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CLINICAL WEBINARS

FOR HEALTH SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS

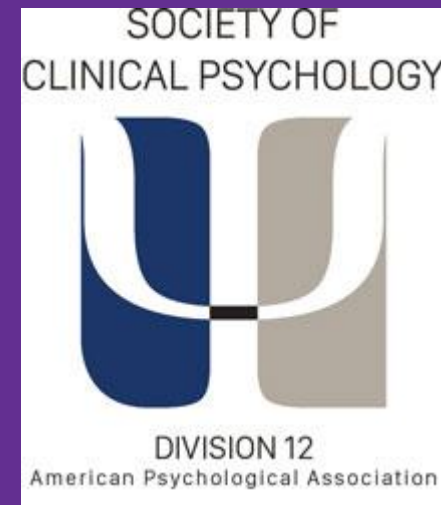
TRANSLATING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Problematic Internet Use: Research and Clinical Practice

Dr. Daria Kuss [Nottingham Trent University]

Dr. Halley Pontes [Birkbeck, University of London]

**Presented by the National Register
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The Society of Clinical Psychology,
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1 CE Credit, Instructional Level: Intermediate

1 Contact Hour (New York Board of Psychology)

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Dr. Daria Kuss



Dr Daria Kuss is a Chartered Psychologist, Chartered Scientist and Associate Professor in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University, UK. She has an international reputation as Internet addiction expert, and is an award-winning author, with her new books *Internet addiction – Evidence-based practice in psychotherapy* (Hogrefe) and *The Oxford Handbook of Cyberpsychology* (OUP) having been published in 2019. Her research has been covered in international news outlets, including the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *BBC*.

Dr. Halley Pontes



Dr. Halley Pontes is a Chartered Psychologist (CPsychol), Chartered Scientist (CSci), and lecturer at Birkbeck, University of London. He has published over 80 refereed journal articles and a book on Internet addiction. His primary research interest is related to the intersection between cyberpsychology, health, and well-being within a psychometric perspective. Dr. Pontes has won multiple international awards for his pioneering research on behavioral addictions, including the prestigious Early Career Researcher Award (Australian Psychological Society).

Disclosures/Conflicts of Interest

Both speakers declare no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe theoretical perspectives of Problematic Internet Use (PIU)
2. Identify current evidence-based assessment strategies
3. Identify evidence-based treatment approaches
4. Apply tools and techniques to help individuals affected by PIU

U.S. Internet Use Statistics

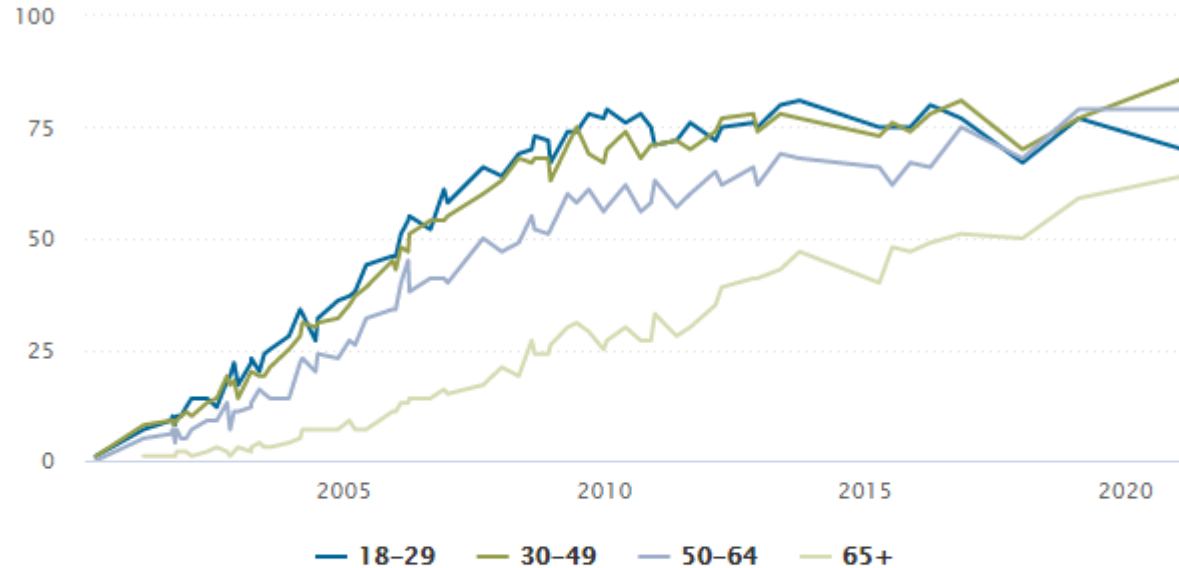
(Digital 2021: The United States of America, 2021)

