

# Avoid Technology Addiction ,Learn Digital Hygiene

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## NEWS

# India opens clinic to help people “addicted” to mobile phones and video games

Cheryl Travasso

Mumbai

India’s first centre for dealing with “technology addiction,” the SHUT (Service for Healthy Use of Technology) clinic, opened on 1 April at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience’s centre for wellbeing in Bangalore.<sup>1</sup>

Opening at weekends, the clinic has so far catered mainly to adolescents aged 14 to 18, who are usually brought in by concerned parents worried about their excessive use of mobile phones or video games.

In an unpublished study funded by the Indian Council of Medical Research that surveyed over 2700 Bangalore residents aged 18 to 65, 3.5% of those interviewed admitted to being “addicted” to social networking sites, 1.3% to the internet, and 4.1% their mobile phones. The study noted physical or psychological distress in 3% of those “addicted” to social networking sites, 4.2% of those “addicted” to the internet, and 6.8% of those “addicted” to their mobile phones.

People attending the clinic are first screened to assess how severe their problem is. The clinic assesses participants by using “the four C’s”: craving (having a desire to use technology); control (being unable to control this behaviour); compulsion (using technology despite not needing to); and consequences (experiencing the consequences of their behaviour). They are then educated using various approaches such as motivating

participant and comparing the benefits of technology with the consequences of its excessive use. The interviewers do not argue but instead listen and express empathy with participants to help them make a decision to completely avoid or to regulate their use of technology.

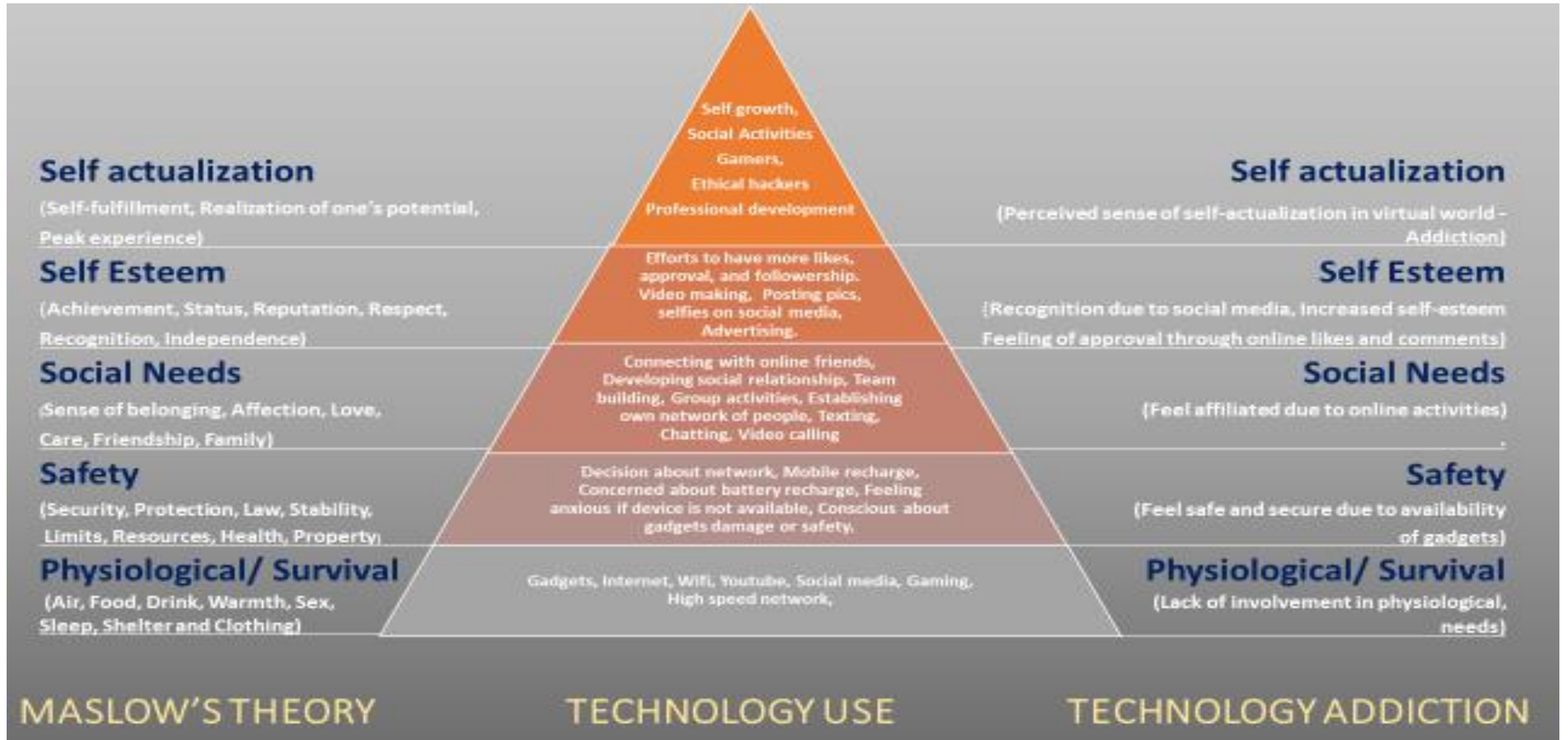
Psychological interventions that the clinic uses include cognitive and behavioural therapy, exercises to aid relaxation, role play, and other leisure activities, in addition to counselling for caregivers.

