

Create an aid guide for families and the environment of the young at risk



Cofinanciado por el programa Erasmus+ de la Unión Europea

This project “GAMBLING ADDICTION IS NOT A GAME” has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication(Create an aid guide for families and the environment of the young at risk) reflects the views only of the FEJAR Association with the collaboration of the INNODXT Association, EPKOL and ATENEA multimedia, all of them acting as promoter and partners of the project and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USE, PROBLEMATIC USE AND ADDICTION

There is a set of criteria that all addictions share and that are also applicable to technologies. Detecting the problem in the early stages is the key.

FROM PROPER USE TO EARLY INDICATIONS OF PROBLEMATIC USE

An adolescent who uses NNTTs does not present any problematic or addictive signs if they are doing it for fun, communicating, or playing and enjoying it. There are warning signs if their use of them does not interfere with their duties or their leisure activities. That is, if you continue doing everything you did before and, in addition, other activities, for example, chatting occasionally or playing on consoles some afternoon. In short, its use is not a problem if it is controlled and is in balance with the rest of the minor's activities.

There are signs of inappropriate use when the increase in use leads to significant interference in daily life and the child or adolescent loses interest in other activities, for example, begins to stop doing homework and to miss out on extracurricular activities or social events. At this stage, life begins to revolve around the NNTTs to the detriment of any other activity. As a consequence, conflicts with parents and the adolescent's denial of the existence of a problem begin, while lies and manipulations appear to devote more time to the computer, console or mobile phone.

This situation becomes unsustainable when the use of computers or other technologies is maintained despite the negative consequences that will appear in all areas: personal, school, family and social. The adolescent will no longer use NNTTs to have a good time but rather to alleviate the discomfort of not using them. At this point, the minor will feel an urgent need to carry out the behaviour at all costs.

Thus, from proper use can be passed to inappropriate or excessive use, and in certain cases it can lead to problematic use and addiction, concepts that are discussed in the following pages.

It is important to keep in mind that some of these aspects may occur in specific way, in specific situations or periods. In these cases, one could not speak about addiction. It is when the problem appears for a long period of time that one may think that maybe it is an addiction. However, all these items can serve as signs for early detection.

PROBLEMATIC USE

We talk about problematic use of technologies when over a long period of time one of the following symptoms occurs:

1. The use of the Internet, social networks, mobile phones or video games means that obligations are not fulfilled (whether at home, at school or at work ...),
2. It is used in situations where it is dangerous or harmful to oneself or to others,
3. You have problems using these technologies in situations where it is forbidden or not convenient to do so,
4. Its use causes problems with others (family, friends ...)

ADICCTION

Addiction is a step beyond problematic use and is characterized by the presence of symptoms indicating that the person needs technologies in a way that is counterproductive and causes serious problems in the family, social, work or academic fields, etc. Some of the most representative criteria are the following:

1. Tolerance: it manifests itself in such a way that the person increasingly needs to use more internet, mobile phones, and video games, in such a way that the initial use pattern is no longer sufficient.
2. Abstinence: This is the discomfort experienced when the use of these tools is interrupted or when they have not been used for some time. It can manifest itself in different ways (anger, anxiety, aggressiveness ...),
3. Use these tools more than originally intended.
4. Not being able to stop using them.
5. Spending excessive time on everything related to games, mobile phones or the internet and social networks, to the point where interference with daily activities will occur.
6. Stop doing other activities or miss opportunities for using these technologies.

7. Continue playing or using the internet, social networks or mobile phones, despite knowing that you are being harmful.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENCE

In order to understand our teenage and preteen children, it is necessary to remember some of the characteristics of this stage of life.

Adolescence is a critical period in evolutionary development, since the transition from childhood to adulthood occurs. It is one of the most relevant stages in the development of personality and also in brain development.

