

Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Youth & Digital Technology: Growing Up Online Toolkit

Abstinence: in the context of addiction, being abstinent is the state of refraining from using drugs or alcohol, social media, smartphones, instant messaging, or engaging in any addictive activity or behavior.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT): is a mindfulness-based behavioral therapy that focuses on processes and helps individuals develop psychological flexibility by promoting acceptance of thoughts and feelings while committing to actions aligned with their values. ACT can be a useful approach in the treatment of problematic internet pornography consumption.

Addiction: a chronic, progressive but treatable disorder in which someone becomes dependent on a substance or behavior that is psychologically or physically dangerous and habit-forming.

App: an abbreviation for “application”. A piece of software that can run through a web browser or offline on your computer, and a smartphone, tablet, or other electronic devices, including smart TVs and smartwatches. Apps may or may not have a connection to the internet.

Assessment: continuous and dynamic process aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of the biological, psychological, social, spiritual, and cultural factors that contribute to and sustain problematic technology use. This process involves structured interviews, validated screening tools, and targeted questions to explore multiple aspects of an individual’s life. Key domains assessed include mental health status, cognitive and learning abilities, family dynamics (both past and present), experiences of trauma or bullying, substance use, and religious or cultural influences. A holistic approach to assessment ensures that interventions are tailored to the individual's unique needs, fostering more effective support and long-term well-being.

Avatar: an image, character, or username that represents a person online. Commonly used in role-playing video games.

Behavioral addiction (also known as process addiction): “behavioural problems that involve a lessening of control, persistent seeking, and significant harm even though no addictive substance is involved”. Process addiction is characterized by the compulsive nature of the behavior. Process addiction could also be defined as: “the compulsion to continually engage in an activity or behaviour despite the negative consequences on the person’s ability to remain mentally and/or physically healthy and functional in the home”. Examples of things that can lead to behavioural addiction include sex, shopping, gambling, gaming, or the internet. Research shows how process addictions mirror substance use addictions in their comorbidity, symptom presentation, neurobiological mechanism, and response to treatment.

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Blog: created from “web log”, referring to an online diary. A blog is usually maintained by an individual or small group and shows entries in reverse chronological order.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): a therapeutic framework that is structured, collaborative, goal-oriented, present-focused, and time-limited with a focus on thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and physiological reactions. CBT has been shown to help treat many different conditions. CBT helps people understand how their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are connected and provide people with ways to change their thoughts and behaviours to help alleviate certain problems in their lives.

Child pornography: any image or video depicting a person under 18 in a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit manner, or engaging in a sexual act. It is illegal to create, possess, distribute, or share such content in any form.

Co-occurring/Concurrent disorder: a combination of mental health disorders and substance use disorders and/or problem gambling. Co-occurring mental health issues and addictions. It is also known as comorbidity, dual disorders, and dual diagnosis.

Concurrent capability: the ability to identify, manage, and treat people who present to either addiction or mental health services with concurrent disorders.

Cyberbullying: hostile behavior utilizing information technology, such as e-mail, instant messaging (IM), and social networking sites, to attack or embarrass a peer. The experience of being cyberbullied can be traumatic as it is a type of mental abuse, contributing to feelings of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

Cyberstalking: harassing with threats of physical harm, using online applications, platforms, or other online involvement.

Digital technology: includes online applications, programs, platforms, and other online involvement or digital screen time in general.

Digital technology addiction: compulsive use of technology that involves devices, online applications, programs, or platforms that create significant impairment in an individual’s life. Digital technology addiction is not officially recognized as a disorder in the DSM-5-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision). However, related conditions are discussed, such as: Internet Gaming Disorder, which is included in Section III as a condition warranting further study. Additionally, behaviors associated with problematic technology use may overlap with or exacerbate symptoms of other mental health conditions, including gambling disorder (now classified as a behavioral addiction), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and various mood

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and anxiety disorders. Ongoing research continues to explore the neurobiological, psychological, and social factors contributing to compulsive digital technology use.

Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD): included in Section III of the DSM-5-TR (conditions requiring further research). It is not an officially classified disorder but has proposed diagnostic criteria. Gambling Disorder is the only officially recognized behavioral addiction in the DSM-5-TR.

Dependence: a physiological or psychological component of addiction. Physiological dependence is the presence of substance tolerance and withdrawal symptoms when the substance is abruptly discontinued or decreased. Psychological dependence occurs when an individual relies upon the effects of the substance (or non-substance/ behaviour) used and can occur without physiological tolerance or physiological withdrawal.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM): a reference book used by the medical profession to diagnose and treat mental disorders. Each mental disorder is described in the DSM in terms of its symptoms, treatment, and prognosis. The DSM is the product of years of research coordinated, collected, and published through the American Psychiatric Association. The manual is currently in its Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR).

Digital Well-being: the practice of using technology in a way that supports mental, emotional, and physical health, balancing screen time with real-world interactions.

Doomscrolling: the habit of continuously consuming negative or distressing online content, often leading to anxiety, stress, or depressive symptoms.

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out): anxiety triggered by social media exposure to others' experiences, creating pressure to stay constantly connected to avoid feeling left out.

FOJI (Fear of Joining In): anxiety about participating in online interactions due to fear of judgment, criticism, or social rejection.

Gambling: the act of staking money or something of material value on an event with an uncertain outcome in the hope of winning additional money or material goods. Qualifying definitions of gambling have gone from traditional 'land-based' gambling to online gambling and have now expanded to include online simulated gambling (virtual currency) that is integrated into video games and social networking sites.

Gambling addiction/Problem gambling/Gambling disorder (GD): an addiction that refers to all types of gambling or choices related to gambling that endanger or compromise a person's life, job, or family [8], or create significant impairment or distress. Gambling Disorder is included in the DSM Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR) and includes persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as

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indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) symptoms (as outlined in the DSM-5-TR), in a 12-month period. Currently, online gambling is included under the diagnostic criteria of Gambling Disorder.

Gaming: the activity of playing video games.

Gamification: the use of game-like features (e.g., point systems, leaderboards, rewards, badges, challenges) in non-gaming digital platforms to increase user engagement, such as in education or social media.

Grooming: when an adult builds a relationship with a minor online to gain their trust for exploitation or abuse.

Internet addiction (IA)/Internet addiction disorder (IAD)/ Pathological internet use: “implies a pattern of uncontrolled internet use resulting in clinical impairment or distress”. Internet Addiction or Internet Addiction Disorder is not currently recognized as a psychological disorder in the DSM-5-TR. There is a growing body of research acknowledging that patterns of problematic internet use can result in significant impairment in an individual’s life.

Internet gaming disorder (IGD): gaming addiction is described in the DSM-5-TR, the condition is referred to as Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD). IGD is included in the section recommending conditions for further research, along with caffeine use disorder and other conditions. Much of the research on problematic digital technology use is around Internet Gaming Disorder. Internet Gaming Disorder is a pattern of uncontrolled internet gaming resulting in clinical impairment or distress.

LGBTQ+2S OR 2SLGBTQI+: acronym representing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer individuals. The plus sign is inclusive of any other sexually and/or gender-diverse individuals. Oftentimes the term 2-spirited is used in Indigenous culture to self-identify gender or sexual fluidity. Many people who identify as sexually or gender diverse have been identified as having many unmet health needs and have a reduced likelihood of accessing routine, emergency, and preventive healthcare services, which may be due to real or perceived discrimination.

MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game): multiple players assume the role of characters in an interactive, fictional persistent online world. The landscape of the world continues to evolve.

Mental health: a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his, her, their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to their community.

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Narcissism: a reasonably broad behavioral trait domain, expressed by self-centered grandiosity, overconfidence, manipulation, feeling special and unique, a lack of empathy, and envy among others.

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) behaviours: the deliberate damaging of one's body tissue in the absence of any intent to die.