- There were **298.8** million Internet users in January 2021
- The number of Internet users increased by **11 million** (+3.7%) between 2020 and 2021
- Internet penetration stood at **90.0%** in January 2021

U.S. Usage Statistics

(Pew Research Center, 2021)

% of U.S. adults who say they have a broadband connection at home, by age



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. The Center has used several different question wordings to identify broadband users in recent years, which may account for some variance in broadband adoption figures between 2015 and 2018. Our survey conducted in July 2015 used a directly comparable question wording to the one conducted in January 2018.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted 2000-2021.

% of U.S. adults who say they use the internet, by age

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
2000	70%	61%	46%	14%
2001	72%	65%	50%	14%
2002	76%	70%	54%	18%
2003	78%	72%	56%	22%
2004	77%	75%	61%	24%
2005	83%	79%	66%	28%
2006	86%	82%	70%	32%
2007	89%	85%	71%	35%
2008	89%	84%	72%	38%
2009	92%	84%	75%	40%
2010	92%	85%	74%	43%
2011	94%	87%	77%	46%
2012	96%	91%	79%	54%
2013	97%	92%	81%	56%
2014	97%	92%	81%	57%
2015	97%	95%	82%	63%
2016	99%	96%	87%	64%
2018	98%	97%	87%	66%
2019	100%	97%	88%	73%
2021	99%	98%	96%	75%

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted 2000-2021. Data for each year based on a pooled analysis of all surveys conducted during that year.

U.S. Social Media Use Statistics

(Pew Research Center, 2021)

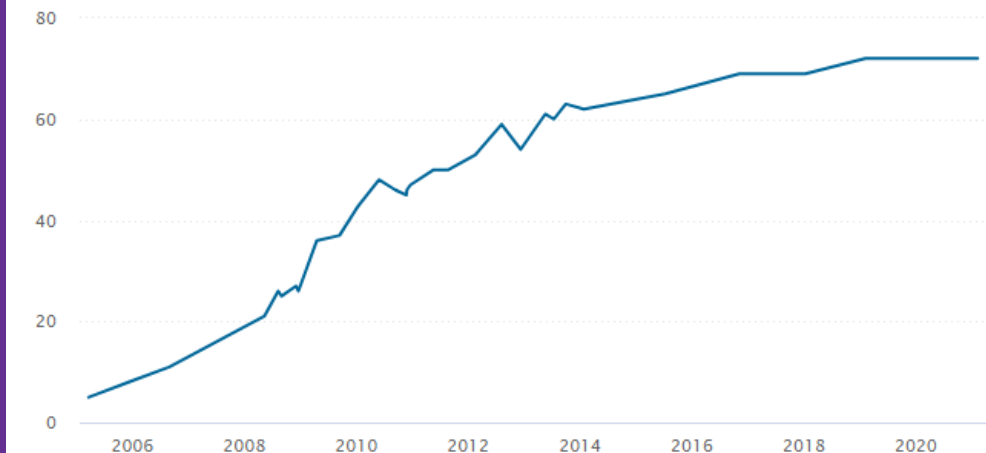
- There were **240.0 million** social media users in January 2021
- The number of social media users increased by **10 million (+4.3%)** between 2020 and 2021
- The number of social media users was equivalent to **72%** of the total population in January 2021

Social media use over time

When Pew Research Center began tracking social media adoption in 2005, just 5% of American adults used at least one of these platforms. By 2011 that share had risen to half of all Americans, and today 72% of the public uses some type of social media.

[Chart](#) [Data](#) [Share](#) [Embed](#)

% of U.S. adults who say they use at least one social media site



U.S. Video Gaming Statistics

(Entertainment Software Association, 2020)

A NATION OF GAMERS: WHO WE ARE

We're a nation that believes in the power of play. No matter who you are or where you're from, there's a game for everyone.



35-44 YEARS is the average age range of a video game player

75% of Americans have at least one video game player in their household.