Adolescents, compared to adults, are characterized by the following behaviors and abilities:

- Fast learning
- More extreme feeling of pleasure, excitement or reward
- More extreme feeling of frustration when things don't go as expected
- Greater capacity of motivation for the things that attract them but, on the contrary, apathy or boredom for what they least like
- Less capacity for judgment
- Less ability to consider the consequences of their actions
- Less ability to plan and organize

In turn, the activities on which they show the most preference or interest are:

- Social relations
- Sexuality
- Novelty
- Activities that produce high arousal at low levels of effort
- Physical activity
- Activities that produce strong sensations

All these characteristics may explain both the impulsivity and the search for new sensations typical of adolescents, which are responsible for carrying out high-risk behaviours, especially due to the lack of consideration of the consequences.

All this means that during adolescence there is a clear vulnerability to addictive disorders, both in terms of drug dependency and other behavioural addictions.

Children, adolescents, and youth have a special attraction to NNTTs, which have characteristics and functions that are particularly important at these ages. Some of them are:

- The need for autonomy
- The search for one's identity
- The importance of the group of friends
- The importance of social relations
- The need for leisure and enjoyment. NNTTs are a form of leisure and entertainment
- Their orientation to risk and experience
- The establishment of the first loving and intimate relationships
- Etc

From a certain age we let our children leave home alone. Before that, we made sure we had shown them the way home, to look before crossing, not to talk to strangers, etc. The same goes for NNTTs. They must not be afraid of them; they must be taught to use them responsibly and safely.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROPER USE OF THE MOBILE OR SMARTPHONE

1. Maintain a communicative atmosphere at home. Teens need their intimate moments and spaces where parents sometimes don't easily fit into. They demand independence from their parents in their interpersonal relationships. Despite this, parents must continue their duties. Meeting spaces and positive affection, dialogue and sincere communication must be encouraged, obviously attending to the needs and requirements

of the adolescent who, as we have just indicated, sometimes do not coincide with those of adults, since they have a different conception of reality. This type of communication will encourage people to talk about any issue and problem, including mobile phones.

2. The later the better. Society puts pressure on consumption, and this excessive consumption is the prelude to many problems and the main cause of all addictions. On the other hand, one of the factors common to all addictions is the absence of impulse control. Both controllability and resistance to frustration are the main protective factors against addictions. These skills should be fostered from childhood.

Generally, a child does not need a mobile phone at eight or ten years of age. It is only when you have the need to move independently that this instrument can be useful to him/her. And generally, that does not happen at such a young age. However, the mobile is given to younger and younger children, even before they ask for it themselves. It is important to delay the gift or regular access to the mobile and, above all, make the child aware of its value and its cost based on their own purchasing power.

- Make a list of the situations in which it would be convenient for the minor to have the mobile.

Remember that like so many other consumer goods, the mobile should be obtained based on appropriate behaviours and provided that it has demonstrated that it is capable of using it rationally and responsibly. It's not the parents' obligation to give away the mobile phone or to keep it. So, when the teenager engages in problematic use of the mobile phone or has behavioural problems, they should know that they can limit its use or withdraw it if necessary.

1 The expansion of mobile connectivity is having two direct consequences: the decrease in the age of onset and the permanent connection. Although it is true that children do not need a mobile, this situation of early access can make it easier for parents to work with their children, providing a real opportunity. The access of minors to the internet at ages close to 13-14 years has made interaction between parents and children in relation to NNTT very difficult until now. Adolescents of these ages are more reluctant to allow their parents to access their profiles on social networks, advise them about their conversations, etc. During adolescence, the weight of the peer group is increasing, and the distance from parents becomes noticeable. Mobile connectivity, by lowering the age

of onset, is allowing very young boys and girls to access the Internet and NNTTs in general. Minors of these ages interact a lot with their parents and are especially receptive to their advice and recommendations. They learn a lot through play, and they also like to play with their parents, showing them what they can do, what they have discovered, the video they have seen or the level they have reached in a certain game. Thus, the new mobile terminals allow parents of young children to do real educational job.

