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## What should parents do when children are addicted to internet surfing and computer game?

Network is an unusual resource. Although it brings a great of advantage to study and amusement, it brings many worried problems to parents. Among these problems, parents are bothered the most by their children's addiction to internet surfing and computer game. When you find your children spend a long period of time on internet surfing and it affects their daily life and study and the time used is far more than their parents allowed and children use more time for internet surfing than participating in activities, you have to consider whether they have already been addicted to internet surfing.

Some parents cut off the electricity, put away internet access equipment or even lock computers in big cabinets, attempting to prevent children from internet addiction continually. But usually the result is in opposite, it hurts parents-children relationship. Some of the adolescents even continue internet surfing in internet bars.

Adolescence is the important period of adolescent development and building social interpersonal relationship, especially for children who have emotional problem, self-isolated character, weak in social interpersonal ability and self-control. These children easily get into hidden phenomenon and fall into another virtual world. They even bring the roles in virtual world into their real world. Thus it easily creates the phenomenon of unhealthy social adaptation and become "Hidden Youths" who are difficult to adapt to living.

In order to use information technology correctly, it needs to cultivate the self-control of children and also needs the cooperated concerns from parents and teachers. When school teachers teach information technology, they need to teach the correct ways of using computers and related knowledge about internet surfing safety. It is suggested to refer to the part "Children and Adolescents Cyber Ethics" IT Education of Resource Bank in website of The Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau. Website address is <http://www.emb.gov.hk/>. Besides, appropriate family education and good parents-children relationship are the protective shelters preventing children to become addicted to internet surfing. The following suggestions are for parents' reference:

### To install the computer in family activity areas

Usually, sitting room is the place where the family members participate in activities together. Parents can use this open space for internet exploring as a means of family activities. In the meantime it reduces the chances for children browsing unhealthy websites in hidden places.

If the sleeping room is another venue for holding family activities, your computer and internet access equipment can be installed here. Because you and your children are in a same area, you can easily master their ways of using computer and take immediate arrangement whenever there is problem.

### To set regulations for internet surfing with your children together

Before purchasing or installing internet equipment, we need to take this chance to discuss with our children and set up reasonable regulations for internet surfing. For example, when is the time for internet surfing? How many hours for each day? At what time at night should we shutdown the computer?, etc. Also we have to make sure that they know which websites are not suitable for online browsing. If there are unhealthy advertisements in the web pages we have to close these pages immediately.

### To understand the situation of children's internet surfing

What are they doing on internet surfing? Are they playing game, chatting with others, sending e-mails or downloading music/short films/software? Parents need to understand initially. In this way, parents can know children's habits of internet surfing. Besides providing discussion topics for parents and promoting parents-children relationship, they can suggest safety for internet surfing.

Moreover, if parents understand the related regulations for playing games on network, children will accept more easily when they are requested to follow routines for example: to stop games for bathing, eating, studying homework and going to bed. It is essential to request them to stop either at the beginning or at the end of the game and never request them to stop immediately when the game is ongoing. Otherwise it will make the children dissatisfied.

### To encourage children to participate in diversified activities

Diversified and rich activities can reduce the chance for children to become addicted to internet surfing. As for health, adolescents are in the growing development. It will hurt their eyes if they sit before the computer for a long period of time and often bad postures will bring shoulder pain and neck pain to them. Therefore parents should encourage them to use leisure time correctly and to participate more in some adolescent activities which are advantageous to their body and mind.

IT People

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