*The BMJ* spoke to Manoj Kumar Sharma, associate professor at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience’s department of clinical psychology, who helped to conceptualise the clinic. Sharma said that he had received inquiries from various states in India and was eager to launch a study to document the extent of technology addiction across the country. Besides clinics, he said he was also eager for the problem to be addressed in schools and colleges and for parents to know what constitutes unhealthy use of technology by their children.

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience Centre for Well-Being. SHUT Clinic (Service for Healthy Use of Technology). [www.nimhans.kar.nic.in/news/shutclinic.pdf](http://www.nimhans.kar.nic.in/news/shutclinic.pdf).

# The Pattern of Technology Use

( Sharma et al 2020)



# Signs of Excessive /addictive use of gaming /technology

- Continuous desire to access technology/gaming
- Loss of control for use of technology/gaming
- Continuous use despite knowledge of harm i.e sleep disturbance, decreased interest in academic, decreased social interaction, behavioral issues when technology is not available etc

# Reasons for excessive use..

## *We check mobile 60-70 times per day*

- Accessibility, Acknowledgement and Affiliation
- Digital Leisure Activity, Free time
- Entertainment, Excitement/Euphoria, Online learning, Work from home
- Coping-psychological distress, mood states, boredom & loneliness, lockdown
- Social brain hypothesis

# Psychological aspect of internet use

- ▶ Negative views of self and world contribute to internet addiction
  - ▶ Self-doubts, negative self-evaluations, low self-esteem

Example,

*“I am worthless offline, but important online”*

*“I am a failure in the real world”*

Associated with overall negative evaluations of the world

Example, *“The world does not care so I might as well immerse myself ONLINE”*

# Thought process associated with...

## ▶ Blaming

- ▶ *“its not the internet, it’s the stress in my life”*
- ▶ *“I need the internet to deal with problems in my life”*
- ▶ *“My parents/spouse/school drives me to the internet”*

## ▶ Excusing

- ▶ *“Its been a long day and the internet helps me to relax”*
- ▶ *“Its ok to use the internet at night since I was studying/working during the day*

# Psychosocial issues associated with Excessive /addictive use of gaming /technology

1. **Physical** : Dryness of eyes, body pain, carpal tunnel syndrome (pain in wrist), tennis elbow syndrome (pain in elbow), decreased involvement in physical activities
2. **Psychological**: Continuous desire to use, irritability , uneasiness, verbal and non verbal expression of anger; loneliness, boredom and inability to structure free time
3. **Social/family**: Decreased social interaction and communication with others, not having leisure activities in offline world;
4. **Biological**: Disturbance in sleep, self care and irregular eating pattern
5. Deviant use of cyber space

