

01 Addictions

Track 01-1

Long ago, I started playing a game called Maple Story. I played primarily to help my son. He was only allowed to play for a few hours a week, so I figured I would log on to his character and help him get some gold and other items. Well, I soon found it harder and harder to stop. I believe that is the definition¹ of an addiction: The more you do something, the more difficult it is to stop doing it even if it harms you.

Addictions come in many forms. Some people are addicted² to eating chocolate. That isn't necessarily a bad thing unless it becomes too expensive or too unhealthy. Other people are addicted to smoking or drinking. These kinds of addictions can have harmful results.



Whenever I go on a trip to California, I see huge billboards promoting the California lottery on the sides of the roads. The government is promoting gambling. It seems like the government is encouraging behavior that could become addictive to some people. You would think that the government would try to help people avoid behavior that could be addictive.



TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Have you ever felt that you were addicted to something?
- 2 What did you do to break that addiction?
- 3 Were you successful at ending your addiction?
- 4 Do other people who are addicted to things make you feel uncomfortable? Explain.
- 5 Do you know people who do not realize they are addicts?
- 6 Do people become resentful³ if you or others try to get them to give up their addictions? Or are they grateful for your help?
- 7 Are there addictions that seem harmless on the surface but actually cause great harm?
- 8 Can you be addicted to a good thing? Explain.
- 9 How does the government take advantage of⁴ our addictive behavior?
- 10 What are some signs of addiction?
- 11 How can a person break his or her addictions?

¹ **definition** the meaning of a word or phrase ² **addicted** unable or unwilling to stop using or doing something ³ **resentful** full of anger or bitterness ⁴ **take advantage of** to manipulate; to profit from

- 1 Have you ever felt that you were addicted to something?

Well, I guess texting⁵ is an addiction. I feel the need to text all the time. It's gotten so bad that I see texts floating in the air when I close my eyes.

- 2 What did you do to break that addiction?

When my grades at school started to tank⁶, I gave my phone to my best friend to hold for me. But that didn't work out well at all. I begged her to give it back to me on the same day. I felt terrible about that.

- 3 Were you successful at ending your addiction?

No way. There's no way I could live without texting my friends. Not being able to text would be terrible. It would be like being stranded⁷ on a desert island.

- 4 Do other people who are addicted to things make you feel uncomfortable? Explain.

Well, not really. I totally understand them. After all, we all have to do the things that make us happy. For my brother, he has his games. Mom has her soap operas. Dad has his golf. So what's the big deal⁸?

- 5 Do you know people who do not realize they are addicts?

Yeah, one of my friends is totally addicted to computer games. All he does in his free time is play game after game. Whenever I call him up and want to hang out with him, he tells me that he's too busy because he's playing his favorite game.

- 6 Do people become resentful if you or others try to get them to give up their addictions? Or are they grateful for your help?

I think some people could become upset or resent⁹ others getting involved in their personal business. But, on the other hand, other people might realize that they have a serious problem which they are unable to stop by themselves. They might welcome any help that their friends and family members could provide to them.

- 7 Are there addictions that seem harmless on the surface but actually cause great harm?

I think dieting too much could cause a person great harm. A lot of people want to lose weight. That's good. But what happens if they diet too much and lose too much weight? That can't be good for their bodies.

- 8 Can you be addicted to a good thing? Explain.

Well, yeah. Reading is a good addiction. So is playing Sudoku¹⁰ or some sort of mind game that increases brain strength. So maybe not all addictions are bad after all.

- 9 How does the government take advantage of our addictive behavior?

The government promotes some types of gambling, such as lotteries. Also, the government makes people pay high taxes on items such as alcohol and cigarettes. So the government is making money off of some people's addictions.

- 10 What are some signs of addiction?

I think some typical signs of addiction are when the activity, person, or thing is the most important thing on your mind. You start to justify why it is so important to you and then fiercely defend your attraction to it.

- 11 How can a person break his or her addictions?

First, the person needs to accept that he has a problem. Then, he should get some information from books, other people, or the Internet on how others have fought the same or similar types of problems. Next, he should make a plan on how to combat it. The last step is actively working to end the addiction.

5 **texting** the act of sending a text message 6 **tank** to fall dramatically; to do very poorly
7 **stranded** left all alone somewhere 8 **big deal** something of great importance; used ironically to indicate that something is unimportant 9 **resent** to feel annoyed about someone or something because one thinks they are unfair 10 **sudoku** a number puzzle

One of the most important relationships we have in our lives is the one that we have with our parents. When we are young, our parents care for us. As they age, however, the roles often become reversed¹. It is the children who care for the needs of their parents. Thank goodness my parents in California are happy and healthy. I call them at LEAST once a week and visit them whenever I can.

