Center for Counseling and
Career Advisory (C3A)

The Perils of Growing Up

A Document for Awareness Raising
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Centre for Counseling & Career Advisory (C3A)

The NUST Center for Counseling and Career Advisory (C3A) was established in October 2008 as part of student services. It is a unit of NUST that provides primary mental health services. NUST is the only university in Pakistan offering this service that extends to all NUST students, faculty, personnel and families, within and outside the H-12 campus. The Centre functions as a student/faculty support organization and strives to help others attain their full potential, personally and professionally.

The core objective of C3A is to provide professional counseling service for educational, social, emotional or psychological issues that may inhibit personal or professional performance and advancement. The center also conducts psychological tests for students of all schools of NUST uniformly. These activities are to provide psychological support as well as meet the growing need of the university to promote wellbeing and personal development of all associated.

C3A consists of a professional staff of qualified psychologists/ counselors who provide short-term individual and group therapy. The program provides consultation, psychological testing, psycho-educational programs, trainings, workshops and outreach services. The Centre offers a confidential and professional service; counseling a range of concerns varying from short term personal, social or academic worries to longer term often more complex psychological problems. The psychologists are further trained through professional development programs to equip them with the changing times and needs of the centre.

The testing facilities at C3A assist students to achieve a sound understanding of their personality, their strengths and weaknesses and problematic areas of their life; thus guiding the individuals towards better choices and techniques of adaptation.

General

Change is inevitable and can have positive or negative impact on our lives. Technology based change is shifting paradigms and helping people attain personal and professional heights. The world is at one's disposal at the touch of a finger tip. Photo sharing, social network systems, mobile phones, digital cameras and other such devices; can be destructive just as much as we consider them to be constructive.

The crux of the matter leads us to two other words; 'use' and 'misuse'. How we use the mode of technology available to us is our own responsibility. We forget the implications and the outcomes of these facilities that have invaded our lives. 'A mobile in every hand' and 'Internet in every home', these slogans have worked well to get people connected; but has also put them through some unnecessary hassles not experienced before.

As the number of devices is increasing in our country, so are the associated risks. It is established that misuse may have serious ramifications; and hence educating our youth about these risk factors is crucial. Educating people on related issues and raising awareness would help the parents, caregivers and the youth. This would help make innovations bliss for all.

Similarly, the kind of company one keeps is increasingly becoming important. With the progress of technology, the youth is also facing a trying time. Mutual relations and friendships are full of deceit, jealousy and fake exteriors. It is of utmost importance to bring to the attention of the youth, how to remain alert about their surroundings and to safeguard their wellbeing.

In order to avoid such company and the children going astray with external pressures; the parents should be aware of the potential influence and threats; and be encouraged to talk to their children and improve communication with them. In general, maintaining healthy communication with children and staying involved in their lives, helps prevent such damaging linkages to establish and flourish.

Need of the hour is also to raise a generalized awareness about addictions/dependencies that not only affect ones health; but also instigate one to commit acts of criminal nature. Peer pressure and the need to belong; can make people conduct themselves in the most unbecoming manners.

The triggering factor is not just emotional and physical distance from families but also the loss of spiritual connection. The need to study hard and get good grades has removed focus from all the other aspects of a healthy personality. People identify themselves with grades and others judge them through the GPA. The need to go beyond and know people at a personal level is minimizing.

Awareness of religious and cultural obligations, norms and boundaries is lacking in our society. Students must be careful while making friends and sharing personal information with acquaintances. There is a growing need for parents and teachers to be more cognizant and involved in the lives of the upcoming generation. Legislation on the subject exists in the country, but there is lack of implementation. The requirement is that efforts should be made at all levels of society; the individual, family, educational institutions and the entire community collaborating with the government.

Some of the imminent aspects that require attention are:

The Internet

The internet has become an integral part of an adolescent's life, outside and on campus. The "Hanging Out" in chat rooms includes anonymously discussing intimate topics with strangers. This is done in the privacy of their homes, mostly without parental consent or knowledge. With no age bar and constructed identities, such interactions lead to exploitative relationships. Social networks formed with other known or unknown people provide contacts such as email and instant messaging services.

The worlds' biggest information exchange, the internet; could have some unexpected ramifications. Face book, Twitter, Orkut and

My Space are social networking websites with more than 900 million users. Adding people as friends, sending messages; and personal profiles to notify friends about one's whereabouts and status are some basic activities on these sites.

These sites are subject to controversy and have been blocked intermittently in several countries. The users suffer privacy violations as well as spending time in redundant and nonproductive activities. These sites are now warning users to protect themselves from harm through exposure. Some of the hazards of using the internet could be:

Internet Frauds

This refers to the use of Internet services to present fraudulent solicitations to prospective victims. Fraudulent transactions transmit the proceeds to the illicit financial institutions or persons. Internet fraud occurs in chat rooms, through emails, or on websites. Some forms of such fraud are:

Social Networking Fraud

Hackers and identity thieves use social networking sites to gain access to other individual's sensitive information. Posting full name, birthday, address, the name of schools and organizational affiliation is the information disclosed. This irreversible disclosure might be accessed by scams and offenders. Thus, it is wise to verify contacts before allowing access to personal information.

