

Assessing Your Online Flirtation

If you think that your involvement in online sexual interactions may be crossing the line of “acceptability” in your relationship, it’s time to take an honest look at your behavior. You might start by asking yourself if your spouse would be upset about your spending many hours a night on the telephone or computer talking to somebody while using sexually suggestive language. If the answer were yes, then they probably would have the same discomfort with your using the Internet in the same manner. It’s *not* the medium of communication that’s relevant here; it’s the effect that *such a detour from your primary relationship can have*. If your spending many hours of the day or night having cybersex, or flirting, you *cannot* have time for those same behaviors within your primary relationship. The latter part of this chapter will offer more detailed suggestions on how to address these issues in your marriage. There are undoubtedly many people who aren’t addicted and who occasionally flirt while online (about 22 percent of general users report cyberflirting). There’s probably little harm in this, provided it doesn’t interfere with your marriage or relationship. This type of cyberflirting is similar to flirting that goes on at work (barring any sexual harassment issues) and is a natural part of human interaction. However, one should always be mindful of the possible misinterpretation that flirting can have. This is especially true online as you’re missing some of the more typical social cues that reinforce social boundaries and imply clear limits.

From “*Virtual Addiction*” by Dr. David Greenfield, copyright 1999, 2006.