

4 READING

- a Apart from mobile phones, what other gadgets or activities do you think people are addicted to or obsessed with in the 21st century?
- b Read the article once. What exactly are 'behavioural addictions'? In what way are they different from what most people think of as addictions? How can they be treated?

Are we hooked on addiction?

The word 'addict' for most people conjures up images of drug users or alcoholics. But today there is a new breed of addicts...

DR MARK COLLINS is the head of the addictions unit at the Priory, an expensive clinic in Roehampton. 'Over the last 18 months we have noticed a big rise in the number of behavioural addictions, so-called to distinguish them from substance dependencies,' he says. 'People are looking down on smokers, alcoholics, and cocaine addicts, but then go and spend five hours in an Internet chat room,' says Collins. Behavioural addictions include compulsive attachments to plastic surgery, the Internet, mobile phones, and even sun beds.

It seems that in our fast-paced pressurized modern life, we are increasingly turning to comfort behaviour, activities which temporarily make us feel happier, less stressed and lonely. And experts warn that these are the very things that can lead us into dependency no matter how harmless they may seem at first. And while behavioural addictions may sound less serious than being hooked on drink or drugs, according to experts, their potential for wrecking lives may actually be quite similar. They can lead to obsession, debt, and the breakdown of relationships.

Internet addiction

Caroline Harrison, 37, a full time mother of three, admits to compulsively using the Internet. 'I was surfing to discover something about my youngest child's skin problem when I found this amazing parenting website with lively message boards,' she says. 'Soon I found I couldn't go a day without logging on. I started spending all evening 'chatting' to my new online friends instead of spending time with my husband. It never crossed my mind that it could be addictive. But now I feel edgy and tense if I can't access my computer. It's as if I can't help myself. The people there seem more real and supportive than my own family and friends. I often feel depressed and lonely in real life because my husband works long hours, so being on the site makes me feel good. Well, temporarily good.'

Tanning obsession

Even more worrying is the behaviour of 14-year-old Tracey Barlow, who is now seeking treatment for her addiction to tanning. The teenager has been visiting tanning parlours three times a week, and at one stage was having treatments five days a week. Her skin is already prematurely aged, and she has been warned that she risks getting skin cancer, but despite being warned of the risks she says she feels overwhelmingly anxious if she perceives her tan to be fading. 'It's like an illness with her,' says her despairing mother. 'She hates being pale.'

Shopaholic

For 26-year-old sales manager Emily Lane, it was her love of shopping that got dangerously out of hand. Her compulsive spending on designer clothes, shoes and handbags left her with £30,000-worth of debt and destroyed her relationship with her boyfriend, James. She admits that many of the items she bought remain unused, but that she found it impossible to stop spending. 'Coming home with armfuls of bags gave me an enormous high, and I needed to keep on buying more clothes, shoes and accessories to keep getting it. I would shop in my lunch hour, after work, and at weekends, but I couldn't see that I had a problem until James split up with me over it.'

DR ROBERT LEFEVER, of the Promis Recovery Centre, who has himself overcome addictions to gambling and work, explains, 'Deep down sufferers are usually depressed. In that state you can become hooked on anything that changes the way you feel and even if you try to stop the behaviour, you will find it extremely hard, at least without becoming bad-tempered or anxious.'

Dr Lefever believes that compulsive behaviour often manifests itself in clusters. There is, for example, the 'eating disorder cluster', which also includes shopping and spending, work, cosmetic surgery, and exercise, the 'hedonistic cluster' which includes alcohol, drugs, caffeine, sex, and gambling, and the 'relationship cluster' which includes compulsive helping of others, and addiction to love and being in love. 'If you are addicted to one thing in the cluster, you are at risk of becoming addicted to the others,' he says.

Whatever your age, Lefever believes that if you have a serious compulsive problem that is interfering with your life, then the most effective treatment is a stay in a clinic, or therapy with a psychologist who understands addiction. 'Addiction is treatable,' he says. 'And I see this every day, in myself and in other people.'



- c Read the article again. Then choose a, b, or c from the options below.

