

Self-Help Support Groups: Internet & Technology Addicts Anonymous (ITAA & IT-Anon)

****Resource for the People Struggling with Internet & Technology, Social Media, Smartphone, and Streaming Addiction AND their Loved Ones**

- ❖ Self-help is a critical part of the recovery process. Self-help groups can assist callers with the tools for recovery by providing support, direction, motivation, resources and a sense that they are not dealing with the gambling problem alone.

Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous

- ❖ Welcome to Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous. ITAA is a 12-step fellowship of individuals who support each other in recovering from compulsive internet and technology use. Our single purpose is to abstain from compulsive internet and technology use and to help others find freedom from this addiction.
- ❖ Join one of our many daily meetings over the phone or online, or attend one of our face-to-face meetings in a local city. Meetings are free to attend, and we have no membership requirements beyond the desire to stop compulsive internet and technology use. Meetings are safe, secure, and anonymous. Most of our meetings are in English, and we also have meetings in French, Dutch, Spanish, Russian, German, Hebrew, and Arabic. The following types of Internet & Technology addictions discussed include:
 - ✓ **Social Media Addictions**
 - ✓ **Smartphone Addictions**
 - ✓ **Streaming Addictions**
- ❖ If you are wondering whether you may have an internet and technology addiction, you can review some [common signs and symptoms](#) or read our [guide for newcomers](#).
- ❖ Again, welcome. We hope that what you find here may be of help to you. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

A Guide for Newcomers

Welcome! If you have just arrived to ITAA and are looking for relief from internet and technology addiction, these are practices for the first 90 days which many of us have found helpful.

1. **Attend 90 meetings in 90 days.** ITAA offers a variety of different meeting types and times. Take the time to find ones that are right for you. We recommend attending six meetings in a short time frame before deciding whether this program is right for you.
2. **Abstain.** Sobriety in ITAA is a process of discovery and looks different for each addict. We encourage you to talk to other members about their own experiences. Some of us have found the following guideline helpful as a starting point in our own recovery: *"I will abstain from all internet and technology use except for what is strictly necessary for work, finances, health, recovery, or family. I will not use internet and technology for the purposes of entertainment or satisfying my curiosity. I will also avoid internet and technology use that helps me numb my emotions. If I am uncertain whether an activity is strictly necessary, I will consult others first."* To help us understand whether something is necessary, we may also ask ourselves the following questions: "Is it necessary? Is it necessary to do with technology? Is it necessary to do now?"

3. **One day at a time.** Some of us have found it unhelpful to count sobriety in the first 90 days, particularly as we are still learning what sobriety means for us. For other members, counting days can help keep us accountable to our fellows, give us a measure of progress, and give us clarity when we have broken our commitments around sobriety. One way or the other, what's important is that we focus on staying sober one day at a time. If we slip, we share honestly, let go of shame, practice acceptance and self-compassion, and come back to these suggestions. Every moment is a chance for a fresh start.
4. **Make daily outreach calls.** In ITAA, recovery is a fellowship-wide process, and daily outreach calls help us stay connected, supported, and sober. There are several phone lists other members can share. When we hear somebody share something in a meeting that resonates with us, afterwards we ask that person for their phone number or find them on an outreach list and arrange a call.
5. **Do service.** Take on a service position, even a small one. Volunteer to keep time or to lead a meeting. Service keeps us sober.
6. **Find a sponsor and work the steps.** We have benefitted from asking somebody we resonate with to sponsor us and working the 12 steps together with them, which is the vital and transformative basis of our long-term recovery from our addiction. A great way to connect with potential sponsors is to make outreach calls with other members, and you may wish to talk to a potential sponsor more than once or talk to multiple people to find the right fit. As we are a growing fellowship, some members have had success finding sponsors in other 12 programs while consulting with a more experienced ITAA member on tech-specific issues.

Those of us who have followed all of these suggestions have noticed great changes, and have begun to experience freedom. After the first 90 days, we may decide to reevaluate some of these actions. We might write more nuanced guidelines for our sobriety, or reintroduce certain internet and technology activities with the support of our fellows. We might consider reducing from 7 meetings a week to a lower number. We may also decide to continue with the above actions for an additional 90 days, or longer. Having begun to see the richness of a life free from addiction, we are able to engage with these decisions from a more grounded, honest, and sober place.