There are approximately **46 MILLION** video game players with disabilities*

* Source: The AbleGamers Charity



VALUE OF THE VIDEO GAME MARKET IN THE U.S. IN 2021

65.49bn USD

CONSUMER SPENDING ON GAMING IN THE U.S. IN Q2 2020

11.6bn USD

FT2 MOBILE GAMES REVENUE IN NORTH AMERICA

13.2bn USD

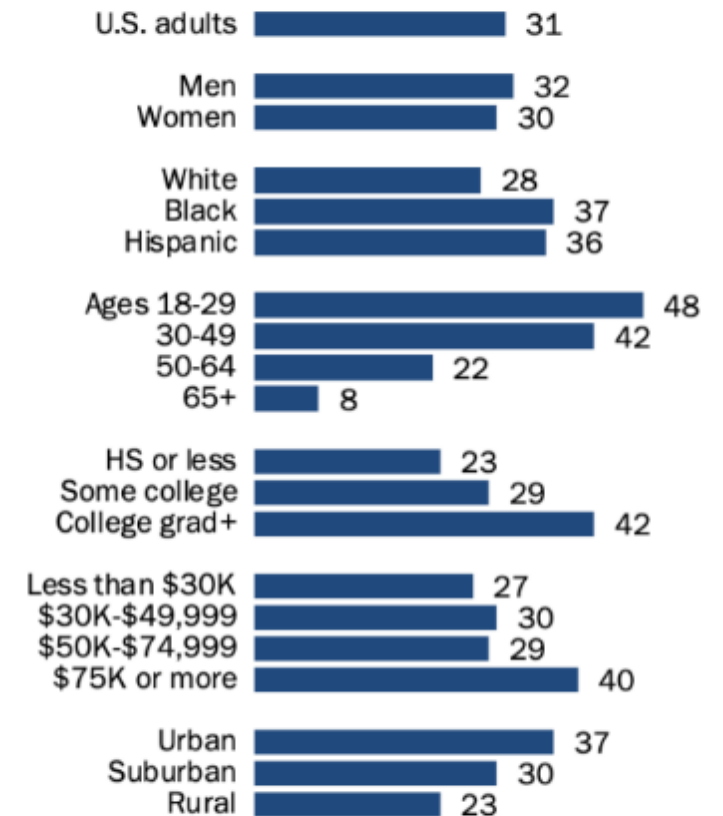
Statista (2021). *Video game industry - Statistics & Facts*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/topics/868/video-games>

Excessive and Problematic Usage

(Pew Research Center, 2021)

- 85% of Americans use the Internet on a daily basis
- About 3 in 10 (31%) Americans report being online *'almost constantly'*
- Problematic usage: gaming
 - Internet Gaming Disorder (APA, 2013)
 - Gaming Disorder (WHO, 2019)

% of U.S. adults in each group who say they go online "almost constantly"



Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Respondents who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

Problematic Internet Use

Definition and Conceptualization

- **Umbrella perspective** (Young et al., 1999) vs. **Generalized/specific perspective** (Griffiths, 1999)
- Most of the existing theoretical frameworks refer to this issue as being **associated with serious functional and health-related impairments** (Pontes et al. 2015)
- A behavioral pattern of Internet use marked by dysfunctional **craving** underpinning **dysregulated** and **excessive** usage leading to **significant psychosocial and functional impairments** not accounted for by any other disorder (Kuss & Pontes, 2019)

Problematic Internet Use

Definition and Conceptualization

- A nonchemical (behavioral) addiction involving excessive human–machine interactions (Griffiths, 1995)
- A compulsive-impulsive disorder associated with excessive patterns of computer use, experience of withdrawal, tolerance, and deleterious outcomes (Block, 2008)
- Poorly controlled cognitive preoccupation, urges, and behaviors related to excessive use leading to clinical impairment and distress (Weinstein et al. 2014)

Problematic Internet Use Prevalence Rates

- **7.02%** for PIU and **2.47%** for IGD (Pan et al., 2020)
 - Meta-analysis of 113 referred studies (1996-2018), N = 693,301, 31 countries
- **3.05%** and **1.96%** (with random sampling) for IGD (Stevens et al., 2021)
 - Meta-analysis of 53 refereed studies (2009-2019), N = 226,247, 17 countries
- **3.5%** for IGD and **2.6%** for Problematic Social Media Use (Wartberg et al., 2020)
 - German representative sample (12-17 years), N = 1,001