For years, my mother-in-law has lived with my family. This arrangement provides many benefits for both of us. She gains a sense of purpose and meaning by caring for us, and we care for her as she becomes frailer². This arrangement works because she is such a kind, loving woman. It's a joy living with her. I have never heard her complain or say a mean word about anyone. How would it be if she were not as kind? Would our living arrangement be different?

Not everyone is as lucky as I am. Many people don't have such a good relationship with their parents. In America, it is rare to see

grown children living with their aged parents. Many older people live on their own or in retirement communities. They want their independence and freedom, and they don't want to be a burden on their children. And most adult children want to live on their own.



TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 What is the best way to treat our aging parents?
- 2 What are some advantages of living with our aging parents?
- 3 What are some disadvantages of living with our aging parents?
- 4 Is placing the elderly in retirement homes an appropriate way to deal with them as they age?
- 5 How would you like your children to treat you as you grow older? Do you want to live with them or to live apart from them?
- 6 When you were young, who was your favorite elderly relative?
- 7 Do you know anyone who gives a lot of help and care for his or her elderly parents?
- 8 How often do you visit your elderly parents?
- 9 Do you feel that you have an obligation to take care of your parents when they get older?

¹ **become reversed** to become the opposite of a prior situation ² **frail** weak; lacking strength or energy

1 What is the best way to treat our aging parents?

It may sound cruel³, but I plan on putting my folks in a retirement community. There's no way I can deal with their health needs. I'm no doctor. I don't know the slightest thing about caring for an elderly person. It's just not fair to my own kids. I mean, if I spend all my time looking after my folks, who will look after my kids? And what about my life? Don't I have the right to enjoy my life? Sure, my parents gave me life. But I can't live my entire life like I owe them.

2 What are some advantages of living with our aging parents?

I think that our aging parents can help us raise our children. This is especially true when the husband and wife are at work or are busy doing other activities. Parents also can provide years of experience in a number of different fields.

3 What are some disadvantages of living with our aging parents?

There are so many disadvantages that I can't even count them. Many old-timers go senile⁴. They start breaking stuff and getting lost. I can't leave my work suddenly to go to look for my dad. If I did, I'd lose my job. And they need constant medical attention. All those tubes and bags and stuff. I can't handle that. And they get real ornery⁵. They start snapping at you and yelling random stuff. I don't want to get in fights with them in front of the kids. I want the kids to remember them as kind and caring. Are those enough reasons for you?

4 Is placing the elderly in retirement homes an appropriate way to deal with them as they age?

Yeah, like I said, they have the staff to deal with the problems the elderly have. If there is a medical emergency, they can handle it there. They make sure people don't just wander off⁶. They make sure people eat right and get bathed. I really think my parents would be better off⁷ there than at my own home.

5 How would you like your children to treat you as you grow older? Do you want to live with them or to live apart from them?

I don't want to ruin their lives. Once they are on their own, I won't bother them one bit. If they want me to visit them, then that would be fine. But as for living with them full time, there is no way that I would do that.

6 When you were young, who was your favorite elderly relative?

I had an aunt who was fabulous⁸. She loved kids, and we loved her right back. She would bring balloons when she came over to visit us, and then she would twist them into cool shapes. She would bring us candy as well. I loved her so much.

7 Do you know anyone who gives a lot of help and care for his or her elderly parents?

Yes, my sister gives a lot of her time and energy to our parents. They are both quite old, so they need to be looked after a lot. She lives quite far from them—about a 10-hour drive—but she still spends time with them very regularly. She is a great daughter.

8 How often do you visit your elderly parents?

I live very far from my parents—almost halfway around the world. Still, I make sure to go home and visit them at least once a year. I am lucky because I can take a lot of time off and spend it with them. I usually go home for about one month every summer. I think I am going to try to visit them also in the winter from now as well.

9 Do you feel that you have an obligation to take care of your parents when they get older?

Personally, I don't feel that way at all. However, I understand when other people look after their parents. Some people have their aging parents move in with them. I could never do that, but I respect people who do.

3 **cruel** mean; violent; evil **4** **go senile** to become forgetful or absent minded in one's old age

5 **ornery** bad-tempered; crabby **6** **wander off** to roam; to walk away to no particular place

7 **be better off** to be in a better situation **8** **fabulous** wonderful