Dating Fraud/ Romance Scam

Online dating frauds are almost as old as the concept itself; often referred to as the 'Sweetheart Swindle'. This is a confidence trick involving feigned romantic intentions towards a victim; gaining affection, and then using that goodwill to commit fraud. Fraudulent acts may involve attaining access to the victims' money, bank accounts, credit

cards, passports, e-mail accounts, and/or national identification numbers; or by getting the victims to commit financial fraud on their behalf. Most online dating services experience difficulties dealing with fraudsters and issue warnings to their users.

Identity Fraud

Identity fraud is where someone steals personal details to con another out of money. Sharing personal details without discretion may result in purchases or withdrawal of funds without the person's knowledge or consent. Disclosing credit card number or bank account information on the internet is therefore discouraged.

Spam

Spam are emails sent to a large number of email addresses; mostly consisting of advertisements of illegal products, scams and pornography. It is against the law to market material by email without the consent of the receiver. Spam, especially if it has an attachment; may contain a virus that can damage the computer. Deleting and not responding to such an email will remove you from their mailing list; otherwise it leads to more spam.

Chain emails

A chain email is an email with a request to send on to all contacts some promising to bring good luck and others of contribution to charity, if passed on. Not passing them forward and deleting them on realization is the best way to ward off any further ramifications.

Lottery Scam

"You have won!" a large sum of money in a lottery, can excite many; although the recipient may have never bought a ticket to participate. Further in this scam comes the depositing of the "processing fees" or "transfer charges" so that the winnings can be distributed; but will never receive any lottery

payment.

Many email lottery scams use the names of legitimate lottery organizations or other legitimate corporations/companies, without their involvement. There are several ways to recognize a fake lottery email:

- Unless someone has bought a ticket, they cannot have won a prize.
- The real lottery system does not charge a fee, but would subtract it from the prize, while the scammer will ask the victim to pay a fee before they can receive their prize.
- Scam lottery emails will nearly always come from free email accounts such as Yahoo!, Hotmail, MSN, Gmail etc.

Online Victimization

People may be victimized online in many ways:

Harassment:

Threats or other offensive behavior sent online to the youth or posted online about the youth for others to see.

Sexual solicitation:

Requests to engage in sexual activities and talk or give personal sexual information. This becomes aggressive with continued requests for offline contact with the perpetrator through regular mail, by telephone, or in person.

Unwanted exposure to sexual material:

Without seeking or expecting sexual material while searching/surfing the web, accessing email/links or instant messages. These become distressing incidents only when and where the youth rate themselves as extremely upset or afraid as a result of the incident.

Cyber Bullying

Is when the internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send/post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. Entertainment for millions of people

could turn out to be an avenue for violence. Videos/material is posted to get even. Stalking youth through this method becomes extreme and could even lead to suicide by the victim, as a desperate measure.

The Risks of P2P (Peer to Peer) File Sharing

This refers to sharing files for music, games or other types of software. This sharing requires one to connect with other computers using the same software. This could expose the system to:

The copying of your private files. A hacker is capable of accessing all personal and private information including bank accounts, address and contacts.

Violation of copyright laws. includes received, downloaded to shared folders/files. The penalty for such a violation is quite harsh.

Incoming viruses that could corrupt data and saving devices permanently and the user might not be aware of the damage already done. Accidentally download pornography that was purposely mislabeled as something else; allowing them to be downloaded to safer websites used for P2P file sharing.

The Exposure at Internet Cafes:

It becomes unavoidable at times to use a public computer while away from home which might not include the essential security settings and firewalls for protection. Private information such as credit card information (online shopping), bank account details (internet banking) and personal emails should be avoided. Using a public computer just for anonymous browsing (e.g. weather, news, updates etc.) is alright.

Risks of using Internet-cafe and public-computer include:

Unscrupulous owners and managers:

There is a chance that the person running the internet cafe might be involved in the internet business or the identity-theft business.

Phony 'customers' or internet-cafe patrons are there to spy:

Some cybercriminals can see precisely what you are typing regardless of how fast you can type.

'Security' cameras:

The visible security cameras are for public safety; while the invisible cameras could be recording all windows viewed and each keystroke made, together with recording all 'immoral' acts by the users in the booth; to be later used for blackmailing purposes.

Corrupted computers:

Most publicly used computers are infected with malware, have viruses, worms and Trojan horses. Being used previously by cybercriminals is also a possibility.

Booby-trapped computers:

The café manager could install spying devices that would record each keypad movement. Such devices are impossible to locate, without disassembling the computer.

Unsafe Wi-Fi devices:

Internet cafes often provide local Wi-Fi hot spots. The information even if encrypted could easily be accessed by Wi-Fi spies.

The Vulnerability to Internet Addiction:

Internet addiction is defined as using the Internet for more than eight hours a day, or loss of control over the use of Internet. As teenagers nowadays stay logged on the web for its convenience, many have revealed worrying signs of Internet addiction. This could be identified with someone cannot clearly differentiate between cyberspace and reality which may damage mental and physical health.

According to a research survey, 18 % of high school students develop an Internet addiction which may cause problems in learning, school performance, developing healthy

relationships and controlling impulses. Initially denied, this condition is now being considered as a new addition in the Official Handbook of Mental Disorders (DSMV).