Problematic Internet Use Comorbidities

- Mood disorders
 - **Major depressive disorder:** almost 1 in 3 (Alpaslan et al., 2016)
 - **Bipolar spectrum disorders:** 5.6% prevalence (PIU individuals) (Wölfling et al., 2015)
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
 - Prevalence of **ADHD** can range from 26.8%-83.3% (Karaca et al., 2017)
- **Social anxiety** in PIU and IGD (Ko et al., 2009; Prizant-Passal et al., 2016)
- Sleep disturbances
 - **Short sleep duration** (Guo et al., 2018)
 - **Reduced sleep quality** (AlAmer et al., 2020)
 - **Insomnia** (Tsumura et al., 2018)
 - **Daytime drowsiness** (Alimoradi et al., 2019)

Problematic Internet Use Theories and Models

- The Cognitive-Behavioral Model (Davis, 2001)
- The Syndrome Model of Addiction (Shaffer et al., 2004)
- The Components Model of Addiction (Griffiths, 2005)
- The Neuropsychology-Based Model (Brand, Young, & Laier, 2014)
- The Interaction of Person-Affect-Cognition-Execution Model (Brand et al., 2016; Brand et al., 2019)

The Components Model of Addiction

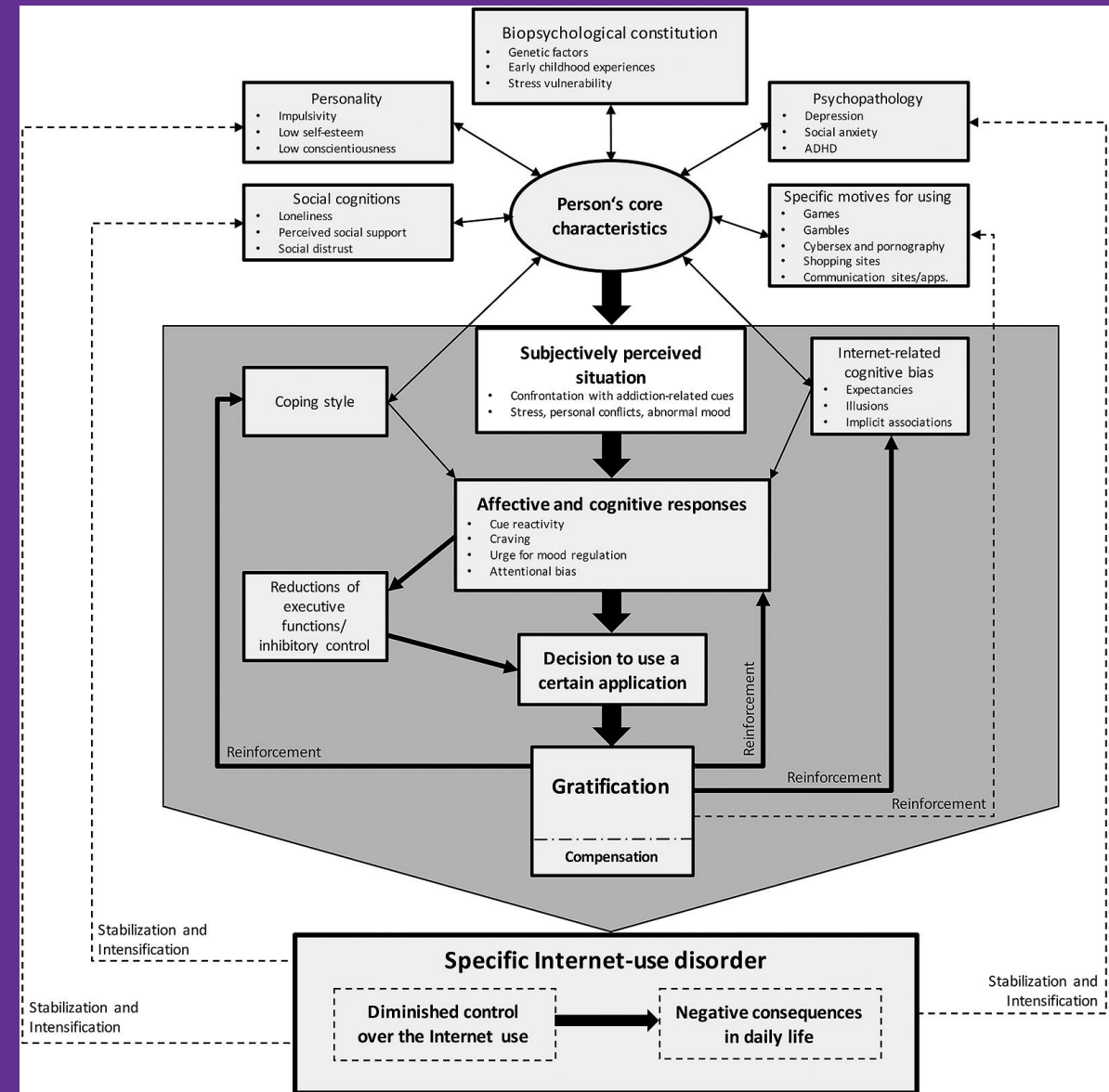
Griffiths (2005)

