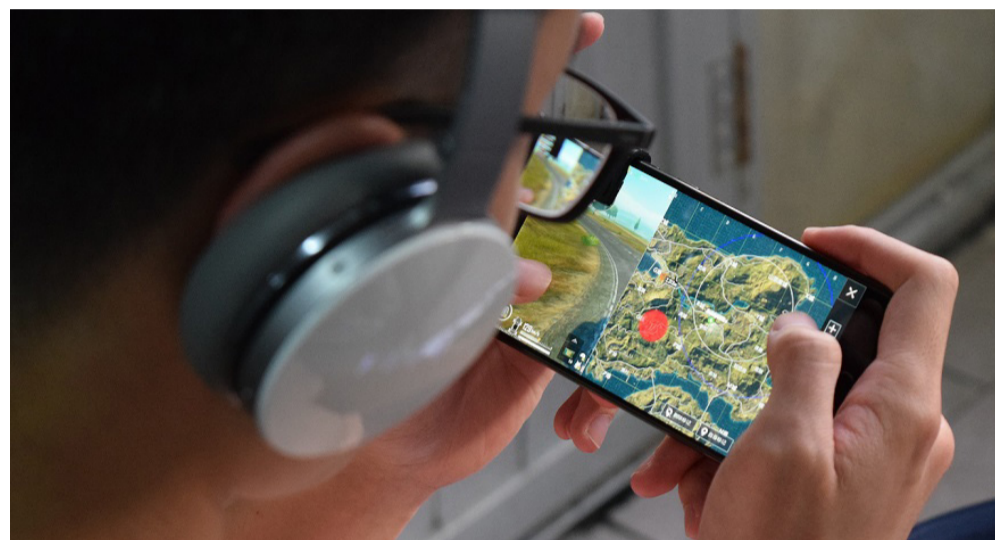# Fatal Games: Addiction to Internet and Internet Games Is The New Threat

Technology and the internet should be used for enhancing one's life and not for diverting from it

by: **Sanjeev P Sahni,** Karishma

Two men got mowed down to death by a train while they were hooked to their screens playing PUBG. Several cities have already banned the games and many are moving in to take the same action, but PUBG is just the tip of a gigantic iceberg. A myriad number of people have been injured, even fatally taking selfies at dangerous locations and poses, competing in viral internet challenges like the Kiki Challenge, the Bird Box Challenge, the Blue Whale Challenge and so on.

Maladaptive and overindulgence of internet gaming is so prevalent that internet gaming disorder is being recognized as an independent disorder. Scientific literature suggests that it is more common in young males. It can be recognized by one's obsession with internet games, continued engagement in internet gaming despite negative outcomes and experiencing withdrawal symptoms if not engaging in internet gaming.

Internet use is not confined to gaming and neither is the maladaptive overuse. Affordability of computer systems, smartphones and data plans has opened floodgates for a plethora of applications encompassing almost everything. People are hooked on social networking sites, desperately seeking for validation online in the form of 'likes' and 'comments', watching videos, reposting 'memes', obsessed with uploading a myriad number of pictures of self or random objects or food, broadcasting minute details from daily life and so on. The latest trend is people participating in dangerous internet challenges which have been illegal and even life-threatening. The negative outcomes of maladaptive internet use are numerous and well documented, ranging from poor cognitive functioning, low academic performances, relationship problems, psychiatric and physical disorders. Yet, the gravity and significance of such behavior are yet to be addressed.

Though the government of India has established the SHUT clinic in NIMHANS, Bangalore which exclusively focuses on combating excessive use of technology some four years ago, no such other initiative has taken place since then. Moreover, in spite of recognizing it as a prevalent health hazard, not enough innovative work is being done for the treatment and management. In light of this, it's imperative that we learn to self regulate internet use:

1. Set time limits: Allow yourself limited time online. If you keep losing track of time, many of the applications and smart phones have features that can nudge the user when crossed the time limit. One can also keep check of one's digital behavior.
2. Monitor children's and adolescent's internet use: Children and adolescents are the most vulnerable population when it comes to sensation seeking activities. Their activities should be monitored in case they are getting lured into harmful activities like internet challenges.
3. Develop offline hobbies: Do something creative that helps you forget going online. Cook something new, read a paperback novel or draw.
4. Exercise: Exercise! Moreover, try to mindfully exercise without using monitoring devise such a pedometers or similar applications and without 'checking in' the gym.
5. Talk to family and friends: Just talk; don't click photographs to beat the urge to upload it on a social media platform.
6. Go wifi-less and low on date plan: If you're going out, choose places where there is no wifi available; when you enter your house don't rush straight away to switch on the wifi devise. Try buying a smaller data plan once in a while.

Just a couple of months ago Prime Minister Modi quite rightly stated that "technology is a problem, as well as a solution" and "technology should be used for progress and its misuse can have adverse outcomes." Technology and the internet should be used for enhancing one's life and not for diverting from it. Hence, to recognize the fine line that divides the proper and maladaptive use of the internet is the need of the hour.

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