

## *Thirteen Warning Signs of Internet Addiction in Your Spouse, Friend, or Loved One*

Recognizing the warning signs of Internet addiction in your spouse or loved one is the first step in your helping them help themselves. The following warning signs should serve as general guidelines for you to determine whether or not your spouse, family member, or friend may have a problem. Does your loved one:

1. Spend a lot of time alone with their computer on a regular basis?
2. Become defensive when you confront them with their behavior.
3. Seem either unaware of what they have been doing, or attempt to deny it.
4. Prefer spending time with their computer or on the Internet than with you or other people.
5. Lose interest in other, previously important activities, e.g., friends, sports, work, hobbies, exercise, etc.
6. Appear to be more socially isolated, moody, or irritable.
7. Seem to be establishing "a second life," with new and different friends whom they met online.
8. Spend greater amounts of time online, and attempt to cover or "minimize" the screen when you come in the room.
9. Arrange unexpected time away from home on business trips or for other reasons, and seem to be away more than usual (this can be for out-of-town liaisons to meet up with cyberlovers)
10. Have unexplained charges on your credit card bill, and offer suspicious explanations.
11. Exhibit signs that their work or school performance is suffering, e.g., they were fired, grades are slipping, or their household responsibilities are neglected.
12. Talk about their time on the computer incessantly, and seem to draw meaning in their life from this activity.
13. Have legal problems as a result of their Internet behavior, e.g., loss of child custody, divorce, or sexual harassment charges at work due to downloading pornography, etc.

### *Chatting or Cheating 125*

If these warning signs sound similar to the signs of having an affair, that's because they are. Internet addiction is a lot like having an affair, an affair with a computer, along with their relationships formed online. It's the same process whenever a person withdraws from their main source of support (spouse, friends, family) and finds it elsewhere (in this case on the

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