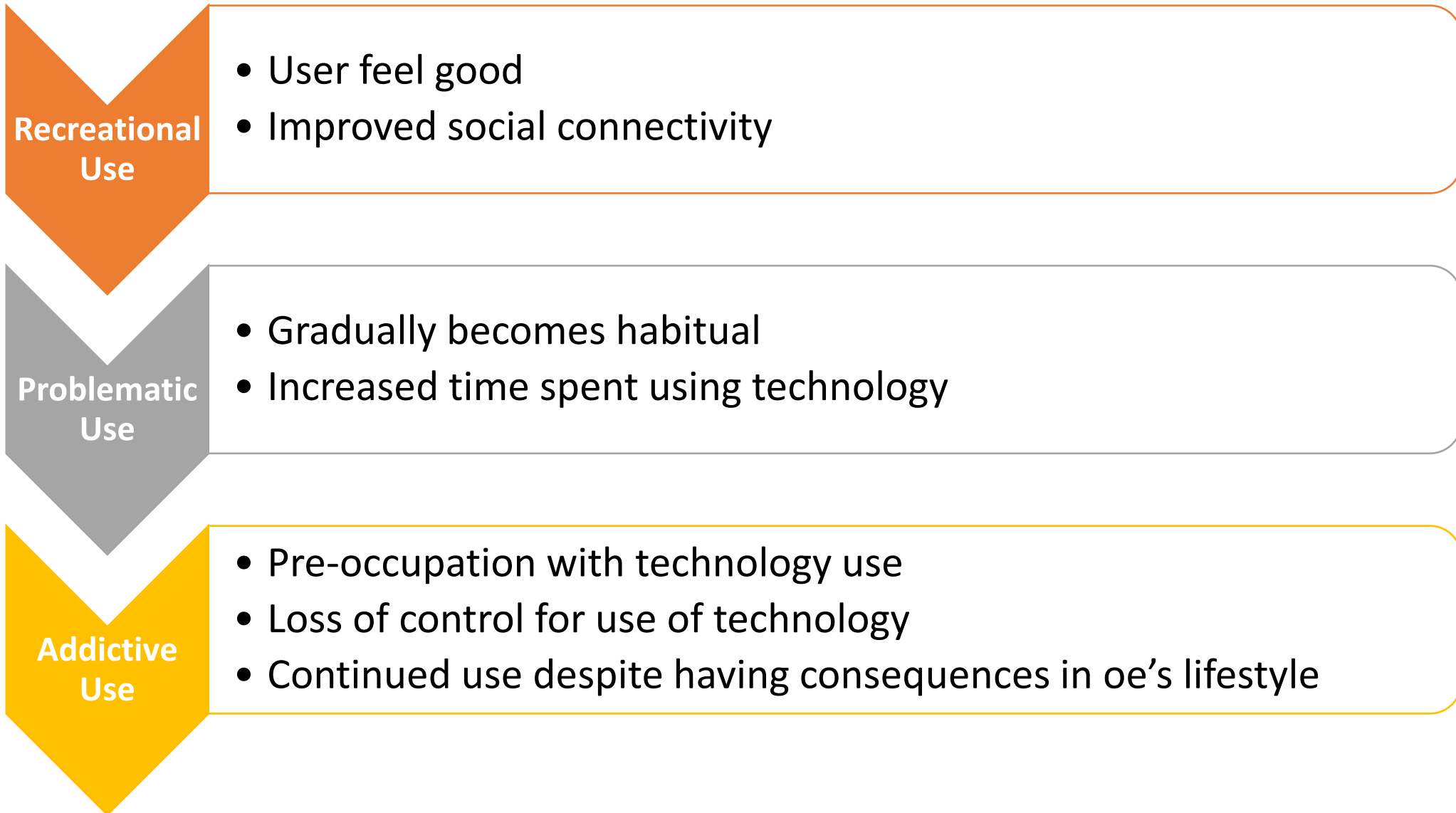


# Manifestation of Excessive use

- Nomophobia
- Phantom vibration syndrome
- Zero inbox syndrome
- Snap chat syndrome
- Selfitis
- Digital amnesia
- Doom surfing
- Digital Burnout

# What can I do?

## **Step 1: Assess** yourself for excessive use of gaming and technology



# Screening for Technology Addiction

- Craving
- Control
- Coping
- Compulsions
- Consequences

4 or more yes indicates problematic use

# Technology screening instruments

- Internet Addiction test( Young 1997)
- Internet Gaming Questionnaire(Pontes,2001)
- Bergen Social Media Addiction test( Bergen 2002)
- Smartphone Addiction test(Kwon 2006)
- Pornography addiction screening test

# What can I do?

## **Step 2: Assist** yourself for healthy use of technology:

### **Physical:**

- Take frequent break, definitely after 30 minutes of screen use ( do blinking of eye 10 times, move head forward and backward 5 times each, move wrist clockwise and anticlockwise (5 times each).
- 60 minutes of physical activities everyday recommended for from 6 to 17 years age group. If possible indoor setting will be good.
- To avoid binge watching, take break of 10 to 15 minutes after each episode.



# What can I do?

## **Step 2: Assist** yourself for healthy use of technology:

### **Psychological:**

Breathing exercise-5 cycles of inhalation and exhalation of slow breath . Build up leisure activities to work on boredom and loneliness



### **Social/Family:**

Schedule digital fasting to enhance quality interaction with family or involve yourself in family activities.