- A ‘technological addiction’ (i.e., PIU) marked by the experience of six key components common to all addictive behaviors:
 - **Salience (cognitive and behavioral)**
 - **Mood modification**
 - **Tolerance**
 - **Withdrawal symptoms**
 - **Conflict**
 - **Relapse**

I-PACE Model

(Brand et al., 2016, 2019)

- The Interaction of Person-Affect-Cognition-Execution (I-PACE) model of specific Internet-use disorders
- Specific Internet-use disorders emerge from the interactions between:
 - **Pre-disposing factors**
 - Neurobiological and psychological makeup
 - **Moderators and Mediators (Gray area)**
 - Coping style, cognitive biases
 - Affective and cognitive responses



Assessment Strategies

- **Internet Addiction Test (IAT) (Young, 1998)**
 - 20-items, scores can range from 0-100
 - ‘none’ (0-30), ‘mild’ (31-49), ‘moderate’ (50-79), and ‘severe’ (80-100) (Young 1998)
- **Internet Gaming Disorder Scale–Short-Form (IGDS9-SF) (Pontes & Griffiths, 2015)**
 - 9 items based on the 9 IGD criteria (DSM-5), scores can range from 9-45 points
 - (1) Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often (5)
 - Clinical studies suggested a cut-off of 32 points (Qin et al., 2020)

Assessment Strategies

- **Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) (Andreassen et al., 2016)**
 - 6 items based on the components model of addiction
 - Scores may range from 6 to 30
 - 1 (Very rarely), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), 5 (Very often)
- **Additional PIU and IGD assessment tools publicly available**
 - <https://www.halleypontes.com/psychometric-tests>