Additional resources:

[Symptoms of Internet and Technology Addiction](#)

[Tools of Recovery](#)

[ITAA Recovery Stories](#)

[A Guide to Outreach Calls](#)

[A Guide to Withdrawals](#)

[Stepwriting resources](#)

[A Guide to Sponsorship](#)

Internet and Technology Addiction

You may be wondering whether you're an internet and technology addict. The following questions can give you some food for thought and act as a guide to judge your situation. If you answer yes to most of the following questions, ITAA may be helpful for you.

1. Do you hide or lie about your internet and technology use?
2. Do you feel emotionally absent when you are not using internet and technology?
3. Have you ever taken a break from internet and technology use and binged uncontrollably upon your return?
4. When upset, do you soothe yourself with internet and technology or plans to use internet and technology?
5. Is internet and technology use the first thing you do when you wake up?
6. Is internet and technology use the last thing you do before you go to bed?
7. Do you set limits around internet and technology use and then break them, using longer than intended?
8. Do you lose hours of sleep to internet and technology use?
9. Have you called in sick or late to work or skipped classes to use the internet or technology?
10. Have you sworn off an internet and technology behavior, uninstalled or blocked it, and later returned to it?
11. Do you feel guilt and shame around your internet and technology use?
12. Does internet and technology use contribute to the avoidance or abandonment of personal relationships?
13. Do you find yourself unable to focus on anything other than internet and technology?
14. Have you suffered financial or career problems from compulsively using internet and technology?
15. Do you wish you weren't using the internet and technology at the same time as feeling you can't stop?
16. Do you have internet and technology binges that last all night, or for multiple days in a row?
17. Do you avoid social events to use the internet or technology?
18. Do you eat while using internet and technology or forget to eat while using internet and technology?
19. Do you have intense feelings (highs, lows, anger, fear) while using internet and technology?
20. Do you use the internet and technology to numb your feelings?

Most of us who now identify as internet and technology addicts answer yes to many of these questions. If you have answered yes to several of them, you might consider reading our [guide for newcomers](#) to begin exploring the practical solutions our program can offer.

Here are some additional questions that can also help you identify further obsessive and compulsive behaviors you might have around internet and technology use. Many of us have answered yes to these questions as well.

- Do you find yourself obsessively researching a topic, product or decision online, beyond any productive return?
- Do you watch videos, movies or tv shows online without being able to stop?
- Do you get sucked into internet and technology activities without realizing it?
- Do you use internet and technology to disappear from the world?
- Do you binge on internet and technology right before a big deadline?
- Do you neglect personal hygiene when using internet and technology?
- Do you feel irritable and restless when you don't use internet and technology for a few days, or a few hours?
- Do you envy people who can use internet and technology in moderation?
- Do you feel like you are constantly running out of time?
- Have you suffered any physical pains from intense internet and technology use?
- Is anybody in your life worried by your internet and technology use?

If you answered yes to these questions, we encourage you to participate in our meetings to learn whether this fellowship may help you recover from any problematic or destructive patterns you are suffering from.

Social Media Addiction

Many ITAA members discover they have a problem with social media. Here are some questions to help you understand if this is true for you.

1. If you go someplace new, do you feel an uncontrollable urge to document it on social media?
2. Do you always photograph certain activities for social media, such as your meals or workouts?
3. When around friends, are you constantly picking up your phone or checking your computer to post about what is happening or to check to see what is happening to other people?
4. Do you spend more time reading about other people's fun activities or posting about your own fun activities, than you do actually spending time on your own fun activities?
5. Do you spend more time posing for or editing the perfect picture of how you are achieving your goals (such as fitness) than you do working towards your goals?
6. Do you intend to just briefly check your Facebook or Instagram feed and then look up to discover hours have passed?
7. Do you intend to go on social media for something specific, and then realize later that you have spent most of your time watching videos, photos, memes or humor that you weren't intending to and weren't related to what you are intending to accomplish in life?
8. Do you find yourself following attractive or important people on social media to make up for your lack of connection in real life?
9. Do you spend a lot of time interacting with people on the Internet that you are uncomfortable talking to in person?
10. Are you distracted and disengaged when you are around people you say you value and that you enjoy their company?

If you have answered yes to several of these questions, you might consider reading our [guide for newcomers](#) to begin exploring the practical solutions our program can offer.

(Continues on Next Page)

Smartphone Addiction

Many ITAA members find that smartphone addiction is one of their problems. Here are some questions that may help you decide if this is an issue for you.