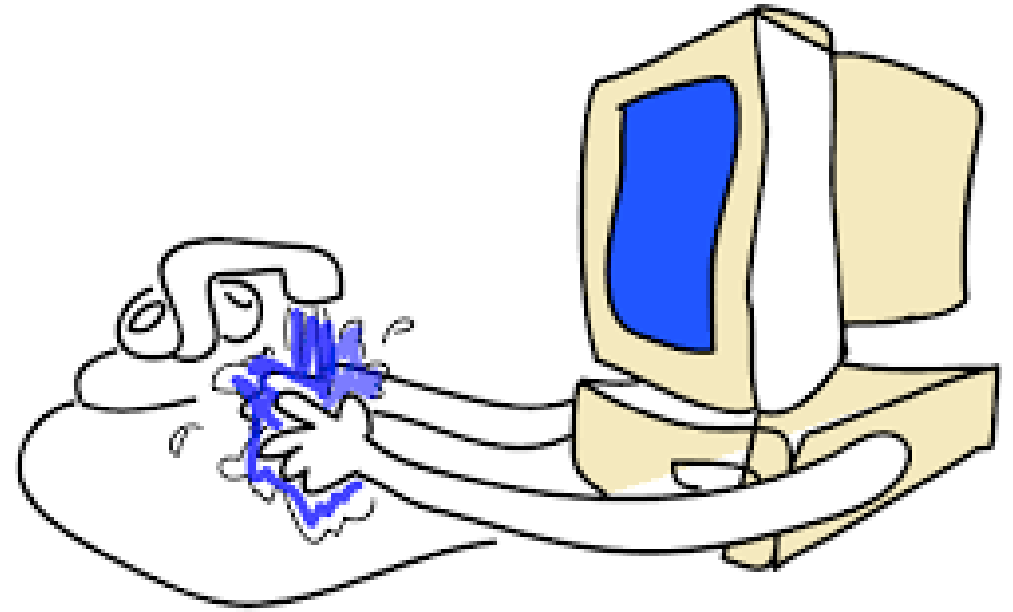


# What can I do?

## Step 2: Assist yourself for healthy use of technology:

### Digital hygiene:

1. Frequent break,
2. Schedule three meals a day,
3. Break after 45 minutes of headphone use
4. Bring indoor physical activities,
5. Take care of self hygiene and
6. 30 to 45 minutes before sleep time ,no online activities



## Step 2: Assist yourself for healthy use of technology

SHUT clinic-Digital detox app:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.shutclinic.shutclinic>

Download information materials

at: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h6w9j0i9e3mg604/AABZVjBopfuRn5EZe6ZOIBdwa?dl=0>



# Take Away

1. Be aware of signs of digital addiction
2. Spend valuable time with your family or friends.
3. Include hobbies and alternative pleasurable activities in your daily schedule.
4. Don't hesitate to seek help.

Contact: SHUT clinic,  
NIMHANS Centre for Well Being,  
NIMHANS, Bengaluru

E-mail: [shutclinic@gmail.com](mailto:shutclinic@gmail.com); [nimhanswellbeing@gmail.com](mailto:nimhanswellbeing@gmail.com)

# Gaming Addiction

## Effects of Gaming Addiction

### Physical Effects

- Aches and Pains
- Eye and Muscle Strain
- Difficulty in sleeping

### Psychological Effects

- Irritability and restless when not playing
- Increased aggression
- Poor academic performance

### Social Effects

- Reduced offline activities and friends
- Conflicts with parents over playing

### Cognitive Effects

- Difficulty in concentration
- Difficulty in remembering things

## Tips on management of gaming addiction for parents and children

- Choose suitable games which are still fun
- Parents should talk with children about the content of the game to understand the difference between make believe and reality
- Follow recommendations on possible risks
- Take frequent breaks while playing
- Ensure enough offline play time activities or any other extra-curricular activities other than online playing
- Set time limits of playing
- Spend quality time as family which might lead to increased offline communications
- Have open direct communication with children



## Gaming Addiction



SHUT Clinic (Services for Healthy use of technology)

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## Cell Phone Overuse & Addiction



- Excessive use of texting language leads to change in the language even in writing such as - eg, *dat, c, wat, u, der*, and so on.
- Feeling of loneliness or emptiness when there are no calls or messages even for a short while

### Social effects:

- Excessive use leads to poor family interaction.
- Use of mobile phone while driving/road may lead to accidents.



### How can you better manage your Cell Phone use?

- Use the cell phone only when necessary
- Keep your talk brief on the phone and don't extend your calls for hours.
- Avoid using your phone while spending valuable time with your family or friends.
- Set and follow certain rules for your family members and yourself such as—No mobile use while eating, praying, and other such important activities.
- Set a budget for cell phone bills, don't cross the limit.
- If you are texting too often, try to avail special packages for SMS.
- Include hobbies and alternative pleasurable activities in your daily schedule.
- If you are not able to control your cell phone use, it might indicate an addiction and a Counsellor / Therapist/ Mental health professional may be able to help you.



## Cell phone Overuse & Addiction



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