



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY ...

Q: Why do people lose control and get addicted to Facebook or other social networking sites?

Dr. Berger says: Humans have a natural need to socialize and interact with others. Especially for adolescents and young adults, they have a strong drive for acceptance and to be part of the "in crowd", and these sites cause the most problems for this age group. Facebook or other social networking sites take advantage of this need, adding the ability to exchange photos and other media as kind of a "show-and-tell" where one can receive positive feedback, and the use of this kind of medium can explode.

Q: Why can getting hooked on it have damaging consequences?

Dr. Berger says: Naturally, too much time spent on one's PC can impair family, school, or work function. If the parents try too hard to control the child, there can be intense fights for control.

Q: How can one detach healthily from too much dependence on gadgets?

Dr. Berger says: As noted above, the main reason for the explosion of social networking sites is for social acceptance. This is really no different from hanging out at the hamburger joint, street corner, or movie theater as in the '50s and '60s, the mall as in the '70s or '80s, e-mail or chat rooms as in the '90s, or just to spend hours on the phone as many young people have done for decades. If someone is too engrossed in one of these sites and there is family trouble, or if the person has other psychiatric symptoms (ie, they are depressed, feel rejected easily, or can't pay attention to things of priority, etc.), then they should be seen by a mental health professional.

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