3. Observe your child's behaviour regarding the mobile. If we pay attention to their way of acting, it will be easy to see if the use of the mobile phone is adequate or if, on the contrary, they are using it excessively.

In many cases the mission of the parents is to be, and to be alert. Most problems do not appear suddenly but are the final and logical consequence of a process that has been developing over time. The sooner we realize it and the solutions are put in place, the better. As far as the mobile phone is concerned, there are a number of signs that must be taken into account, such as: Have you noticed that you spend considerably more time using the mobile? Do you do it in different situations?

Do you lock yourself in your room to do it? Have you noticed a significant increase in your spending, or have you noticed behavioural changes or worrying emotional disturbances?

Staying alert and observing children can be the best preventive strategy. As soon as you suspect that something negative may be happening, don't hesitate to talk to him/her and express your concerns or take action. These observations will give you more control over the time your child spends using the mobile.

4. Establish clear rules on when and how to use the mobile. Teach to use it only when necessary and that there are situations in which, out of respect for other people, risk prevention or, even, to safeguard one's privacy, it is necessary to stop using it. Some examples of them may be the following:

- Setting a limit at night. From a certain time onwards, the mobile should be switched off, both to preserve sleep and night's rest, and to encourage family communication, as well as privacy.

- The mobile should be switched off in class. It should not even be kept silent, since it is still possible to use it, which makes it a constant distraction.
- Keep it off or silent in public places where it can disturb (cinema, theater, conferences, etc.).
- Once at home, leave the mobile in the living room or other public place. Avoid having it in the room at night.
- Take care of the expense with the own allowance. If necessary, it is preferable to negotiate the allocation upwards, but it is essential that the adolescent learn to control spending.
- In the event of compulsive calling problems, do not use the mobile to play games or for any other operation. Keep it off when not in use. You can turn it on periodically several times a day to see if any calls or messages have been received and use it if necessary. Once the necessary calls have been made, turn it off again.
- Turn off the mobile during the necessary moments of family interaction (games, conversations, meals, etc.).
- Not answering the mobile phone (if it was turned on) at inappropriate times or when certain activities are carried out, such as conversing with the family, having guests at home, etc.

5. Set a monthly spending limit and time of use of the mobile phone.

The teenager should be responsible for the expenses of his/her mobile or, at least, part of it. One of the problems some teenagers have is that they don't know the real value of things, largely because adults have covered their needs without them having to make any effort to do so. When teenagers are made responsible for the expenses of their mobile and are forced to pay for it, they are being taught, both to control their behaviour and to take responsibility for the consequences that this entails. This exercise of self-control and responsibility is essential to develop mature behaviour. Although, in short, the parents are the ones who support the adolescent through the weekly allocation that is given to him/her, one of the useful strategies for them to learn to acquire self-control and take responsibility is for him/her to be the one who, with his/her weekly allowance, takes charge of the cost of his/her mobile. If the expenditure is such that it exceeds his

or her own allowance, it's better to renegotiate it upwards, so that he or she can cope with the expenditure, that to cover it, since in this case it's not conducive to the adolescent developing strategies for self-control and management on her or her own expenses.

On the other hand, excessive spending on mobile phones is a source of problems with parents, so learning to control consumption is not only necessary as a preventive strategy against addiction, but also reduces the occasions for confrontation between parents and children, all of which favours the family environment to be more pleasant and, in any case, protects against possible later problems.

7. Show them that there are other means of communication between people, and try to promote their leisure activities.

8. Inform them of the risks involved in having Bluetooth, geolocation or other activated systems. Anyone could send you a virus that would destroy the mobile device in a sudden way or access its location, therefore, you should activate it only at specific times and then deactivate it again.

9. Try not to let your mobile phone separate you from your children because it is an instrument or a language that you do not know.