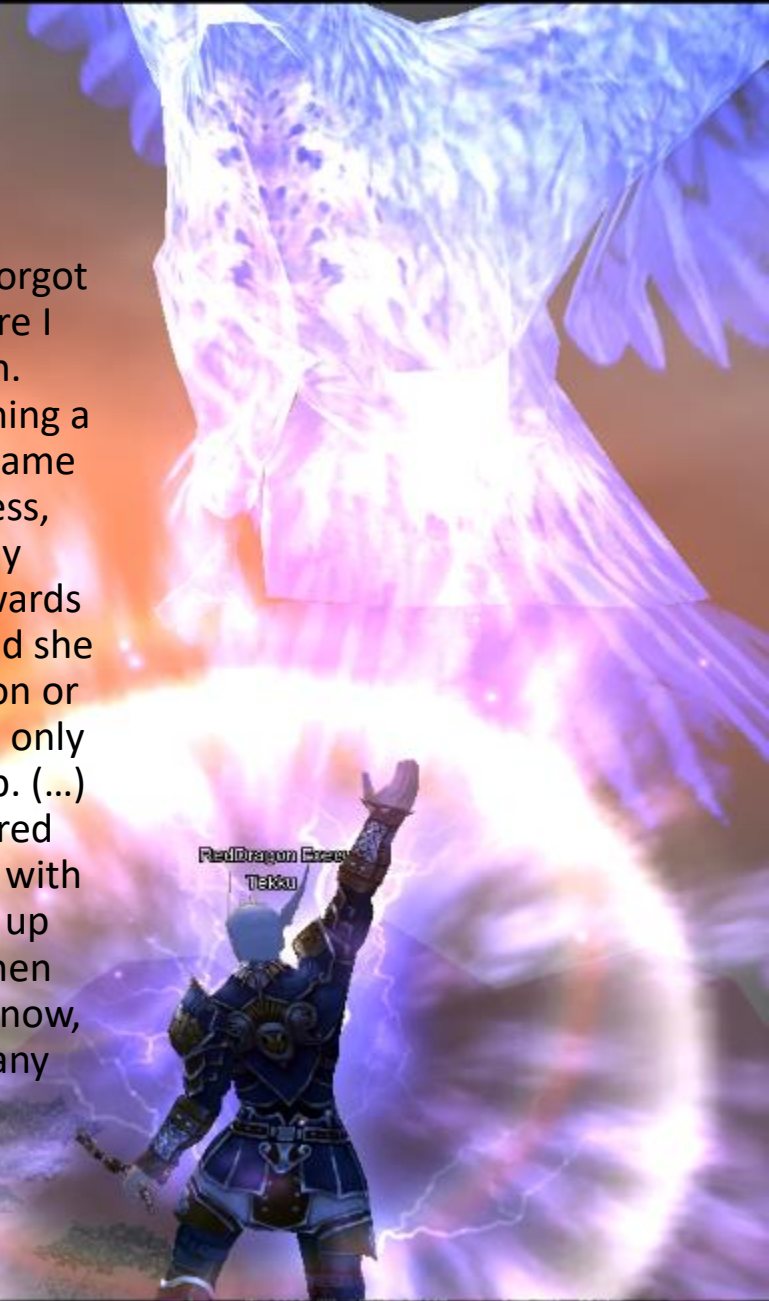
Client perspective

“[When you play,] you don’t feel [how time passes] at all. Well, I simply immerse myself. Then I’ve really got the feeling that I’m the character who does that. (...) I don’t realize time itself, the way it passes by. Well, I sometimes look at my watch then and see that an hour has passed, two, three, but that doesn’t matter. Only when you switch off [the computer] and realize that you need to use the toilet, you’re hungry, you’re thirsty, then all those feelings come up at once and you’re having a headache. Then I realize: Oops, that was too long again. I take a headache pill, eat something, drink something, go off to bed, and sleep. And when you’re alright again, you get up and continue [playing].”

Kuss 2015

Client perspective

“Well, the first problems [occurred] because I forgot everything. I forgot the whole household, I forgot appointments which I had somewhere, I forgot what I had promised to her [his girlfriend], where I said: Alright, I promise you that I will do this and this tonight. All of that was buried in oblivion. Because of that I became unreliable. Then I cooked up a pack of lies in order to straighten everything a little bit or something like that. And now, as I said, where everything with the dismissal at work came out, everything, the whole scaffold of lies, collapsed. Well, now that’s only a huge complete mess, where I’ve got to see that I sweep together everything and that I can simply continue normally afterwards. (...) Well, I’ll say that in the aftermath [of my excessive gaming], I wondered or afterwards I’ve realized what could’ve happened. I’ve entirely neglected my girlfriend because of [playing] and she could’ve left me. This would virtually be the worst thing. (...) In order to balance off this frustration or loss, I would’ve had to play computer [games] in order to process that or to ignore it. Actually it’s only ignoring all the negative experiences. At work it’s so acute at the moment that I could lose my job. (...) Well, I didn’t have friends or something like that, who could’ve registered that. My boss registered that my performance declined more and more, that it declined continuously, and confronted me with that. (...) And then I pulled myself together for a week, and then my level of performance went up again but, well, it declined immediately all over again, and then it declined even more. Well, when there was a short-term boost, then the double amount of negative stuff bounced back. (...) You know, yeah, my employer dismissed me or wanted to dismiss me without previous notice because many mistakes happened due to not concentrated behaviour (...).”



NHS opens clinic to help child addicts of computer games

GPs will be able to refer young people, after 'gaming disorder' defined as a health problem



News

Children treated for computer gaming addiction under NHS Long Term Plan

8 October 2019

Children and young people

Long Term Plan

Children and young adults who are seriously addicted to computer games will now be able to get help on the NHS after the launch of country's first specialist clinic.

The new service is part of the National Centre for Behavioural Addictions which will also provide support for internet addiction and is located alongside the National Problem Gambling Clinic.

It comes amid growing concerns about the amount of time children and teenagers spend playing online games and the impact it can have on their mental health.

The World Health Organization has recently classified gaming disorder as a mental health condition for the first time.

The new Centre for Internet and Gaming Disorders launches at the same time as the children and young person's gambling addiction service goes live.

