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INTERNET ADDICTION TREATMENT, COUNSELING, AND SUPPORT

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Therapy can give you a tremendous boost in controlling Internet use. **Cognitive-behavioral therapy** provides step-by-step ways to stop compulsive Internet behaviors and change your perceptions regarding Internet and computer use. Therapy can also help you learn healthier ways of coping with uncomfortable emotions, such as stress, anxiety, or depression.

Since Internet addiction is relatively new, it can be hard to find a real-life support group dedicated to the issue like Alcoholics Anonymous or Gamblers Anonymous. If that is a simultaneous problem for you, however, attending groups can help you work through your alcohol or gambling problems as well. There may also be groups where you can work on social and coping skills, such as for anxiety or depression.

There are some Internet addiction support groups on the Internet. However, these should be used with caution. Although they may be helpful in orienting you and pointing you in the right direction, you need real-life people to best benefit from group support.

Tips to helping others with Internet addiction

- Be a good role model. Manage the Internet and computer use in your own life well.
- Introduce the Internet addict to other people who handle their Internet use sensibly.
- Get your friend involved in non-Internet related interests.
- Talk to your friend about your concerns with their Internet use.
- Support their desire for change if they think they have a problem.
- Encourage them to seek professional counseling.

Helping a person with an Internet addiction

It's a fine line as a parent. If you severely limit a child or teen's Internet use, they might rebel and go to excess. But you should monitor computer use, supervise computer activity, and get your child help if he or she needs it. If your child or teen is showing signs of Internet addiction, there are things that you can do to help:

- **Encourage other interests and social activities.** Get your child out from behind the computer screen. Expose kids to other hobbies and activities, such as team sports, Scouts, and afterschool clubs.
- **Monitor computer use and set clear limits.** Restrict the use of computers, iPads, or smart phones to a common area of the house where you can keep an eye on your child's online activity, and limit time online. This will be most effective if you as parents follow suit. If you can't stay offline, chances are your children won't either.
- **Talk to your child about underlying issues.** Compulsive computer use can be the sign of deeper problems. Is your child having problems fitting in? Has there been a recent major change, like a move or divorce, which is causing stress?
- **Get help.** Teenagers often rebel against their parents but if they hear the same information from a different authority figure, they may be more inclined to listen. Try a sports coach, doctor, or respected family friend. Don't be afraid to seek professional counseling if you are concerned about your child.