Online Security Measures:

Guarding financial and personal information: Includes credit card, bank account, driver's license, PIN and NIC numbers etc. Store such information in writing away from the source to prevent easy access and unwanted disclosure.

Being wary of imposters: Crooks pretending to be from companies one does business with, claiming they need to verify personal information. It is always wise to authenticate before responding, especially if the asked for information is previously provided.

Staying safe online: Clues about security on Web sites should be followed, especially where asked to provide financial or other sensitive information. Despite the browser's indication to safeguard information, there is no guarantee that the company will store it securely.

Disposable email addressing: While registering for websites, social networking and chat rooms etc., it is a good idea to share an email address that is not actively used. This aids in preserving ones identity and keeping businesses private.

Taking Face Book Safety Measures: Face book is the most popular site for networking, also where privacy could be easily invaded. A privacy setting where photographs, videos and status etc. is only accessed by 'Friends Only' is highly recommended. Also, posting personal information e.g. about going on a vacation or business trips makes one vulnerable to break-ins. The following tips can help:

- Creating a password using upper and lowercase letters mixed in with numbers
- Leave your birth year off your profile to help prevent identity theft
- Use the site's privacy controls and recheck

them off and on

Turning off your computer: When working long hours on the computer it is advisable to turn off the wireless switch or the remove the internet cable to avoid any possible access to the computer through the Internet. Turning off the computer will not only protect unauthorized access, but will also save energy and give the required rest to the system.

Buying a security suite: Computers come with a few security components, such as a firewall that can be turned-on on use. Additional security measures are always helpful and wise.

Being careful with downloads: Claiming to be approved by the Better Business Bureau or being secure is no guarantee that the site will actually be secure. Downloads come with spyware that may compromise security.

Using wireless connections: A wireless connection should only be used for personal or financial business if it is secured and restricted to access.

Special care is to be taken if the system is public or through shared computers.

Mobiles
Mobile Chat and SMS

Mobile chat has been a natural extension of the chat rooms, offered over the Internet and on fixed lines. With the telecom companies introducing reduced rate packages, it has becoming increasingly difficult to prevent the youth from using messaging as means of regular communication. As convenient as they are, SMS (Short Message Service) or text messages have as with all forms of communication, a few drawbacks:

SMS is extensively being used by unscrupulous people to blackmail/misguide others. Text messages are sent indicating that you have won a lottery or a prize. Responding to such messages is not under the usual rate, but at an increased rate. The person never wins but

ends up spending a substantial amount of time and credit on such scams.

SMS has alienated the family members from one another. Being occupied with sending and receiving text messages to friends and associates, rather than communicating with the family has become a norm in many homes. Family time is usually spent with mobiles and other devices, rather than bonding with each other. Reduced interaction/ communication, and addiction to SMS has jeopardized many a relationships.

Text messaging is a non-confrontational mode of communication, bullying via the medium is more like stalking. A recipient has no way of knowing who has sent the text; so the offensive and harassing text messages become more frequent. Offensive jokes, threats and forwards are sent through SMS/ text messages. The psychological effects of such bullying have a greater negative impact than face-to-face bullying.

It is not possible to control or monitor the conversations that take place amongst people in these chat sessions. However, it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that children are fully aware of the risks involved in this respect. Also, spending quality family time has become increasingly important because of hectic schedules of family members. Once together, the family should communicate and connect with one another and be physically and emotionally present.

Tips to encourage 'responsible' SMS/texting include:

Your mobile number and other personal details, would only be known if you share them.

Inform your parents if anyone bullies or threatens you. Timely action is necessary.

Online friends or chat buddies might not be disclosing their true identities.

Select an appropriate chat nickname. Others will only see your nickname when you send them a message; it should reflect that you deserve to be respected.

It is best not to meet chat friends face to face but if you really want to, tell your parents, take an older friend with you and always meet in a public place. Be wary of marriage proposals or invitation to meet alone.

Keep in mind the time you are sending a text; late night and early morning messaging might inconvenience another.

Send and forward messages that bring you respect, people assess your mindset by the messages you send.

Remember that these devices are made to ease your life, not bring added pressure. Use them discretely.

Treat people with the respect, as you would expect for yourself.

Camera Phones:

Cameras attached to mobile phones are becoming more and more common; almost a standard feature of mobile phones. Cases identified of misuse of this facility are on the rise as well. The more convenient and technology superior they are in image quality; the more appropriate they are to use in some of the unacceptable ways. Camera phones are designed to provide a means of transferring images via your mobile phone to compliment voice or text based communication for business or personal reasons. The Network Operator cannot legally as well as logistically monitor all sent images to ensure 'appropriate content'; exactly the same way voice and text calls cannot be monitored. However, directing the youth to make their own decision on what is appropriate to distribute via MMS is necessary. Contrary to this, benefits of a camera phone were demonstrated recently in Italy where the world's first arrest was made as a result of a MMS sent to the police. The picture helped the police identify the culprits also wanted for other petty crimes and charged for six months in jail.

Tips to encourage responsible MMS use include:

- Respect privacy of others; the same applies if you were using a regular or digital camera
- Remember to ask first; if you are taking a picture of someone and intend to MMS it
- Respect the sort of image you take of someone; do not force or ignore their right to say 'No'. If you plan to send it on the MMS to someone else, check if it is alright with them.
- Passing on objectionable material only reduces a person's self-respect, and the respect he/she can get from others.
- Becoming part of a forward that is ridiculing another, means that you are also an abuser.