It is part of an expansion of treatments promised in the [NHS Long Term Plan](#), with

Treatment

• Types of clinical research studies:

- Treatment seekers
- Psychopharmacotherapy
- Psychological treatment
- Combined treatment



Treatment seekers

- **Sociodemographics:**
 - $N = 1 - 1826$ in- and outpatients/ help hotline callers
 - International samples: 5 continents/13 countries
- **Internet/Gaming addiction classification:**
 - Psychometric scales
 - Clinical interviews
- **Comorbidities:**
 - Anxiety/Mood disorders
 - ADHD
 - Psychotic disorders/Dissociation
 - Substance-related addictions
 - Behavioral addictions
 - Personality disorders



Psychopharmacotherapy

- 5 studies
- **Antidepressants**
 - SSRIs (e.g., citalopram, clomipramine, escitalopram, bupropion)
- **Anxiolytics**
 - Benzodiazepine (e.g., clonazepam, flvoxamine, sertraline, fluoxetine, clomipramine)
- **Stimulants**
 - Methylphenidate (concerta)
- **Antipsychotics**
 - Atypical AP (quetiapine)

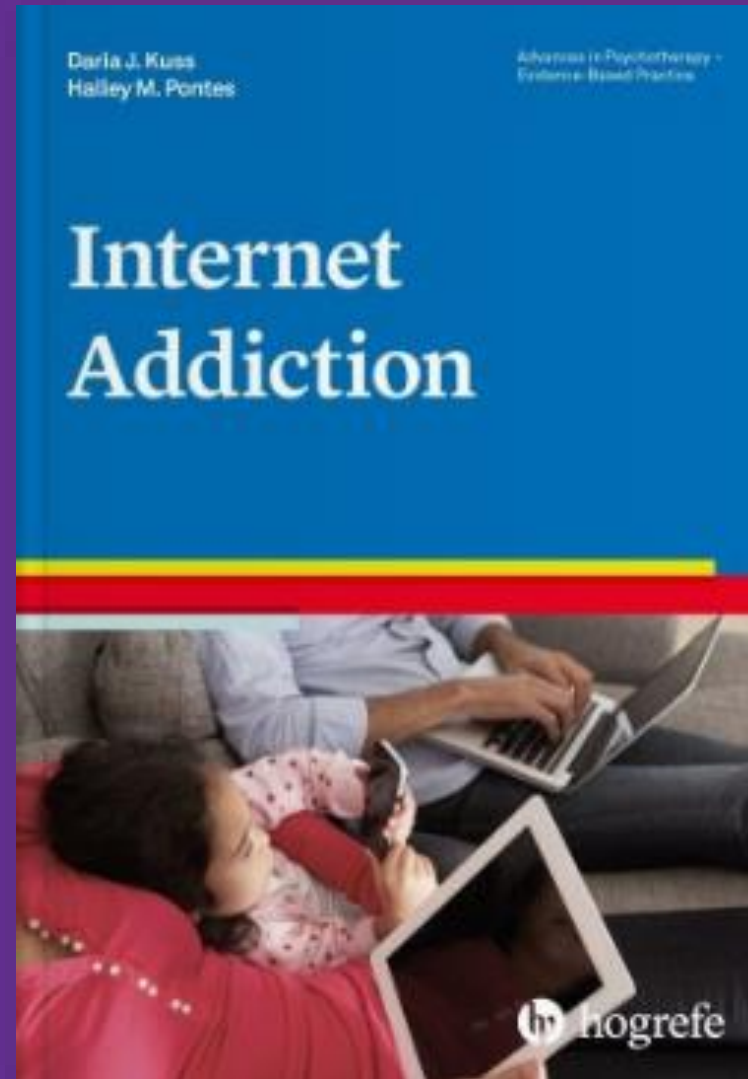


Psychological therapy

- 10 studies
- Individual & group therapy
- Cognitive behavioral therapy most common
 - 8-28 sessions incl. psychoeducation, problem identification, healthy communication, Internet awareness, cessation techniques, etc.
- Short-Term Treatment for Internet and Computer Game Addiction
- Group therapy:
 - Systemic therapy including parents/teachers/peer support
 - Multilevel interventions
 - Motivational interviewing



Cognitive-behavioral treatment of Internet and gaming addiction



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Four phases of cognitive-behavioral therapy of Internet and gaming addiction

1. Diagnostics

2. Motivation and psychoeducation

3. Intervention

4. Transfer and stabilization



1st phase: Diagnostics

- Diagnosis: Gaming addiction?
- Comorbidities?
- Problem- and behaviour analysis with client:
 - Triggering stimuli
 - Cognitive, emotional & physiological reaction
 - Short- and long-term consequences/maintenance of behavior
 - Biographical context
 - Function of behavior
 - Stress coping
 - Coping with negative emotions
 - Managing aggression

