

Digital Mental Health for Internet or Gaming Addiction

While computers and mobile phones have become an integral part of study and working life for so many people, we have unprecedented exposure to the Internet, social media, apps, and games. Gaming itself has evolved to become more real and engaging to consumers.

Problematic internet or gaming behaviour refers to frequent use or thoughts about the use of social media, gaming, apps, or internet browsing, difficulties controlling use, or continued use of internet or gaming despite it leading to problems with relationships, work, study or household duties.

While there is a need for more research to determine whether internet or gaming addiction is a diagnosable mental health condition, there is no doubt that problematic gaming or internet behaviour can impact the mental health and lives of individuals, their parents and their families.

Getting help from a professional can significantly improve your relationship with the Internet or gaming. Digital mental health services can provide support for individuals and parents on identifying problematic gaming or internet use, tips and tools on cutting back use, and where to seek further support.

Scan to download a free
PDF version from the
eMHPrac Website



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMING OR INTERNET BEHAVIOUR?

Physical

- Needing to use the internet or game for longer or for more often to get the same rewarding feeling.
- Associated health problems such as losing sleep, back or neck pain.

Psychological

- Frequent thoughts about using the internet or gaming.
- Anxiety, sadness, frustration when not engaged online.
- Feeling out of control of use.

Behavioural

- Continued use of the internet or gaming despite negative impacts.
- Losing interest in or giving up on other activities.
- Relationship problems.
- Repeated unsuccessful attempts to cut down use or stop.
- Being late to work or having problems at school due to use.
- Not keeping on top of things at home such as household tasks or taking care of children.

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This resource sheet is designed for mental health professionals to use, whether as a resource to share with clients or as a reference guide. Others are welcome to use or share this resource for general information purposes only and within the scope of their professional role.

National Mental Health Website

HEAD TO HEALTH

Head to Health

A website that links Australians to free or low-cost online and phone mental health services.
headtohealth.gov.au

Online Programs

GAMBLEAWARE

Gamble Aware

Free service assisting gamers and their families find a healthier relationship with gaming.
<https://www.gambleaware.com.au>

Information Sites



Health Direct

Explains the difference between internet addiction and other addictions, including gambling or shopping.
<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/what-is-addiction>



Apps

Smiling Mind - Digital Detox Program

Website and app teaching mindfulness and meditation to young people and adults. The digital detox program supports individuals to take a break from technology and reconnect with their surroundings.
<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app>



Healthy Families

Information on healthy boundaries with teens and supporting healthy habits such as sleep, food and exercise. Moderated peer-support forums and phone support service.
<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au>



Raising Children Network

Information for parents and carers on maintaining healthy technology routines and making choices with their children and teens.
<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/entertainment-technology>



Phone Services

Kids Helpline

Information for young people aged 5 to 25 and their parents on warning signs for addiction to gaming and where to seek further support.
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/should-i-be-worried-about-gaming-addiction>
1800 55 1800



It's Time We Talked

Tips for parents and teachers on discussing pornography with students.
<https://itstimewetalked.com>



Parentline

Telephone counselling, information and support for parents and carers of children. Online counselling is also available in some states/territories.
<https://parentline.com.au>
1300 30 1300



ReachOut

Information for young people, parents and schools on addiction. Online moderated peer-support forums, online referral tool, and parent coaching resources.
<https://au.reachout.com/mental-health-issues/addiction>



eSafety Commissioner

Information and advice on online gaming for kids, young people and parents.
<https://www.esafety.gov.au>