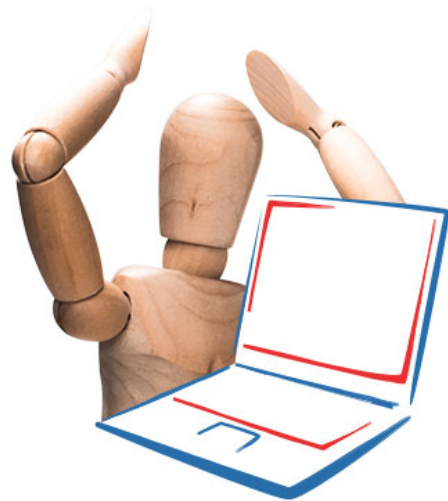


Module 7: Addiction

Objectives

This module aims to help you explore and gain understanding of the following:

- The difference between addiction and compulsion
- What role addiction played in your on-line behaviour
- How you can start to address your addictions



What do we mean by a compulsion or addictive behaviour?

Compulsive: defined as performing an act persistently and repetitively without it necessarily leading to an actual reward or pleasure.

Addiction: is a state characterized by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli, despite adverse consequences.

Typically an individual becomes dependent on something to reduce the pain of certain emotions. Usually they get pleasure the first time they try it and then they return to the behaviour to get the same feeling of pleasure. Continual usage leads to a reliance on the behaviour to feel normal which ultimately leads to psychological dependence.

Starting Point

Think about your use of adult pornography and sexual images of children and using the definitions above think about whether they were compulsive or addictive?

Adult pornography	Addictive Compulsive Neither
Sexual images of children	Addictive Compulsive Neither

If you are still not sure here is an exercise that might help:

Please make a note of all those of the following that apply to you and your use of sexual images of children:

- Tolerance (needing more images for the same 'fix')
- Withdrawal (feeling negative/low when you are not looking at the images)
- Use more than intended (staying on-line longer than intended, time 'disappearing' when on-line)
- Inability to control use (repeatedly saying you will stop but then returning to the behaviour)
- Effort is expended to obtain (making sure you have time alone on-line, hiding your search history etc from others)
- Important activities are replaced (stopping other hobbies, spending less time with friends/family)
- Continued use despite negative consequences (not having enough time to do other things, being tired due to staying up late on-line, feeling guilty or ashamed, fear of arrest)

Click here if you meet 2-3 of the criteria

Meeting 2-3 of the criteria indicates a mild addiction

Click here if you meet 4-5 of the criteria

Meeting 4-5 of the criteria indicates a moderate addiction

Click here if you meet 6-7 of the criteria

Meeting 6-7 of the criteria indicates a severe addiction

Module 7: Addiction

It's an addiction, so it's not my fault – right?

Wrong – the first time you looked at sexual images of children you knew it was wrong, you weren't addicted then but you went back and did it again. This is because you prioritised the pleasure you got over the harm it caused others and each time you went back you could still have chosen a different path. Yes, it will have got harder to stop over time but you still had a choice. What's important is that you now see this and are doing something about it.

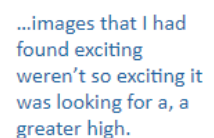
So if you have recognised an addictive element to your offending, you need to understand more about it. Why do you think your use of the internet became addictive? What emotions were you avoiding/covering up?

You will need to look at reasons or motivations behind your addiction. You have already started looking at motivations for your offending and triggers to your behaviour. Think about the following questions:

1. Have I ever had other addictions such as alcohol, drugs, gambling?
2. Do I always use quick fixes (sex, drugs, alcohol, gambling) to feel better?
3. If I didn't get a rewarding feeling from my online behaviour why did I repeat it?
4. What was happening in my life at the times my addiction was at its worst? (it can help to look back to your life line from module 1)

HEALTH WARNING:

It is quite common that people replace one addiction with another. Be aware of this and if you have found that you have had other addictions in the past or other current addictions you may need to get specific support to address these. There are a number of organisations that may be helpful for specific addictions, such as [Sex Addicts Anonymous \(SAA\)](#), [Alcoholic Anonymous \(AA\)](#), [Gamblers Anonymous \(GA\)](#) and [Narcotics Anonymous \(NA\)](#).



...images that I had found exciting weren't so exciting it was looking for a, a greater high.



Module 7: Addiction

How to deal with addiction and compulsion

It is really important to look at the motivation for your behaviour and the emotions you are avoiding. If you don't you will only mask the problem.

However, whilst addressing the underlying motivations for your addictions there are also techniques that can be used to manage urges to go on-line and access indecent images, as set out below:

- Restructuring/challenging – rehearsed self-talk.
- Active distraction – pro-actively distracting self from fantasy, e.g. computer game, conversation.
- Tell a safe person – someone from your support network, Stop It Now! helpline.
Thought stopping – physical prompt to stop fantasy e.g. elastic band around your wrist.
- Urge surfing – ride the urge without acting on it, know it will pass.
- Fantasy blocker – think of “worst case” consequence – e.g. prison or being caught in the act by partner.
- Escape route – physically remove self from where you are having the fantasy e.g. turn off the computer, go for a walk.
- Relaxation techniques – use appropriate guided visualisation that works for you – this should be something that has been planned and rehearsed in advance.

A long term technique for managing addiction is self-care – including taking an interest in diet, social life, personal hygiene and exercise. Having an interest in this area can then be drawn on to use in the above techniques e.g. for ‘active distraction’ going to the gym or cooking a meal.

Make a list which of these techniques you will find most useful or will try using.

It is important to review how well you are managing your urges and the techniques which work well for you. Completing the diary below can be a way of doing this.

Situation (day, time, mood, location)	Strength of urge (1= low, 10 = high)	Technique used	Strength of urge after (1= low, 10 = high)
<i>At home, late at night, bored and lonely</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Active distraction – doing a Sudoku puzzle</i>	<i>5</i>

This can also be used to help you recognise patterns when your urge to access sexual images of children is strongest or what moods are linked to the urges. This awareness will help with your relapse prevention and risk management.

Module 7: Addiction

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Module 7: Addiction

Reflection

Now, consider the following questions:

- How has your understanding of addiction and compulsion helped you understand your online behaviour?
- What are you doing to address your underlying motivations? What else do you need to do?
- What is the most effective way to manage your urges and triggers?
- How in control of your behaviour do you feel? What could improve this?

If you want to discuss anything covered in this module, have struggled with working through the self-help material or just want the opportunity to work through the self-help site with a practitioner to guide you then please [call the Stop It Now! Helpline](#) for confidential support from our trained staff.