Bluetooth Misuse:

Bluetooth is an inexpensive and speedy way to send data and information across to others. It is a wireless technology and is the short-range wireless standard for personal connectivity of a broad range of electronic devices. It works when two devices are "paired" or configured to recognize each other, allowing them to connect and share data.

Bluetooth acquired a bad standing, mostly because of its immoral use. Concern is shown over the use of this technology for circulating obscene content and promoting immorality. Mobiles, mostly equipped with cameras, are making even private gatherings unsecure; as people worry over the misuse and circulation of their photos and films.

Peer pressure and absent or minimal parental guidance attract youth towards immoral social acts. Some use Bluetooth to vent their frustration and exhibit feeling of hurt publically. Pictures are published on the Internet and mobiles of people, using the Bluetooth that may be used later for harassment and blackmail.

When two Bluetooth devices are paired, the pairing must be done in what is called "Discoverable" mode. After the pairing is completed, the devices should be switched back

to the non-discoverable mode.

Sexting:

Sexting is the practice of sending pictures of sexual acts or nudity, and is becoming a major concern of parents across the world. In the west, teens often face prosecution for pornography and are added to the sexual offenders' lists. The offence ranges from the sharing of pictures of teens to selling videos of sexual nature via messaging services or the internet. Often privacy of people is invaded and then public sharing is done through cell phones. Many a times the pictures are eventually downloaded and shared on the Internet where it becomes almost impossible to retrieve or reverse.

Here are some of the reasons why pictures must not be sent to anyone:

Teens especially, are unaware of the fact that once you hit the 'send' button; the content of the message is out of one's control. Your picture could be forwarded, saved or posted at any time now or in the future.

Break-up with a partner or getting into a fight with a friend triggers off revenge.

A once best friend could also share pictures with other people to get even.

'Sexting' can get one in a lot of trouble with parents and with the law! Firm warning should be given about the consequences of this behavior.

Teens may not realize that their or others' reputations can be scarred for life.

There are specific actions that parents can take as well. Some of these include:

Parents need to set clear rules and boundaries about the children's proper behavior and expectations regarding use of cell phones.

Parents should feel comfortable asking the teens to have their phones randomly checked for inappropriate texting or sexting.

Parents and schools should explain to the teens that once something is posted on the Internet, they cannot change their mind and get it back. Anything that is posted can haunt them for life and can be seen by anyone years later (potential college recruiters, future employers, etc.).

Mobile Frauds:
Dating Frauds:

Mobile phone dating has become a common issue now-a-days. It allows individuals to chat and to send messages which results in more meetings and getting romantically involved. This service permits its users to store their personal data in the form of a short profile, under their dating ID. The users can browse over the internet to find suitable dating ID, matching to their own profile; or they can call certain numbers as dictated by this service. These services claim to be free to register but the revenue is mostly generated with the service charges associated with the text messaging.

But there are certain drawbacks. Firstly, there is always a possibility for losing privacy; personal details and information may be used illegitimately. Secondly, there is a possibility of being harassed with spam messages or undesired calls even after cancelling subscription.

Subscription Fraud:

Subscription Fraud is simply using an operator's products and services, with no intent to pay. The fraudulent application for service can include anything from false or forged documentation to identify theft. As an industry we have seen a huge increase in the use of identity theft as a means to obtain fraudulent telephone service.

Identity theft becomes lucrative for someone who wants to get a Post Paid connection with a mobile operator with an intention of extensive or illegal use and then not clearing dues.

Credit Transfer Fraud:

This is a problem experienced by most Mobile Network Operators, who provide Prepaid services. For a prepaid service credit is added to the phone by the user, before calls are made and the user then can make calls as the credit balance allows.

Credit can be added to the phone in a number of ways, for example using recharge cards purchased from a retailer, or by transferring credit to a known number. Many fraudulent people send bulk text messages, claiming they are in the hospital or under

some other distress. They ask the receiver of the message to transfer a certain Rupees worth of credit so that they can make the emergency call.

Such messages should be ignored, and credit should only be sent to those who one already knows. Also, lending your prepay phone to others who guarantee to add value back to your phone once they have used it. Since prepaid services have no record of phone calls made; one should be careful before handing over phone to strangers. Your number might be passed on to a network you don't want to associate yourself with.

Psychological problems linked with the use of Mobile Phones:

The dependence on mobile phones has caused youth to face some new stressors. If the network is inaccessible/ down or the phone is not working; people with phone addiction are severely hassled. It is now hard to comprehend the 'Life before mobile phones'. Cell phone abuse is a worldwide epidemic which is now affecting millions of men, women and children especially teen age students.

No-Mo phobia (No-Mobile phobia):

Being phoneless can bring a panic symptom referred to as NoMo Phobia or No Mobile phobia. Running out of credit or battery charge or losing a phone or being in an area with no reception can cause this stress. To overcome this it is suggested to keep the battery in top condition and the credit sufficient. To wean-off the mobile dependence systematically, one can deliberately avoid mobile phone for few hours and then few days to reduce its importance.

