

ADDICTIONS ARE SNEAKY

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When we think of 'addictions' our minds immediately go to the 'biggies' like drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, pornography, nicotine, caffeine, sugar or general food abuse. You might be astonished to know just how many addictions there are. Addictions are subtle in onset and many of us have them without even realizing it. Ask yourself, "Is there anything that I just can't live without? If that thing is denied me, do I become anxious, fidgety, depressed, frustrated, angry, or get headaches? Will I do anything possible to get or do that thing?"

If you could say yes to any of those questions, then it is likely to be an addiction. It might be internet games, chat-rooms, texting, social networking, video games, TV soaps, sports, shopping, fitness, competition, collecting, hoarding, cosmetic surgery, sex or work, just to name a few.

Did you know that talking can become an addiction? There are people who will not stop talking. They are usually not interested in what anyone else has to say because they are thinking about what they want to say next. In fact, they can think and talk at the same time.

Addictions are rife when we consider all the activities that we think we just can't function without. The question is how do addictions affect our families? When it comes to the most commonly considered addictions like drinking, smoking, gambling, pornography and overeating, we know how they threaten family wellbeing. They may lead to domestic violence, child abuse, trouble with the law, depletion of family finances, loss of jobs and health issues.

Unrecognized addictions may also threaten family life. Constant communication via texting, phone conversations or Internet chatting can drastically cut down the one-on-one, face-to-face communication between family members and friends. Already the family table is almost extinct as people eat and watch TV at the same time. What happened to the very fruitful family communication that starts with, "How was your day today?" How have we allowed our kids to text their friends during meal times? Where is the casual conversation when we are standing in line at the Post Office or at the grocery store? Does anyone see, let alone care about someone struggling with too many parcels? No! Why? It is because, too often, our noses are pointed towards a hand held device. Why is it that we have allowed ourselves to believe the lie that 'we only need to look after number one' and that 'other's stuff is not our business?'

A person with a talking addiction is often self-absorbed and does not develop good listening skills. The effect is that other family members will feel that their opinions don't matter and therefore their contribution is worthless. While

there is nothing wrong with activities like sports, competition, TV soaps, hobbies, video games and fitness, when these activities preoccupy us to the extent that we neglect our family responsibilities, then there is a major problem.

As parents, our families come first so we need to monitor them carefully. Each family member needs to contribute to the family as well as having their own interests. This is made easier by creating and maintaining routines where there is time for chores as well as time for fun like hobbies, sports and vacations. When the routine activities are compromised, then some changes need to be made. When a family member demonstrates irrational behavior when denied a particular activity, this also needs to be investigated immediately. We need to protect and encourage face-to-face communication with our kids as well as our spouses. If a preoccupation becomes habitual, then we need to deal with it by setting boundaries and monitoring the situation.

By ensuring that you are living a balanced lifestyle, you are training your children not only to better manage their own lives, but also that of their future families.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.