- 1 According to experts, behavioural addictions _____.
 - a are not as serious as being addicted to drink or drugs
 - b are more serious than being addicted to drink or drugs
 - c can be just as serious as being addicted to drink or drugs
- 2 Caroline Harrison says that she feels the need _____.
 - a to do something about her addiction
 - b to chat online every day
 - c to spend more time with her husband
- 3 Tracey Barlow _____.
 - a is slightly less addicted than she used to be
 - b can no longer afford to pay for so many tanning sessions
 - c has an illness as a result of her addiction
- 4 Emily Lane thinks that _____.
 - a if she hadn't been a shopaholic, her boyfriend wouldn't have left her
 - b her boyfriend should have helped her overcome her addiction
 - c the money she owed caused the break-up with her boyfriend
- 5 Dr Lefever thinks that _____.
 - a if you are addicted to coffee, you might also become addicted to shopping
 - b if you have an eating disorder, you will probably become addicted to smoking
 - c if you are addicted to going to the gym, you may also become addicted to having cosmetic surgery

LEXIS IN CONTEXT

- d Look at the **highlighted** words and phrases related to addictions. With a partner, decide what you think they mean.
- e Do you think the addictions referred to in the article are a problem in your country?

5 VOCABULARY adjectives + prepositions

- a Complete the prepositions column with one from the list.

for of on to with

prepositions

- 1 A lot of people are **obsessed** ☐ celebrities and their lifestyles. _____
- 2 Some young people are becoming **addicted** ☐ social networking websites. _____
- 3 People are normally very kind and **helpful** ☐ foreign tourists. _____
- 4 Most young people are **dependent** ☐ their parents until their mid-twenties. _____
- 5 People are totally **fed up** ☐ the number of commercials on TV. _____
- 6 Older people aren't as **open** ☐ new ideas and fashions as younger people are. _____
- 7 People are **sick** ☐ being bombarded with depressing news by the media. _____
- 8 Our country is **famous** worldwide ☐ its cuisine. _____
- 9 A lot of people are **hooked** ☐ Latin-American soap operas. _____
- 10 As a nation we are very **proud** ☐ our achievements on the football pitch. _____
- 11 Couples are not as **keen** ☐ having children as they used to be. _____

- b Cover the prepositions column and say the sentence with the correct preposition.
- c With a partner, say to what extent the sentences are true for your country, and give examples.

6 LISTENING & SPEAKING

- a **4.13** Listen to five people talking about obsessions. What are they or the people they mention obsessed with or addicted to?
- b Listen again and answer with the number(s) of the speaker. Who...?
 - ☐ A says that their obsession started as a result of a family incident
 - ☐ B doesn't really think that they are obsessive
 - ☐ C thinks that the obsession makes the person bad company
 - ☐ D says that the obsession started because of a family member
 - ☐ E doesn't think that the obsession serves any purpose
- c Talk in small groups. Try to think of someone for as many categories as possible.

Do you know anyone who is

'addicted' to...?

- a machine or gadget
- a particular TV series
- work
- shopping
- chatting online
- electronic games
- anything else

obsessed with...?

- tidying / cleaning
- their appearance
- keeping fit
- healthy eating
- anything else

How long has it been going on for?

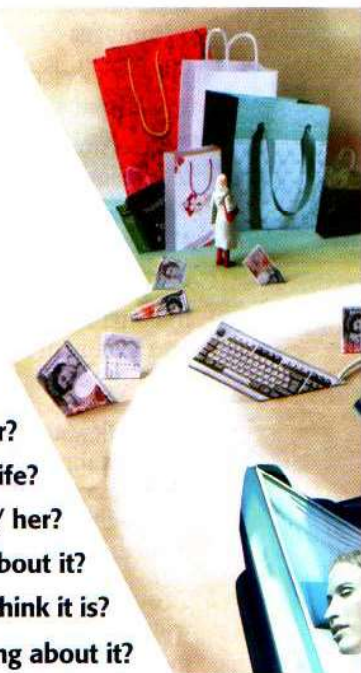
Does it interfere with his / her life?

Does it affect the people around him / her?

Does he / she talk about it?

How serious do you think it is?

Do you think they should do something about it?



7 4.14 SONG 🎵 Addicted to Love