2nd phase: Motivation and psychoeducation

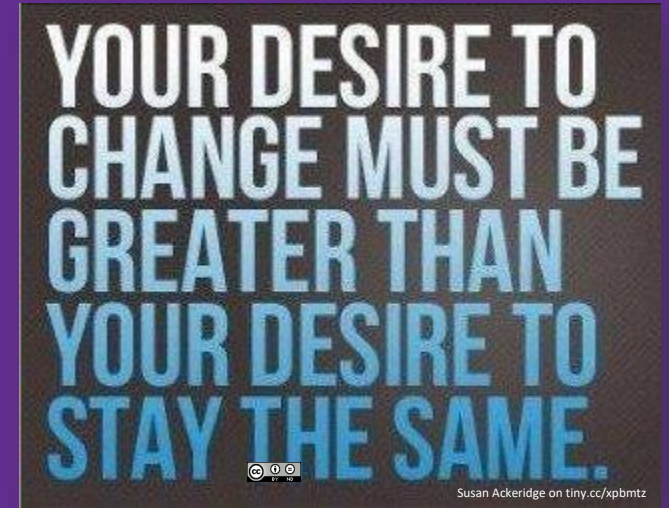
- Strengthening motivation and confidence to change
 - Motivational Interviewing (Rollnick & Miller, 1995)
 - Ambivalence to change:
 1. Negative consequences increase motivation
 - Study drop-out
 - Financial problems
 - Family conflicts
 - Prospect of value-oriented life
 2. Strong attachment to gaming/Internet use decreases motivation
 - Anxiety provoked through lack of emotion-regulation strategies
- Formulation of therapy goals



Photo by Prateek Katyal on Unsplash

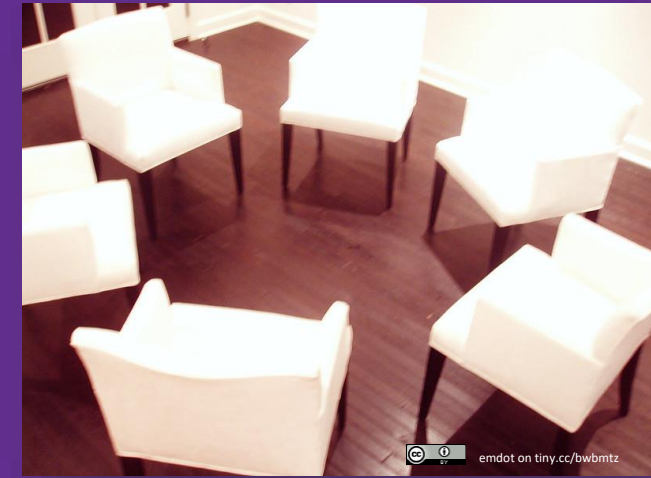
2nd phase: Motivation and psychoeducation 2

- Sets framework for subsequent therapeutic intervention
- Internet and gaming addiction becomes plausible
 - Re-evaluation in client's value system
- **Goal:** In-depth illness awareness
 - Recognition of and distancing from previously ego-syntonic behaviors and thoughts
 - Change of perspective
 - Illness-specific information regarding initiation and maintenance of gaming addiction
 - Predisposition
 - Learning processes
 - Vicious cycle of addiction



3rd phase: Intervention

- **Goal:** to change experience and behavior
 - Detailed behavior and problem analyses
 - Self-monitoring via weekly protocols
 - Distancing from automatic addiction processes via mentalization
 - Reduction of media focused coping
 - Tendencies to procrastinate and motivational problems
- Precise understanding of individual triggers and gaming motivations
- Developing strategies to cope with craving and triggering situations and emotions



3rd phase: Intervention 2

- Creating opportunities for alternative pastime activities
- Increasing social skills
- Cognitive work regarding self-worth
- End of interventions phase: Exposure
 - Screenshot of avatar
 - Saying farewell
 - Deleting online accounts





Zusammenfänge
sind die...
- wie...
- wie...
- wie...

4th phase: Transfer and stabilization

- Relapse prevention based on addiction therapy
- Retention of balanced lifestyle
- Long-term goal-setting
- Recognition of warning signals
- Development of emergency plan for possible relapse
- Reflection on therapy success
- Maintenance of helpful experiences



Photo by [Bekir Dönmez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Q&A With Drs. Kuss and Pontes

- Dr. Penberthy will read select questions that were submitted via the Q&A feature throughout the presentation.
- Due to time constraints, we will not be able to address every question asked.