

PROPERTIES OF THE INTERNET. (“It’s the Internet, stupid.”)

Griffiths (2003) found a number of factors that make online activities potentially addictive. They include (with some creative license by Dr. Simpson):

Accessibility. Increase accessibility to Internet activities enables the individual to rationalize involvement by removing previously restrictive barriers such as time constraints emanating from occupational and social commitments.

Affordability. Socializing, gaming, porn and gambling are all dramatically cheaper online.

Anonymity. The Internet allows users to behave without fear of being identified.

Convenience. Online applications provide convenient mediums to engage in online behaviors. A person’s behaviors occur in a familiar and comfortable environment, thus reducing the feeling of risk and allowing even more adventurous behaviors.

Escape. The Internet experience can provide an emotional or mental escape, which further reinforces the behavior.

Immersion and Dissociation. This can include losing track of time, feelings of being someone else, blacking out, and being in a trancelike state.

Disinhibition. The Internet makes people less inhibited (Joinson, 1998). Online users appear to open up more quickly online and reveal themselves emotionally much faster than in the off-line world.

Event frequency. The more a person goes online, the more familiar the places and behaviors become.

Interactivity. Interactions online allows for instant reactions from other humans.

Simulation. Many aspects of the Internet recreate real-world places but allow for the feeling of greater safety and control.

Associability. Ironically, the Internet can also create an asocial experience where an individual does not reveal their true self, but rather the “social self” they have created for online interactions.