

Logoff and Live a Fun Life

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Each year, college students become more dependent on the internet. Students rely on the internet for communicating with friends, family, and professors. They download lecture notes, find research information, and submit assignments through their computers. Online newspapers help us keep in contact with our hometowns, and digital media helps us keep up with our favorite sports teams, music bands, and television shows. Personally, I can not imagine life without these conveniences. It is hard to remember what life was like before the World-Wide-Web came along.

While the benefits of the internet are amazing, there is also a dark side. Some college students are now relying on the internet as their primary way of feeling connected to others and fulfilling their social needs. Chat rooms, message forums, and online video games often provide a fun way to interact with other people. Phrases like “LOL”, “BRB”, and “IMO” are becoming a normal part of today’s pop-culture. The question becomes: are online relationships replacing real face-to-face relationships? If so, what are the consequences of this?

Consider the following questions . . . Do you derive much of your pleasure and satisfaction in life from being online? Have any of your friends or family members complained about the time you spend at your computer? Have your personal relationships suffered as a result of spending too much time on the internet? Do you find yourself either avoiding or missing out on real-life social opportunities? Do you use the internet as a way of coping with loneliness?

In many ways, the internet can provide a “safe” way to socialize with people. Someone is usually available online to chat with, and therefore, we don’t have to go through the anxiety-provoking task of making new friends and possibly experiencing rejection. The internet also provides a sense of anonymity so that others will not notice our weaknesses and flaws. We are also free to

use our imagination when thinking about others whom we interact with online. In other words, we can see others the way we want to see them. Overall, it is easy to see how the internet can be a convenient and safe way to meet one's social needs.

While there are fewer interpersonal risks associated with internet use, the concern is that students who rely on the internet may be missing out on important opportunities to make real friendships and enhance their social skills. College is an important time where people make life-long friendships, gain valuable life experience, and develop new skills while forming an identity for themselves. Personal growth is a highly valued aspect of the college experience, and much of the personal growth comes from our learning experiences in dealing with other people. Many college graduates also discover that potential employers are very much interested in someone's social and interpersonal skills when deciding who to hire for a job.

Meeting new people, making new friends, and forming new relationships is never easy. But it is important to take some risks and use the college experience to practice these skills. Once you graduate and leave school, there may be fewer opportunities to meet new people and become socially involved. Logoff the internet and take advantage of the many social organizations and activities that ISU has to offer. Your time in college is short, so be sure to make the most of it. Someday when you look back on your college days, your memories of the people you meet will matter much more than the time you spent on the computer.

Enjoy the internet, but remember . . . there is no substitute for real life experiences.