

*EAP Column***Internet addiction**

by Brian Bethell, IMAAW EAP representative, Vancouver

The American Psychological Association recently released results of what it calls the largest study of web surfers ever conducted, with over 17,000 individuals surveyed.

It discovered that almost six per cent of Internet users have some form of addiction to it.

Internet addiction is defined as excessive, non-essential use of the Internet that cause psychological, social or physical problems for the user.

The Association has concluded that Internet addiction is not much different than other forms of addiction. Some in the study indicated they had turned to the Internet to escape from their problems but were not able to lower their usage when they realized the use of the Internet itself had become a problem.

Additionally, 30 per cent of those surveyed said they turned to the Internet as an "escape".

Those results are backed up by a recent Statistics Canada survey, which found some Internet users choosing the Web in lieu of spending quality time with their families.

In addition to web surfing and the predominance of Internet chat

rooms, there is a growing awareness that addictions to online gaming and gambling are becoming problems with instant access to virtual casinos and interactive games.

For example, those who are becoming hooked on online games show clear signs of addiction – some play almost everyday and for extended periods of time (over four hours), get restless or irritable if they can't play, and sacrifice other social activities.

Overall, the American Psychological Association recommends individuals who feel their Internet usage is creating significant difficulties in their life should think about joining a support group or seek professional help.

Your EAP coordinators are here to assist you with resources for this issue or any issues that may be impacting you or the well-being of those close to you. Please give us a call.

**Need help?**

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