

TMS TRENDS

JULY 2016

A publication of the TMS Institute of Pennsylvania – Advanced Neuropsychiatric Solutions

INTERNET ADDICTION, SCHOOL BURNOUT AND DEPRESSION

Excessive internet use contributes to the development of school burnout. School burnout, in turn, may lead to excessive internet use or digital addiction, which may cause depressive symptoms. Mind the Gap, a longitudinal research project has established a link between digital addiction and school burnout. The results of the Finnish study were published in May 2016 in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. The findings show that via school burnout, adolescents' excessive internet use can ultimately lead to depression. Exposure to digital addiction is most likely to happen if the adolescent loses interest in school and feels cynicism towards school.

Fostering enthusiasm for learning is paramount. The research suggests that the most critical stage for tackling the problem of digital addiction and school burnout is age 13-15.

It was found that depressive symptoms and school burnout in late adolescence are more common among girls than boys, but boys suffer more from excessive Internet use than girls.

The study was carried out among Helsinki adolescents aged 12-14 and 16-18. In all more than 3,000 Helsinki adolescents from 33 lower schools and 18 upper secondary schools took part. This project is the first longitudinal study exploring the reciprocal associations between excessive internet use, school engagement, school burnout and depression among adolescents.

Today's young people are described as 'digital natives': they are the first generation who have grown up with mobile devices and social media.

The digital transformation has two facets. On the one hand, earlier research has shown that the internet provides important and pleasurable social experiences that are useful in later studies and eventually in the workplace. The pedagogical use of digital technology can also engage and inspire young people to take an interest in science and technology. On the other hand, digital addiction can also cause burnout in adolescents and even lead to depression.

A DOSE OF NATURE IS JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

People who visit parks for 30 minutes or more each week are much less likely to have high blood pressure or poor mental health than those who don't, according to new research by Australian and UK environmental scientists. This new study suggests people might need a minimum "dose of nature."

Researcher Dr. Danielle Shanahan said parks offered health benefits including reduced risks of developing heart disease, stress, anxiety and depression.

"If everyone visited their local parks for half an hour each week there would be seven per cent fewer cases of depression and nine percent fewer cases of high blood pressure," she said.

"Given that the societal costs of depression alone in Australia are estimated at \$12.6 billion a year, savings to public health budgets across all health outcomes could be immense," she said.

Researcher Richard Fuller said the research could transform the way people viewed urban parks.

"We've known for a long time that visiting parks is good for our health, but we are now beginning to establish exactly how much time we need to spend in parks to gain these benefits," he said.

Fuller continues, "We have specific evidence that we need regular visits of at least half an hour to ensure we get these benefits."

Dr. Shanahan adds, "Our children especially benefit from spending more time outdoors. Kids who grow up experiencing natural environments may benefit developmentally and have a heightened environmental awareness as adults than those who don't."

The research is published in *Nature Scientific Reports*. The research team included scientists from UQ's School of Public Health, the University of Exeter, and CSIRO Land and Water.

