

A close-up photograph of a man's face and hands. He is wearing a grey hoodie and a black leather jacket. His hands are clasped together in front of his mouth, and he has a tattoo on his left wrist. The image is split horizontally by a white, torn-edge banner.

ADDICTIONS

A TALKING POINTS LESSON FOR
ENGLISH READING & SPEAKING

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Introduction

What is addiction?

What kinds of things can people be addicted to?

Are you addicted to anything?

Reading

What is addiction?

The dictionary defines it as: The condition of being enslaved, either physically or psychologically, to a substance or behaviour that can cause the user bodily or mental harm.

In the past when people thought of addiction they thought of drug addicts — people addicted to heroin or cocaine — unable to work or live within normal society and living in desperate conditions.

But later we came to recognise people addicted to drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes as people with an addiction.

Later still we found that people could be addicted to gambling. Many a man or woman has lost everything they had in their life — a job, a home, even a marriage — because of an addiction to gambling.

But now addiction experts have discovered a whole new array of addictions. One of these newer types is internet addiction.

This affects many people but often boys and young men have fallen victim to this. Usually, in the form of online gaming, it encourages boys and young men to give up everything else in their life for the pleasure of one more hit.

Many of these young men have lost the ability to communicate on a normal level and lead anti-social lives. In some rare cases, victims become violent if they do not have access to a computer and internet connection.

Some countries have taken necessary action against this and set up Internet Addiction camps.

Places where boys can 'dry out' and rejoin the real world.

People are also becoming addicted to food. This is a very difficult addiction to treat because people must consume food. It's not like we can just stop eating.

Some scientists argue that this is because much of our modern food has a lot of added sugar in it. It is not so much an addiction to food as an addiction to sugar. But it is slowly killing thousands of people every year as they cannot stop eating.

Fast-food companies are in every country and soft drinks exist all over the world. They accept no fault in this and still spend millions on advertising.

Another strange new addiction — in complete contrast to food addiction — is exercise.

Believe it or not, many people are now becoming addicted to doing exercise. Whereas most people would regard three or four visits to the gym as perfectly adequate, exercise addicts are going many more times than that. Some would even say they live in the gym.

Early morning workouts, followed by a run to the office, then a short work-out at lunchtime and then a marathon session in the gym after work.

It doesn't sound possible, but this is extremely bad for a person's health. Heart conditions, lung problems and even mental issues such as anxiety and depression have been reported.

Many psychiatrists argue that addictions are caused because of some trauma that happened to the person during childhood. Many of these people get addicted to something in their adult life or in their late teenage years and use the addiction as a way of dealing with the trauma from the early part of their life.

Essential Vocabulary

enslaved	physically	psychologically
substance	behaviour	bodily
harm	heroin	cocaine
desperate	gambling	experts
array	pleasure	one more hit
anti-social	violent	access
consume	contrast	perfectly adequate
marathon session	extremely	lung
anxiety	depression	psychiatrists
trauma	childhood	teenage

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

Questions

1. What addictions are prevalent in your country? Is there any help provided for these people?
 2. Are you addicted to anything? Think of all the things you consume or do every single day — are these addictions?
 3. What should be done about people who have addiction problems? Is there any help for them?
 4. Cigarettes and alcohol are legal in most countries of the world. But thousands of people get addicted to these things and they often have very serious health issues. Do you think it's right that cigarettes and alcohol are legal at all? Why/why not?
 5. Is there a difference between being addicted to drugs and being addicted to the internet? What are the differences? What are the similarities?
 6. How can doctors treat someone addicted to food? After all, we all have to eat. How can someone stop eating so much?
 7. How can we treat a young man who has internet addiction? What steps should he take?
 8. Do you think there is no hope for someone addicted to drugs? Why/why not?
 9. How is it possible to become addicted to exercise? Why did someone like this get addicted to exercise?
 10. Can we just ban all harmful substances? Is this a good idea? Why/why not?
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Teacher's Notes

The ideas behind addiction—and addiction theory—are not well-known in most countries.

Addicts are often seen as evil and nothing else, rarely there is any sympathy.

Some of the themes here you may not be allowed to discuss in certain countries—drugs, gambling.

And of course, most of the themes here may be better suited to adults. But I leave all of that to your discretion.

Start by asking the simple questions at the beginning of the lesson. When you ask if anyone is addicted to anything you might be met with a firm no from all the students. Then mention things like cigarettes, chocolate, computer games, social media.

Credits

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