

Social Networking: Case Study

The following clinical description is fictional. Any resemblance to real cases is purely coincidental.

Scenario

James is an 18-year-old, single Asian male with no previous psychiatric history. Eight months ago, he began feeling anxious, sad, and always tired. James has lost interest in leisure activities, except for social media, especially Facebook. He and other family members are in conflict over the amount of time he spends online. James spends more than eight hours a day chatting, watching videos, looking at photos, and sharing posts. Facebook is consuming his life, and disrupting his sleep and school activities. James describes his use as a way to cope with unpleasant emotions, but feels it is affecting his general functioning.

Practice question 1:

What additional information do you need to support James?

Possible answer:

Find out if there are any underlying mental, physical or familial concerns. A family-centred care approach might help determine any issues James and his family are experiencing. Some youth use technology to cope with a mental health problem or other stressors. For example, youth who feel isolated and have challenging relationships, or are dealing with family disruption, may escape their problems by immersing themselves in online communities. The internet can fulfil the need for socialization, connection and wellbeing; therefore, people with problematic internet use should be considered as clients for treatment related to addictive behavior through the lens of process addiction [1].

Practice Question 2:

What would a treatment plan for James look like?

Practice Direction and Recommendation

Service providers:

- Apply assessment tools and analyze results.
- Obtain information from family, school, and community in general.
- Access to resources, refer to specialist if necessary.
- Provide recommendations for the client.

Provide counselling for James according to treatment modalities that you are trained in, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavioural Therapy or Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy.

Client:

- Use alternative strategies to cope with stress and anxiety such as exercising, listening to music or relaxation techniques.
- Engage with activities that provide you joy. Join a school club, take part in school, church, or other social activities. Become a volunteer.
- Find ways to get engaged in your community.
- Go for counselling and work with the counsellor to develop a treatment plan that is realistic and you can stick to.
- Explore resources.

References

1. Strittmatter, E., Kaess, M., Parzer, P., Fischer, G., Carli, V., Hoven, C. W., Wasserman C., Sarchiapone, M., Durkee, T., Apter, A., Brunner, R., Cosman, D., Sisask, M., Värnik, P., & Wasserman, D. (2015). Pathological internet use among adolescents: Comparing gamers and non-gamers. *Psychiatry Research*, 228(1), 128-135. [doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2015.04.029](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2015.04.029)