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STEPIN:

Supporting Parents to Deal with the Excessive Online Time and Habits of Their Children

Module 3:

Risk factors for problematic Internet use

Developed by:

ASSERTED KNOWLEDGE
THE ICT EQUALISERS

KA205- Strategic Partnerships for Adults
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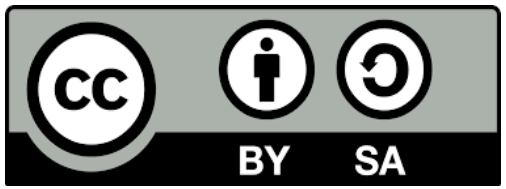

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Key Symbols

	Tips
	Questions
	Extra Resources

Module Description

This module provides information about the **risk factors for problematic Internet use**. Based on research, these risk factors are divided into three categories: personality and distinct individual traits, external stressors, and peer pressure. Maladaptive behaviour is detectable in the form of warning signs/symptoms ranging from mild to excessive and parents are advised to carefully observe how a child's daily life is affected.

Topics

This module aims at examining the risk factors for problematic Internet use and covers the following topics:

- Topic 1: Personality
- Topic 2 : External Stressors
- Topic 3 : Peer Pressure

Topic 1 : Personality

This topic aims to examine how personality can affect internet usage and identify the individual tendencies that make a child prone to abusive internet behavior.

It will cover the following:

- Problematic internet use and maladaptive behaviour
- Personality traits linked to Internet addiction
- Disturbing signs to look for

Problematic Internet use and maladaptive behaviour

Problematic Internet use or “Internet addiction” is defined as an attitude with:

- “*obsessive-like characteristics and impulse control problems related to a person‘s Internet usage resulting in a preference for on-line rather than in-person interactions*” (Beard, 2011, p.100).

Research has shown that certain personality traits can be related to maladaptive behaviour and addictive tendencies toward Internet and Social Media Use:

- “technological addictions may be related to *different personality types* and *key individual differences* associated to personality” (Hussain & Pontes, 2018, p.45).
- “different maladaptive variants of personality traits may lead to the excessive use of the

Internet and may exacerbate symptoms of Internet addiction” (Gervasi et al., 2017, p. 25)

Personality traits linked to Internet addiction

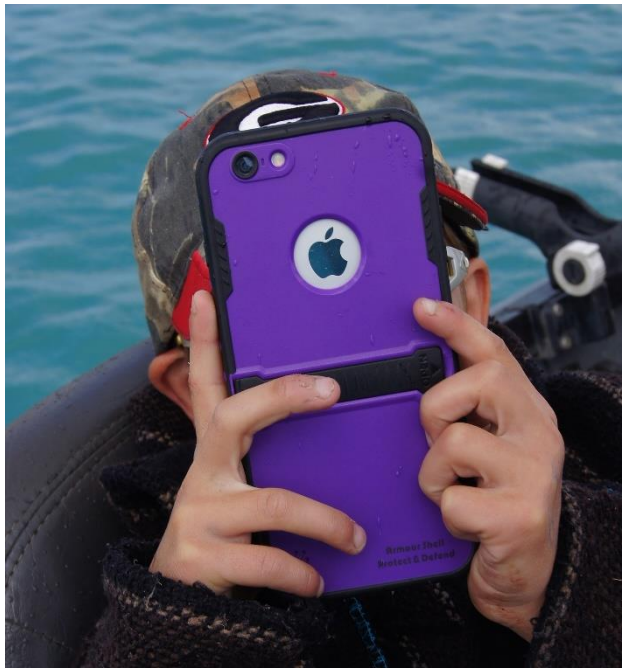
- *Extraversion:* Very sociable individuals
- *Openness to new experiences*: Individuals showing high levels of curiosity

- *Introversion*: Lonely/socially withdrawn individuals; depressed; with low self-esteem.
- *Neuroticism*: Emotionally volatile individuals, experiencing uncontrollable mood swings.

Is your child lonely and distraught?

- *Conscientiousness*: The levels of self-discipline/ self-regulation and control.
- *Narcissism*: Individuals demonstrating obsession with the self and egotistic pursuit of gratification, dominance, ambition.

Is your child showing
Difficulty in self-regulating?



Look for signs!

Your child may show various signs of maladaptive behaviour in everyday life, some of which are:

- *Mood swings, tiredness*
- *Trouble associating with others*
- *Geek behaviour* =“intense level of interest in the technological field” (Peris et al., 2020, p.36)
- *Nomophobia* =“intense fear of being disconnected” from one’s devices (Peris et al., 2020, p.36)
- *‘disturbing’ classroom behaviour* (Pontes et al., 2014, p.96)
- *Sleep problems* (Chen & Gau, 2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WrmQ2SHaxM Internet addiction Animation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyMqljINR74 Symptoms

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQOSMcGkt6E Harmful effects of excessive screen time

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SX7-8Nnub60 Tips for healthy screen use

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RUM5mM2MZw Tips for healthier screen time

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Topic 2 : External Stressors

This topic aims to clarify the role of external stressors as risk factors for problematic Internet use and will cover the following:

- Sub-Topic 1: The importance of parenting styles
- Sub-Topic 2: The significance of external stress and stressful life events
- Sub-Topic 3: Identify signs of stress

Parenting styles

Parents set the rules in the household, thus marking its daily routines and levels of order. These rules and how they are enforced affect the interactions between the members of the household.

