

A photograph of a person's hands typing on a keyboard in front of a computer monitor. The monitor displays the World of Warcraft login screen, featuring a character in a blue and white robe standing in a dark, forested landscape. The room is dimly lit, with a desk lamp providing light from the right. The text 'Online Gaming Addiction' is overlaid in large red letters, and 'Jeroen Decates' is overlaid in white letters below it.

Online Gaming Addiction

Jeroen Decates

example 1

- My sixteen year old son is addicted to WoW. If I threaten to remove the game he threatens to harm himself. He comes home from school, gets in his pyjamas and plays for at least 9 to 10 hours straight.
- Unless I take food to him he will not eat. I cannot sleep at night as I know that unless I go to the computer and shut it down at 1 AM, he will be up all night and won't be able to go to school.
- He has alienated all his friends.
- He had two panic attacks on Friday and he doesn't know what brought it on but he could not take his hands off the keyboard. He was convinced that the only thing that would help him (as he was breathing into a paper bag) was to keep playing.



example 2

- I used to play the game myself; I played it all the time, I got little sleep, it was all I was thinking about.
- When it eventually began affecting my performance in school, I decided to quit and I did but without deleting my character which was a mistake.
- So my life became normal again, I was getting enough sleep, better marks in school, etc. But then over the Christmas break I was persuaded by my friends to start playing again because WoW was all they talked about.
- The same thing started happening after a while and I quit for a second time and this time deleted my character too. I haven't played for probably 4 or 5 months and I feel great.

example 2 cont

- But two of my friends have become serious addicts.
- I haven't seen one of them for 3 months, he doesn't do anything except WoW, doesn't go anywhere, rarely answers his phone, doesn't sleep, doesn't shower, nothing. All he eats is junk food and he only drinks soft drinks. He declines offers to go to see movies or to go to an amusement park. I'm really worried about him but there's really nothing I can do about it; there's no way to convince him to stop playing because he just wouldn't listen.
- The other friend would be like that too if not for his parents. His parents wouldn't let him play 24/7 and they make him do stuff so at least he gets out once in a while and does other things.
- I don't think there's a real way to stop the addiction without cutting off the internet or taking away the computer.

example 3

- The reason I was addicted was: it just made me not bored and was better than what my other friends were doing. So I pushed them all away and just thought I would be fine with this game
- It was: go to school, come home, play wow and raid with the guild. They became my friends. I had no idea who they were outside of the game and we would talk in vent (Ventrilo; communication software). It was just fun doing things and working on things together. This went on for about 6 months or so.
- I burnt out, quit for a month and went out with my friends came back for about 3 weeks said F-this, its so worthless all the people are 20+ and I am 16, I should be out partying living my life not hung up on some game so I quit. Sold my account for 200+ the other day which sucks for 60+ days of gameplay...
- to fix WoW you need to burn out which wont happen if your guild is downing bosses and you are getting: LOOT.

Definition

- Internet gaming addiction can be defined as a compulsive behaviour which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's school or work environment.
- For the gaming addict, the game becomes a compulsive habit that completely dominates the addict's life.
- Gaming addicts make the Internet a priority more important than family, friends, and work.
- The game becomes the organising principle of addicts' lives

Are you an obsessive online gamer?

- Do you need to play online games with increasing amounts of time in order to achieve the desired excitement?
- Are you preoccupied with gaming (thinking about it when offline, anticipating your next online session)?
- Have you lied to friends and family members to conceal extent of your online gaming?
- Do you feel restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop online gaming?

Are you an obsessive online gamer?

- Have you made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop online gaming?
- Do you use gaming as a way of escaping from problems or relieve feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, or depression?
- Have you jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, or even risked your marriage because of your online gaming habit?
- Have you jeopardized a job, educational, or career opportunity because of your online gaming habit?

Heroinware; why so addictive?

- Exiting visual environment
- Task and struggle oriented quests
- Team work with mates
- Provides an identity
 - where power and status is gained
 - be someone you aren't in real life

Social networking

- Wow is based on Team work
- Chat and voice software allows in-game communication
- Social status and identity is achieved
- Social status needs to be maintained
- “Guildies” may or may not be friends from school
- Online gaming can replace all social interpersonal communication

Why is it difficult to quit?

- The social networking element adds to the experience and to the addiction
 - School friends playing online maintain interest
 - Making friends with strangers allows experimentation with a new Real Life persona
- Low cost entertainment
 - Next to seeing a movie, renting a DVD or going to a pub, it compares well as it gives you “all you can play action”
 - Usually a \$60- \$100 game can be completed in about 12 hours and can lose its appeal immediately

Resistance, Retaliation and Revenge

- not going to school
- threatening self harm/ suicide
- withdrawing from family life anyway
- financial revenge

Symptoms

- losing control over life
- application to study is minimal
- academic results drop
- real-life social life takes a step back
- irregular sleeping habits
- irregular eating habits
- withdrawing from friendships

What is WoW good for?

- A 12 year-old Norwegian boy saved his sister and himself from a moose attack using skills he picked up in 'Wow'.
- Hans Jørgen Olsen and his sister got into trouble when they encroached on the territory of a moose.
- When the beast went on the offensive, Hans decided to taunt it so that it would leave his sister alone and she could run to safety. "Taunting" is a move one uses in WoW to get monsters off of the less-well-armoured Guild members.
- Once he was a target, Hans remembered another skill he'd picked up at level 30 in 'WoW' -- he feigned death. The moose lost interest in the inanimate Hans and wandered back into the woods.

Solution strategies

■ Reasoning

- Explain your concerns; use internet examples of other youth caught in the trap
- Bring online gaming down in his eyes; show how level 60 accounts are being traded on eBay
- Find a compromise: try and negotiate any deal that reduces or eliminates online gaming

Solution strategies

■ Remove access

- Take away the CD and destroy it
- Take away the funding sources for the account
- Remove Internet access full stop
- Go on a holiday where play is impossible

Solution strategies

■ Technological Intervention

- restrict access by changing router or computer settings
- Set parental control on the WoW account
- The account name + password are needed for this. Go to WoW's website and log in, decide when he is to log in and not, and set a password for the parental control

Solution strategies

- Inventive:
 - a demanding girlfriend
- Ultimate:
 - deletion of account and characters by addicted youth themselves (YouTube)

Beyond the individual

- Try to eliminate any discussion of WoW.
 - If his friends are always talking about it, its going to be hard for him to quit. They are basically refreshing his memory of the game, pushing him back to the game.
 - Consider a co-ordinated counter strike: tackle online gaming addiction on a friendship-wide or school-wide basis.

Whole School strategy

- co-ordinated counter strike: tackle online gaming addiction on a school-wide basis
 - Determine the impact of online gaming addiction
 - Identity students who abandoned addictive online gaming as a possible resource
 - Identity students willing or needing to AOG

Whole School strategy

- Develop co-ordinated strategy:
 - Rally ground support for a “Abandon AOG Day” with students, teachers and parents
 - Develop tipsheets on how to abandon AOG, for students and for parents and teachers
 - Decide appropriate timing
 - Establish sufficient support resources
 - Evaluate success of strategies used

Web help

- www.netaddiction.com
 - How to determine if someone is addicted
- www.wikihow.com/Break-a-World-of-Warcraft-Addiction
 - Extensive resource for breaking addiction
- www.wowdetox.com
 - Forum for stories about breaking addiction
- www.olganonboard.org
 - Based on AA principles