Ringxiety (Ringtone Anxiety):

This is an anxiety symptom related to the over use of mobile phone, and a form of addiction. Ringxiety refers to the sensation and false belief that the mobile phone is ringing or vibrating. It also explains the condition

when a person repeatedly checks the cell phone messages or missed calls.

Mobile Phone Addiction:

Mobile phone addiction is a social problem and psychiatrists believe that this is becoming one of the biggest non-drug addictions of the 21st century. With the age drop of the mobile phone users and the ease of prepaid method provided by the system operators; most teenagers now own their own mobile phone and SIMs from different network services.

Teenagers are occupied with their mobile phones all the time; phone calls, using SMS/text messages or personalizing the mobile phones with ringtones and pictures etc. This has become the new status symbol and people are brand and model conscious. New models of mobile phones are released almost every day. In order to be up-to-date, people tend to change their mobile phones quite frequently; which makes them spend extravagantly on mobile phones and bills.

Feelings of Inferiority and Low Self-Esteem

With mobiles becoming the symbol of social status; those who do not have this gadget or an older model, consider themselves to be inferior to others. Demand of new mobile sets from their parents is mostly done to avoid embarrassment. Comparing mobile sets and the desire to get one with all the latest technological advancements, is common. To overcome Low Self-Esteem they may indulge in theft or illegal purchase and consequently misuse the device when they get one.

How Can Parents Help?
Guidelines and Healthy Boundaries:

Educate and talk to your kids about the dangers and responsibilities associated with using a cell phone. Explain the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Make sure to set time limits to use and when it should be turned off and placed in the parent's care. Without clearly defined guidelines, your teenager could be misguided and end up being a victim.

Embrace the Technology:

Embracing the technology that kids use, will increase chances of improving communication with them. Instead of calling your daughter to find out what time she will be home, send her a text message. Rather than trying to get your son to watch a segment on TV about the risks of texting while driving, send him a link to the video. This will not only keep the parents abreast with the latest technology, but will also increase the respect of parents for the teenager.

Learn The Lingo :

The text message language started with character limit for a text message, but now the use of abbreviations is quite common for convenience in swift response. You might know that LOL means "Laughing Out Loud", but do you know what DUSL or PIR means?

A parent might not know if the message was innocent or had more deviant intentions unless familiar with the language. Abbreviations can also be part of a private way to communicate amongst friends without raising parents concern. If you know that DUSL means (Do You Scream Loud), or that PIR means (Parents in Room), you will have a better idea on what your kids are saying and doing with their friends. Language is an essential way to communicate; if you want to communicate with your children, learn their lingo.

Monitor Their Activity:

Who was your son talking to at 2:30 in the morning? Did you know someone was sending your daughter explicit text messages? You could look through their phone, however they will simply delete their call or text logs if they think you are snooping.

There are ways to get the information one needs. Getting a Post Paid connection reduces the risk of making unidentified calls, as is the case of a Prepaid connection. Through the postpaid account you can check your cell phone bills and also get an online update. Installing spy software on their

phone could be another possibility. Programs like Mobile Spy allow you to monitor your teenager's text messages, call information, and even provide you with their GPS location. You can verify their whereabouts or see what text messages they received in real-time simply by logging into your account.

Addictions/Dependencies:

Addiction occurs when an individual becomes physically or psychologically dependent on a substance. Individuals may become addicted to or have compulsive behaviors in regard to almost anything, including sex, food, exercise, shopping/spending money, work, and the Internet. The principles and consequences of addictions are generally the same, even if the particular addiction is different.

A combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors may incline individuals to developing addictions. Initially, the addiction gives a person an elevated feeling (a high); the person believes that he/she is in control and powerful. This desire may stem from underlying causes, such as depression, stress, or low self-esteem; yet others may just try out of curiosity or peer pressure. Once a person becomes addicted to a substance, it causes chemical changes in the brain that lead to intense cravings.

Addictions may lead to social or interpersonal problems, and may cause some people to do things they normally would not (such as lie or steal) to fulfill their addictions. Due to this, the person may have strained relationships with friends, family members, and loved ones. Individuals who are addictive typically engage in riskier behaviors; they may developing infectious diseases (such as HIV or hepatitis) or get involved with wrong company.

Because individuals with addictions often deny they have problems, it is important for friends, family, coworkers, and others to watch for warning signs of addiction. When people are aware that a person close to them has an addiction problem, they should try to persuade the person to undergo some

screening to confirm. People with addictions share many of the same behavioral signs and symptoms. They may lie about their behaviors, deny they have problems, or be extra secretive.

Substance Abuse (Drug Addiction):

Substance abuse occurs when individuals use drugs (which may or may not be illegal) for recreational purposes. Commonly abused drugs include alcohol, central nervous system stimulants (such as nicotine, caffeine, and methamphetamine), cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. Drugs can be taken by mouth, injected into a vein, snorted through the nose, inhaled, or smoked.

Individals may be involved with legal or illegal drugs in various ways. Experimentation with drugs during adolescence is common. Unfortunately, people do not often connect their behavior and its possible outcome. They also have a tendency to feel that they have a strong resistance and would be immune to the problems that others experience. There are many illegal substances abused today. There are other substances, such as over-the-counter medications, household products, and legitimate pharmaceuticals (medicines) that are also abused.