1. Do you check your smartphone as the first thing you do when you wake up, and the last thing you do before going to sleep?
2. Do you go to sleep with your phone next to you like a partner?
3. Do you instantly grab your phone the second you hear a notification or get a text message?
4. Do you feel anxious if you leave the house without your phone or headphones, or if you don't have it sitting next to you?
5. Have you had joint pain or tendinitis from handling and texting your phone excessively?
6. Do you crave your phone and the sense of connection it offers when you are away from it?
7. Does your phone often distract you from basic functions, such as eating, going to the bathroom, walking or driving?
8. Do you revert to using your phone instead of being present with the people around you?
9. Have you tried to limit your phone usage with productivity apps or blocks yet gave in again after mounting frustration?
10. Do you feel like you're not living up to your potential or are you just getting by in life, and drowning this dissatisfaction with ever more staring at your phone?
11. Do you find yourself unconsciously reaching for, touching, or handling your phone?
12. Would you rather connect to your phone than to other people or yourself?

If you have answered yes to several of these questions, you might consider reading our [guide for newcomers](#) to begin exploring the practical solutions our program can offer.

(Continues on Next Page)

Streaming addiction

Many ITAA members find that streaming addiction is one of their problems. Here are some questions that may help you decide if this is an issue for you:

1. Have you ever watched or binged video content longer or more often than you intended?
2. Do you have urges to watch video or streaming content that you can't control or resist, despite your best efforts to the contrary?
3. Do you watch streaming videos every day?
4. Have you ever stayed up all night or spent all day streaming?
5. Have you ever watched at inappropriate times (such as the night before a big deadline, while driving, while with family or friends or when you're supposed to be working or studying)?
6. Have you ever spent extended periods of time watching content you didn't enjoy?
7. Have you ever tried to reduce, moderate or abstain from streaming activities just to start again, months, days or even hours later?
8. Do you use streaming video as a way to avoid other activities, including being productive, or doing other things you usually love to do?
9. Have you ever isolated yourself with your streaming behavior instead of maintaining or forming meaningful personal relationships?
10. Do you use streaming video to avoid or cope with your emotions?
11. Has your video streaming negatively affected your work, studies, social life, or ability to pursue your goals?
12. Have you ever neglected your basic needs (e.g. eating, sleeping, hygiene) because of your streaming behavior?
13. Has your streaming caused any health concerns? For example, loss of sleep, pain or stiffness from immobility, eye problems, deterioration in physical fitness, among others?
14. Has your video streaming caused any psychological issues, such as heightened anxiety, increased depression, or ability to focus on other things?
15. Have you ever felt guilty or ashamed about your streaming behaviors?
16. Have you ever lied to friends and family about your streaming behavior or hidden it from them?
17. Have you ever felt unreasonably upset, frustrated or anxious because you were not able to watch what you wanted or when you wanted?

If you have answered yes to several of these questions, you might consider reading our [guide for newcomers](#) to begin exploring the practical solutions our program can offer.

Phone/Online Meetings

Our meeting schedule can be found by visiting the web link below:

[Phone/Online Meetings – Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous \(internetaddictsanonymous.org\)](http://internetaddictsanonymous.org)

Meeting times are displayed in your local time zone. You can find the details for each meeting, including the video link, dial-in numbers, and meeting focus, by clicking on the meeting event in the calendar. Unless otherwise noted, our meetings are held in English. Below the calendar is an explanation of the color code.

Our meetings have screen-sharing turned off and encryption turned on. Hosts are able to mute and remove any disruptive participants. If you are hosting a meeting, we suggest you read ITAA's [guide on how to prevent and respond to disruption](#).

A guide to the meeting schedule's color code:

- **Blue** meetings are for internet and technology addicts, as well as for those who think they might be addicts. Newcomers are happily welcome.
- **Purple** meetings are for internet and technology addicts, newcomers, and non-addicts interested in ITAA's program of recovery from addiction. This can include friends, family, researchers, or journalists. Those who do not identify as internet and technology addicts may attend purple meetings as observers.
- **Orange** meetings are ITAA business meetings for discussing issues related to administration and service. They are open to any member of ITAA.
- **Grey striped** meetings are in a non-English language. Current non-English meetings include French, German, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, and Hebrew.

A guide to the different meeting names:

Many meetings on the calendar have unique names. This is a friendly way to help members distinguish the meetings from each other. Some meetings may have special formats, and you can hover over or click on a meeting to see the meeting details. If there are no meeting details, the meeting likely follows some version of the standard [meeting script](#). Each meeting is independent and has a slightly different flavor—if you're not sure which to join, you can try out a couple different meetings to see which ones resonate with you.

How do meetings work?

