Communicating verbally (talking and listening) is one important way that humans send and receive messages. Words can flow easily and clearly in a sequence or set of steps that appear to be "natural" but actually have been learned. On the other hand, there can be problems with starting the flow, with the flow getting stuck in one spot, or having overflow or repetition. These problems can leave a couple feeling helpless and hopeless about understanding each other.

A tool that can help with the "how to" is to use a communication formula to prompt us to find words when there seem to be no words (a deficit) on the one hand, or when there are too many words (a surplus) on the other. Follow this sequence when talking more personally (intimately) with your partner:

"When in **the situation** (describe the surroundings that you are in);

and **I observe** (describe what you see, hear, smell, taste, touch as a sensory experience);

then **I think** (describe briefly what

you say to yourself or what you imagine or picture in your mind's eye);

and then **I feel** (describe briefly what emotions you experience, such as sad, mad, bad, worried, glad, calm, etc).

What **I want** is (describe briefly what your preference is, which could be for the same thing to occur again or a request for a change)."

"We both need some 'tools' to help us to communicate better."

For example:

"When we are talking together; and I see you turning away; I think that you don't care what I think;

and I feel devalued and lonely.

Please pay real attention to me as we talk".

It may seem strange or awkward or even silly to have to resort to a formula in order to talk with your partner and to allow your partner to talk so that

you listen and then understand better. However, if your communication is not clean and not clear or is stuck, then you might benefit from following a pattern that is different from the one you more typically use. It can also help you to become less reactive and more objective in your interactions. Think of doing this just like you would if you were practicing to change any other skill. And it can also be used to communicate positive not only "negative" information, to more strongly emphasize what you do like. Why not give it a try. ■



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