Types of Harmful Substances:

There are several classes of drugs; each class has different properties and effects on the user

Narcotics: Narcotics (such as heroin, morphine, etc.) are used to dull the senses and reduce pain. Narcotics can be made from opium (from the opium poppy) or created in a laboratory (synthetic and semi-synthetic narcotics).

Stimulants: Stimulants reverse the effects of fatigue on the body and brain. Sometimes they are referred to as "uppers." Cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamine and Ritalin are stimulant drugs. Nicotine (found in tobacco) is also a stimulant.

Depressants: Substances included in this category are tranquilizers, sedatives, hypnotics, anti-anxiety medications and alcohol.

Cannabis: Marijuana and hashish are substances referred to as cannabis and the ingredient in cannabis which makes the user feel "high."

Hallucinogens: These substances alter the perceptions and moods of users. LSD, Ecstasy, PCP and Ketamine are made in laboratories.

Inhalants: Many common items such as glue, lighter fluid, paint products, cleaning fluids, gasoline, and propellants in aerosol cans contain chemicals that produce intoxicating effects similar to alcohol. Inhalant abuse is the deliberate inhaling or sniffing of these products to get high.

Steroids: Anabolic steroids are defined as any drug or hormonal substance that promotes muscle growth. Some steroids are used for legitimate medical reasons, but many are illegally manufactured and distributed.

Why Do People Use Drugs?

When asked, young people offer a number of reasons for using drugs; most often they cite a desire to change the way they feel, or to "get high."

Other reasons include:

- Escape School/College and family pressures
- Low self-esteem
- To be accepted by their peers
- To feel adult-like or sophisticated
- Curiosity
- Perception of low risk associated with drugs
- Availability of drugs

It is important to remember that not everyone at risk for drug abuse would actually become a drug user. Here are some early signs of risk that may predict later drug use:

- Association with drug abusing peers
- A lack of attachment and nurturing by parents or caregivers
- Ineffective parenting
- A caregiver who abuses drugs
- Aggressive behavior
- Lack of self-control
- Poor classroom behavior or social skills

- Academic failure

Identification of Substance Abuse:
- Increase or decrease in appetite; changes in eating habits, unexplained weight loss or gain
- Smell of substance on breath, body or clothes; change in personal grooming/ hygiene
- Extreme hyperactivity; excessive talkativeness
- Needle marks or bruises on lower arm, legs or bottom of feet (effort to hide/cover)
- Change in overall attitude / personality with no other identifiable cause
- Changes in friends: new hang-outs, avoidance of old crowd, new friends are drug users
- Change in activities; loss of interest in things that were important before
- Drop in school or work performance; skips or is late to school or work
- Changes in habits at home; loss of interest in family and family activities
- Difficulty in paying attention; forgetfulness
- Lack of motivation, energy, self-esteem, discipline. Bored, "I don't care" attitude
- Defensiveness, temper tantrums, resentful behavior (everything's a hassle)
- Unexplained moodiness, irritability, or nervousness
- Violent temper or bizarre/ silly behavior
- Paranoid, secretive or suspicious behavior; keeps door locked or closed, won't let people in
- Major and minor car accidents, household accidents
- Chronic dishonesty; pathological lying, trouble with police
- Unexplained need for money; can't explain where money goes; stealing
- Possession of drug supplies
- Access to unexplainable finances

Food Addiction:
It is the compulsive, excessive craving for and consumption of food. This condition is not only manifested by the abnormal intake of

23

food; but the intake and craving for foods that are in themselves, harmful to the individual. There is now an acceptance of the fact that persons may be addicted to food. When any substance is taken into the body regardless of its potential for harm or in excess of need, that substance is said to be abused.

Food addiction is a serious condition with many adverse health consequences. Obesity, psychological disorders, diabetes and gastric anomalies are just a few. Individuals may be suffering from depression, low self-esteem or loneliness; they will find a high when ingesting large quantities of food or certain foods such as salt or chocolate. The immediate high gives way to a sick feeling or guilt, leading to more depression. Because the addict is out of control, he/she will turn once again to the same eating patterns in a conscious or unconscious effort to feel better.

Exercise Addiction:

Individuals with an exercise addiction are characterized by their compulsive exercise behaviors, an over involvement in exercise, so they exercise at a duration, intensity, and frequency beyond that required for the sport. A rigid schedule of intense exercise is maintained, accompanied by strong feelings of guilt when this schedule is violated. The exercise dependents always work out alone; follow the same rigid exercise pattern for more than two hours daily, repeatedly. They are fixated on weight loss or calories burned and continue to exercise when sick or injured; beyond the point of pain. They are willing to skip work, class, or social/family plans for workouts.
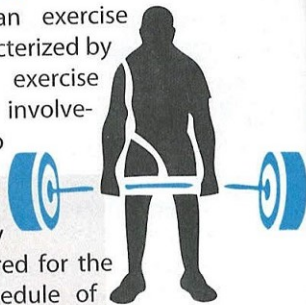
Sex Addiction:

This term describes the behavior of a person who has an unusually intense sex drive or an obsession with sex. The preoccupation affects the addict's thinking, making it difficult to work or engage in healthy personal relationships; also puts the person at risk for emotional and physical injury. This distorted thinking often includes rationalizing and justifying their behavior, and blaming others for the cause.

