



"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

## "How do I help someone...

### ... cope with online addiction?"

A United States health website describes online or internet addiction as being "characterized by excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, urges or behaviours regarding computer use and internet access that lead to impairment or distress". The important reference here is to the discomfort or distress that is being experienced by the person who is addicted. The extent of addiction in the US was seen in a random telephone survey of the general US population that reported an estimated 0.3-0.7% suffered from addiction. It observed that the disorder occurs worldwide, but mainly in countries where computer access and technology are widespread. The addiction can involve obsessive involvement in computer games and excessive social media interaction.

Age can be a factor but often, we are more concerned with the affect such addiction occurs in children and younger people. How can we help someone, or a family, where this is a major difficulty? ...

Helping someone with online addiction requires a sensitive and structured approach. Here are some steps you can take:

1. **Educate Yourself** : Learn about online addiction, its signs, and its effects. This will help you understand what the person is going through and offer informed support.
2. **Open a Non-Judgmental Dialogue** : Approach the person with empathy and without judgment. Express your concerns about their online usage and how it may be affecting their life.
3. **Encourage Self-Assessment** : Suggest they reflect on their online habits and its impact on their daily activities, relationships, and responsibilities. Online self-assessment tools can help.
4. **Promote Healthy Habits** : Encourage activities that don't involve screens, such as physical exercise, hobbies, or socializing in person. These can help reduce the reliance on online activities for fulfillment.

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5. **Set Boundaries and Goals** : Help them set realistic limits on their online usage. This could include specific times for being offline or limiting the use of certain apps or websites.
  6. **Create a Supportive Environment** : Foster an environment where offline activities are prioritized. Participate with them in offline activities to show your support.
  7. **Seek Professional Help** : If the addiction is severe, encourage them to seek help from a professional. Therapists specializing in addiction or counselors familiar with online behaviors can provide tailored support.
  8. **Support Groups** : Suggest joining support groups, either online or in person. These groups provide a community of individuals who understand and share similar experiences.
  9. **Utilize Technology** : Paradoxically, technology can help manage addiction. There are apps designed to track and limit screen time, block specific websites, and remind users to take breaks.
  10. **Be Patient and Persistent** : Overcoming addiction is a process that takes time and effort. Be patient, offer ongoing support, and celebrate small victories along the way.
  11. **Address Underlying Issues** : Sometimes, online addiction is a symptom of underlying issues such as stress, anxiety, or depression. Helping them address these issues can reduce the reliance on online activities as a coping mechanism.
  12. **Model Healthy Behavior** : Demonstrate balanced online habits in your own life. Being a role model can inspire them to follow suit.

By combining understanding, support, and practical steps, you can significantly help someone struggling with online addiction.