10. Educate your children in self-regulation of immediate pleasure and tolerance of waiting.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS ON THE PROPER USE OF VIDEO GAMES

Video games, like all other technologies, have advantages and disadvantages. The following tips offer guidance to educate our children in the reasonable and responsible use of them:

1. Place the computer or game console in a common place in the house, that is, the common space facilitates interaction with parents and siblings and being able to observe them.

2. Know the PEGI rules for choosing the games your children like, taking into account that they they are in line with their interests and evolutionary level. You must always keep in mind the the age rating and the description of content that must appear on all the

covers, according to the PEGI code. On the page www.pegi.info.es you will be able to find the information that corresponds to the video game in case you do not have the original cover page. If you have children of different ages, it is essential to consider that what is suitable for one may not be suitable for another.

3. The new generation video game consoles incorporate the possibility of programming parental controls, blocking the reading of those games that we consider inappropriate.

4. Show interest in your children's video games and play with them sometime, it is the best way to understand what function they have for the players. This will help you better understand their attraction factors, assess their positive and negative aspects, to maintain adequate criteria when buying them and, in short, to improve communication in the family environment.

5. Teach your children to control the time they spend on this activity. Video games are designed so that the more time passes the more interesting the game becomes. For this reason, it is difficult for the adolescent to decide when to turn off the console, since as soon as he/she has achieved one objective, the following one appears. Consequently, they spend more time than they have or should play. Teach them to decide how long to play and to use some warning system (newer consoles indicate how long they have been playing) to stop the game. This should be discussed and agreed upon before they start playing.

6. Rest periods, meals, studies, and other important activities should never be affected by the use of video games.

7. Supervise that your children do not spend all their free time playing video games. Encourage them to do other activities besides playing games that are also fun. It is important that they share their leisure time with friends and diversify their activities. Good use of free time is a factor of protection against addictions.

8. If you notice that your child is getting nervous or aggressive with a game you should make him/her stop. Have him/her rest by doing another activity; it is preferable that you do not play or resume play later and more quietly.

Make children aware of the importance of privacy in video games and on the Internet, both for themselves and for other people in their environment. Alert them to the risks involved.

9. Awareness to minors about the importance of privacy in video games and on the Internet, both their own and those of other people in their environment. Alert them to existing risks.

It is important that adolescents receive clear messages from their parents about the use of video games, and that they know our firm stance towards them.

ADVICES FOR PARENTS

Some of the prevention guidelines for parents are the following:

- Intervene early. Parents don't have to wait until their teenagers start talking about gambling or other risk behaviours to intervene.
- Inform us and teach them about online gambling and betting. Give clear messages:
 - > The law prohibits minors from gambling, you must be 18 years old or older. Despite the existence of laws to prevent gambling by minors, there are still opportunities for them to do so. It would be appropriate for parents to be vigilant, to supervise their children's Internet activities as well as online spending and money exchanges.
 - > Gambling does not solve the problems, neither economic nor of any other nature.
 - > In the game, you can lose control and develop serious problems (economic, family, social, legal, school, work ...).
 - > The reason for playing should be to have fun on time, but never to earn or get money back.
 - > Money should be spent wisely, never spending the money we need for our basic needs.
- Establish rules.
- Help our children develop coping skills.

- Listen to our children. Be attentive to any comments they may make regarding gambling.

Look for opportunities to discuss the risks of gambling. Any news on television, press or radio related to gambling, about a lottery winner, etc., is an occasion to talk to our children about this topic. Gambling advertisements should also be subject to criticism and reflection. Thus, they will become aware of the advertising pressure that exists, and they will learn that winning is unlikely.

It is important to educate our children to understand what gambling is and what its possible risks and consequences are.

When they reach the legal age to play, they should be clear that NO GAMBLING is a legitimate lifestyle choice. And if they choose to play, they must understand that this is not a safe activity and that maintaining responsible behaviour is essential.