They generally deny they have a problem; and often engage in various forms of sexual activity, despite negative consequences. Sex addiction progresses to involve illegal activities, such as exhibitionism (exposing oneself in public), making obscene phone calls, masturbation, multiple partners, exposure to pornography, cybersex, harassing, prostitution, stalking or molestation.

Shopping/ Spending Addiction:

As with all addictions, shopping becomes the person's main way of coping with stress, to the point where they continue to shop excessively even when it is clearly having a negative impact on other areas of their life. As with other addictions, finances and relationships are damaged, yet the shopping addicts feels unable to stop or even control their spending.

Work Addiction:

A 'Workaholic', is incessantly driven, relentlessly active and has the unrestrained internal demand to be constantly engaged in work. For some work addicts, inactivity or activity other than work gives rise to guilt, anxiety, or emptiness. Some individuals view work as the only area in which they can establish and maintain their identities, feel effective, and enjoy feelings of importance, validation, and affirmation. Others may use work to counteract underlying feelings of inadequacy and ineffectiveness. In either case, the workaholic cannot rest, relax or have fun; and eventually ends up facing physical and emotional/ psychological issues.

The Perils of Growing Up

Internet and Television Addiction:

Internet overuse is excessive computer use (more than eight hours daily), that interferes with life. This addiction is said to be one of the extreme addictive disorders. The first group affected is the teenagers and the other are the above 50 group; those facing the 'empty nest' (children leaving home) phase. Sufferers may experience loss of sleep, anxiety when not online, isolation from family and peer groups, loss of work, and periods of deep depression. The fantasy world of the Internet helps them to psychologically escape unpleasant feelings or stressful situations. The more depressed a person gets the more chances there are, that they might use internet or watch television for filling the void.

Television addiction becomes a problem when a person does not want to watch TV but experiences an uncontrollable impulse to start or continue watching; while other priorities might be suffering. The withdrawal symptoms come in form of anxiety; watching TV over long periods of time causes lack of motivation and feelings of listlessness, depression, and anger.

Preventive Measures

On Individual Level:

Develop the skills to resist substances/dependences when offered, strengthen personal commitments against use, and increase social competency (e.g., in communications, peer relationships, self-efficacy, and assertiveness), in conjunction with reinforcement of attitudes against use. Avoid company of individuals with criminal mind or activities; or those who encourage the unwanted behavior/action.

In the Family:

Better family communication skills, realistic expectations, appropriate discipline styles, firm and consistent rule enforcement, and other family management approaches

should be practiced. Consistent rules, discipline, talking to children about drugs, monitoring their activities, getting to know their friends, understanding their problems and concerns, and being involved in their learning helps. The importance of the parent-child relationship continues through adolescence and beyond.

In School/ College/University:

Academic failure is strongly associated with drug abuse. Prevention programs in schools/colleges focus on student's social and academic skills, including enhancing peer relationships, self-control, coping, and drug-refusal skills. If possible, such programs should be integrated into the school's academic program, to strengthen students' bonding to the school and reducing their likelihood of dropping out. Adolescents should be guided by interactive methods, such as peer discussion groups, rather than didactic teaching techniques alone.

In the Community:

Prevention programs work at the community level with civic, religious, law enforcement, and other government organizations to enhance anti-drug norms and pro-social behaviors. Coordinated prevention efforts across settings to communicate consistent messages through school, work, religious institutions, and the media are helpful. Messages that reach youth through multiple settings can strongly impact community norms. Community-based programs also typically include development of policies or enforcement of regulations, mass media efforts, and community-wide awareness programs.

Human Exploitation:
Human Smuggling/Trafficking:

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fueled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

Pakistan is one of the sources of transit and

destination for men, women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Parents sell their daughters into domestic servitude or prostitution to pay off debts. Pakistani women and men migrate illegally to Gulf States, Iran, and Greece for low-skilled work as domestic servants or in the construction industry. Fraudulent job offers are made and a high fee is charged during recruit-ment. However, some find themselves in condi-tions of involuntary servitude or debt bondage once abroad, including restrictions on move-ment, non-payment of wages, threats, and physi-cal or sexual abuse.

Pakistani girls are trafficked to the Middle East for sexual exploita-tion. Pakistan is also a destination for women and children from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, and Nepal trafficked

FOR SALE

primarily for forced labor to the Gulf States. Women kidnapped at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border were being sold in the marketplace for Rs.600 per kilogram. Orphaned girls are sold as 'wives' to men who may resell them. An alarming number of Asian women are smuggled to UK for 'mujra' clubs and are being lured into prostitution. Asian women are also sold to North American brothels for $16,000 each.

Bonded Labor:

The country's largest human exploitation problem is that of bonded labor, which is concentrated in Sindh and Punjab provinces. Brick kilns, carpet-making, agriculture, fishing, mining, leather tanning, and produc-tion of glass bangles; all have bonded labor. Victims of bonded labor, include men, women, and children of varied ages. Forced marriages and women traded between tribal groups to settle disputes or as payment is a norm.

Prostitution:

Growing unemployment and inflation and

the resulting rise in poverty have led many towards the flesh market. The local sex industry comprising prostitutes has also grown in recent years. The women are available for services at meager amounts. These red-light districts are for locals as well as foreigners.