Online gambling: virtual platforms for traditional forms of gambling such as poker, sports, or casino games with potential monetary gains and losses. This definition has been expanded in the last 10 years to include popular online games that are used to purchase virtual coins or tokens for advancement and apps where ongoing effort results in real-life rewards (gains).

Online gaming: playing video games while connected to virtual platforms (internet or computer network). (CYFI definition).

Offline gaming: playing video games without being connected to a virtual platform (internet or computer network). (CYFI definition).

Phubbing: the act of ignoring people in a social setting by focusing on a digital device, often impacting relationships and face-to-face communication.

Pornography (Porn): includes the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement.

Pornography addiction: a problematic preoccupation with sexualized imagery that lasts six months or longer and causes significant problems in the user's life. As is the case with sexual addiction, pornography addiction is not listed as a disorder in the APA's DSM.

Problematic use of digital technology: a pattern of uncontrolled internet use that results in clinical impairment or distress, or internet use, which is risky, excessive, or impulsive.

Problematic social networking/Problematic social media use: "being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable motivation to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas".

Process addiction (also known as Behavioural addiction): behavioural problems that involve a lessening of control, persistent seeking, and significant harm even though no addictive substance is involved. Process addiction is characterized by the compulsive nature of the behavior. Process addiction could also be defined as: the compulsion to continually engage in an activity or behaviour despite the negative consequences on the person's ability to remain mentally and/ or physically healthy and functional in the home. Examples include sex, shopping, gambling, gaming, and the internet. Research shows how process addictions mirror substance

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use addictions in their comorbidity, symptom presentation, neurobiological mechanism, and response to treatment.

Psychoactive substance: any drug or food that affects mental ability, activity or processes, or mood. Psychoactive substances range from ordinary everyday substances and over-the-counter drugs such as caffeine, alcohol, chocolate, and antihistamines, to strong illegal drugs such as heroin.

Recovery (from addiction or mental illness): a process of change whereby individuals work to improve their health and wellness and to live a meaningful life in a community of their choice while striving to achieve their full potential.

RPG (Role Playing Game): an online game in which the player assumes the role of a character in an interactive fictional online setting. Games may be single-player or multi-player.

Screening: questions that help identify whether a client is experiencing an addiction, mental health disorder, or problem gambling.

Sexting: refers to the exchange of sexually suggestive or explicit images, messages, or videos via the internet or electronic devices, such as smartphones. While the term *sexting* is commonly used in media and public discussions, young people often use alternative terms like naked selfies, nudies, or banana pics to describe this practice.

Sextortion: the threatened dissemination of explicit, intimate, or embarrassing images of a sexual nature without consent, usually for the purpose of procuring additional images, sexual acts, money, or something else.

Sexual dysfunction: erectile dysfunction, low sexual desire, and difficulty achieving orgasm.

Simulated gambling: gambling, in which there is no exchange of real money, but virtual currency.

Social networking (SN): the act of socializing in an online community by receiving, sending, and sharing information through online applications, websites, social media sites, or computer programs.

Social network sites (SNSs): web-based services that allow individuals to engage with other people based on common interests to share, co-create, or exchange information, ideas, photos, or videos. These virtual communities are also known collectively as social media. Currently, some popular examples are TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, and Pinterest.

Substance use disorder (SUD): describes an addiction to, or dependence upon, a psychoactive substance (excluding caffeine). The DSM-5-TR combines the DSM-IV categories

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of substance abuse and substance dependence into a single disorder measured on a continuum from mild to severe. The DSM-5-TR requires that two to three symptoms (further detailed in the DSM-5-TR), from a list of 11, be present for a minimum period of 12 months.

Texting/Text messaging: a slang term that refers to the creation and transmission of short electronic text messages between two or more mobile device users over a network. Originally, texting referred only to written messages, but messages may contain images, videos, and sound.

Treatment planning: developing treatment goals with a client and choosing interventions or programs to attain the identified goals. Monitoring progress and adjusting the treatment plan as needed.

Tweet: a post or status update on X (a virtual social networking platform), which consists of 280 characters or less.

Youth (age): young adults or emergent adults from 18 up to 24 years old.

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