Different types of parenting styles exist and are commonly categorised as follows (Sun & Wilkinson, 2020, p. 2165):

- *Authoritative*: a child-centred approach enhancing feelings of security and independence
- *Authoritarian*: a strict approach based on following instructions to the letter
- *Indulgent*: a permissive attitude that fails to regulate bad behaviour
- *Neglectful*: an unresponsive attitude withholding acknowledgement and lacking affection

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyO8pvpnTdE (Parenting styles and their effects on life)

Parenting styles and their effects

Parenting styles may affect positively or negatively all aspects in a child's life and development, namely:

- How a child perceives the Self
- How a child perceives Others
- How a child develops and expresses emotions
- How a child socialises
- And so on!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMxqTXgRO9E Parenting styles

In other words, parenting styles can affect:

- *Cognition*
- *Emotion*
- *Behaviour*
- *Interpersonal relations*

(Sun & Wilkinson, 2020, p. 2165)

External stress and stressful life events

Studies show that Internet addiction is linked with life stress and and stressful life events (Yan et al., 2013, pp.3-11).

Depending on the *cognitions* and *coping styles* that a child has developed, *external factors* can significantly augment problematic Internet use.

- Does your child show signs of stress/ anxiety?
- Has your child recently experienced or witnessed a tragic event?
- Is your child exposed to potentially harmful situations outside your household?
- Is your child constantly sad and/or drained?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imLD5qjt5Vs Identifying signs of stress in children
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2l5jEPjVqUk Stress management for kids

- Ask you child to describe their feelings
- Listen carefully to what your child is saying

Summary

A short summary of the topic discussed in the form of bullet points.

- Item 1: Several different parenting styles exist and they all affect a child's development (positively or negatively)
- Item 2: Life stress and stressful events can significantly increase the chances for maladaptive behaviours
- Item 3: Signs (more or less evident) should be addressed in order to help a child manage stress

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Topic 3: Peer Pressure

This topic aims to highlight the importance of *peer pressure* in a child's daily life and will cover the following:

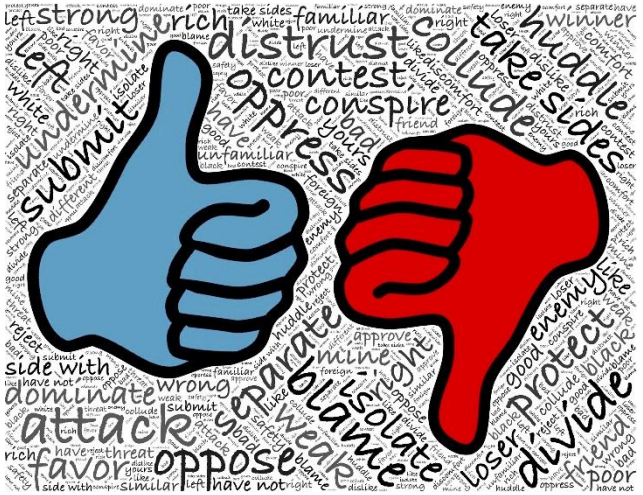
- Child development and interpersonal relationships
- The role of specific environments and interactions
- The dangers of peer pressure

Child development and interpersonal relationships

Child development is a dynamic process affected by several factors:

- Child development depends on *socio-cultural parameters.*
- Early *social experiences* define *child behavior* and *thinking patterns*.
- Children's minds are molded through *interactions*, *rules*, and *expectations*.
- *Ecological* and *cultural contexts* affect *child development* and *agency* in adult life.

(Cole et al., 2010, Huang, 2020, Coll et al., 2000, Fuller & Coll, 2010)



The role of specific environments and interactions

- Specific *environments* expose children to specific *relational models*.
- Children *interact*, *observe*, and *adapt*.
- Different cultures offer different *available resources* (e.g. educational, governmental, etc.) and, subsequently affect a person's adaptation to these resources.
- *Environments* create variations in constructs such as: *self-image* and *identity*.
- Parenting styles generate different thinking patterns based on socio-cultural rules and expectations; subsequently, they also affect how a child socialises.

(Coll et al., 2000, Varela et al., 2004, Hughes et al., 2017

The dangers of peer pressure

- Subcultures define *cognition*, *tendencies*, and *identities*; they impose *norms* and *expectations*, and present *opportunities* or developmental *risks* for each individual (Fuller & Coll, 2010, p. 559).

Peer pressure can form/transform:

- a child's perception of the Self and Others
- a child's agency
- A child's relation to maladaptive behaviours, such as addiction

Look for the signs!

- Is your child showing signs of low self-esteem?
- Is your child motivated by their peers' behaviour?
- Is your child demonstrating excessive signs of problematic socialisation?

Watch the following videos to better understand peer pressure and its implications:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGv6sx0gOcc Peer pressure
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL5W5-gvlBE Dealing with peer pressure

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Thank you

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