Chinese and local bordellos often operating as 'massage parlors' or 'beauty salons'; are spread across Pakistan. Exploiters of the sex industry are starting up a new trend of 'call girls' and 'escorts'. These are girls assigned for social purposes, or by large companies intending to please their 'clients'. Many a times these girls and boys are used as bribe; to get projects and future assignments. Some of them are either college students or graduates looking for employment and belong to respectable families.

Underground sexual exploitation of boys has also been reported to be widespread within the country. Peer pressure is another important factor, particularly in the cases of zenanas and chawas (boys with transvestite and feminine characteristics), who make up the majority of boy victims of prostitution. Boys are also subjected to prostitution when under financial duress and the child labor.

Illicit Relationships:

College and university life is characterized as being more independent and getting opportunities of increased social mixing. Coeducation offers boys and girls the opportunity to interact amongst each other with valid reasons. Moreover, many of them reside independently, either in hostels or private accommodations away from their families. Others who continue to reside with their families may be less supervised by parents than when they were in school.

Moreover, college life is characterized by celebrations of different kinds. For most of the youth, college represents a shift towards opportunities to form new friendships and to experience romantic relationships. Factors associated with these relations are increased interaction with peers, access to resources and chances of being exposed to wrong company that may lead to dire consequences. Exposure to drugs, pornographic materials,

29

prostitution, hidden marriages, alcohol and other illicit activities may also be introduced during this growing-up phase.

Influencing factors that lead the youth into immoral relationships:

- Life style that encourages immoral activities; bad company primarily
- Unable to distinguish between good or bad
- Lack of awareness and ignorance about religious values, beliefs and limits
- "Go figure it out for yourself", an attitude of parents with unhealthy boundaries
- Lack of grooming and disciplining by parents
- Lack of awareness; parents and youth are unaware of the moral threats within the society In dating populations, psychological/emotional violence is considered a "normalized" practice by youth. This may reflect in:
- Hostile attitude (e.g., refusing to discuss a problem, battering/ physical abuse)
- Dominating or intimidating the partner (e.g., threatening to harm the partner's friends, informing their family etc.)
- Degrading and insulting(e.g. name calling, emotional abuse, unabashed insults)
- Restrictive control (e.g., asking the partner insistently where he/she has been, who are they meeting, stalking through phone calls or physically following)
- Forcing into acts the other person is not comfortable with (e.g. sexual advancements, hidden marriage, associating with other unknown and intimidating people)

The violence in dating relationships includes verbal aggression which may lead into physical violence. Students involved in dating relations may indulge into immoral activities. This increases the chances of misuse of technology (As discussed in the aforementioned topics).

To take advantage of ignorant and naïve youth, the mafia groups in this regard are becoming well established. They cleverly involve young boys and girls in such relationships; and later use the shared information

with the partner (in weaker moments) to exploit. The planted partner is often a member of the gang and is trained to exploit. This information in form of recordings and photographs is later used to blackmail the victim. These students are then forced to lead a life of trapping others, into the professions of drug dealing and prostitution.

Invasion of Privacy:

There is part of a person's life that one either chooses to or desires to be private; some are benign aspects while the other much darker. With the changing times and technological advancements, invasion of privacy is becoming a norm. Hidden cameras, mostly installed for security; changing room mirrors, bugging private areas, and other networks probe and privacy that everyone has a right to. Technology becomes a menace when it takes away the freedom to just be!
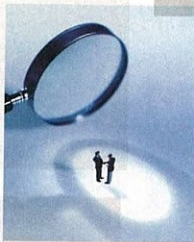
Conclusion:

Media and technology have a large impact on the youth of today. Not only do they utilize technological devices to improve their education and communication networks but it also exposes youth to violence, sexually explicit content, substance abuse, body image portrayal, and stereotyping. Although regulations do exist, parents are a large driving force in this realm of safety.

While most parents are aware of the need to "street proof" children, many are unaware of their children's on-line activities and of the potential dangers of cyberspace. Harassment and stalking through the phone, has become a menace of this time and age. Although the proportion of such exploitation is small; its effects cannot be ignored altogether. The indiscriminate use of mobile phones is causing environmental pollution, and has also become one of the major causes of road accidents. Researchers have revealed that free SMS service and free night packages are damaging the lifestyles of youth, especially
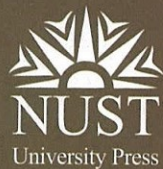
31

The Perils of Growing Up

students. Majority of the students use the special all night packages, which affects their studies and attendance in colleges and schools in the morning. To minimize risks associated with the use of mobile phones; this convenience should only be used on as per need basis. Owning a mobile is a responsibility that should only be given when a child is fully aware of the consequences of its negative use.

Communicating healthy boundaries before handing over the device to a youngster is essential. It is more than just a device it is a responsibility and risk; shared by the parents and their children. Explaining the obvious risks and expectations associated with ownership of the device, ensures responsible use.

Peer influence has a profound effect on the attitudes, choices, and behavior of teens. One of the strongest predictors of adolescent behavior is based on their perception about the actual behavior of friends. It is essential to keep a check on the kind of 'friends' children have in reality and on cyber space.

Most universities and colleges will expel students from their premises if suspected of violating rules, or when doing poorly in studies; attention should be paid to the root cause. Jeopardizing one's personal and professional life for the networking systems is not quite worth the risk; that one bears to, 'be connected'!