If you will be joining a meeting for the first time, there's no need to be nervous. Most of our meetings are very simple; each meeting has a chairperson who leads the meeting, and most meetings are one hour long. The chair and other volunteers read some opening statements, before we open the meeting for members to share. There is no requirement to share, and it's okay to just listen. You can share how you are doing, introduce yourself and what brought you to ITAA, or ask questions. Unless requested by the member sharing, we do not offer suggestions or comments in response to other's shares; we simply listen gratefully and non-judgmentally. At the end of the hour, the meeting will end with some closing statements, after which members usually stay on the line to talk casually, ask questions, and exchange contact details.

ITAA Meeting via Zoom - Orlando, FL - ITAA members/newcomers meetings

Wednesday's online via Zoom from 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Meeting link - (Serenity room):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87953109178?pwd=aytpU2VTTTRSdHFFU09yQjZEYkpKUT09>

Meeting ID 879 5310 9178

Dial-in passcode: 981762

For Family and Friends

We are glad you have found our website and are hearing the news that there is hope for addicted internet and technology users. If you are close to an internet and technology addict, you are likely already aware of the difficulty and pain that this condition can cause, not only for the addict themselves, but for those around them as well. Addiction is a serious problem that is harmful to everyone it touches.

First, no one is responsible for someone else's compulsive internet and technology use. As the Al-Anon slogan goes, "I didn't cause it, I can't control it, and I can't cure it."

You didn't cause it. Some people partly blame themselves for the dysfunctional behavior of their family members, particularly with addicts who are very quick to shift responsibility off themselves and blame others. Perhaps you shared online past times with your loved one, purchased them a computer or smart phone, or encouraged their activities, thinking it was a harmless leisure activity. Maybe you've been involved in some conflict and wonder if that has driven them to hide away in the internet. But no one is responsible for another person's behavior or mental disorders.

You can't control it. You may have already tried to talk to your friend or family member. Perhaps you have bargained with them, or given ultimatums. You have tried to help them see what damage they are doing to themselves and others. And none of it has worked. This is baffling to you. Why don't they seem to understand or care? Why can't they see what is obvious to you? This is actually a symptom of the disease of addiction, one that destines efforts for control to failure.

You can't cure it. We all would like to believe that we have the ability to help those we love. We often think that if we can just get the right information, figure out the right thing to say or do, perhaps change something about ourselves, we can fix the problem. People should be able to solve their problems. Why can't we do that with this one? There is a simple reason. There is no cure for addiction. It requires treatment. The recovery process is long and difficult. And there is **only one person** who can start that process: the one who is using the internet and technology compulsively. There are things you can do. Here are some suggestions that you may want to consider, that other family members and friends have found helpful:

1. **Get information.** The literature of recovery fellowships for family and friends of addicts (such as Al-Anon) has much helpful guidance, some of which is available online as well. There are people who have been in situations very similar to yours, who have learned much from them, and who are willing to share the lessons learned, their experience, strength and hope. We hope you avail yourself of such resources.
2. **Detach with love.** Putting energy into arguing with someone who is using internet and technology compulsively will not help either of you. Your loved one has a serious problem that you are powerless to control or cure, and that they will not get help for until they want it. As much as you love someone, you cannot force this process on another person.
3. **Stop enabling.** Paradoxically, at the same time people are arguing with, bargaining with or shaming a compulsive internet and technology user, they are often (perhaps without realizing it) supporting the addiction in many ways. Anything that shields an addict from the consequences of his or her behavior is enabling, and can include such basic things as providing food, shelter, money, companionship, housekeeping, and covering for education, employment and legal difficulties. Helping a compulsive internet and technology user keep up an appearance of normalcy is helping him or her continue in the destructive behavior. While you cannot change him or her, you can make changes for yourself. You can shift your energy away from enabling behaviors and toward meeting your own needs.
4. **Take care of yourself.** Whether or not your loved one ever stops using the internet and technology addictively, you deserve to have a healthy and happy life. Once you have accepted that you are powerless over their internet and technology behavior, you can begin to focus on what you can do for yourself, to accomplish your own goals. With the help of others who have been where you are, you can learn to set healthy boundaries and stick to them.

Family disease concept and codependency

Addiction has many times been described as a “family disease,” meaning that the addict or alcoholic is not the only one who suffers the problems of addiction and adopts dysfunctional behavior patterns. The people closest to the active addict suffer many of these effects, although in very different ways.

Codependency is an obsession with the needs of others to an unhealthy degree, and often develops in a relationship with someone who has an addiction disorder. Codependent people often cover up problems and shield partners from the consequences of their ill behavior, becoming extremely attached to controlling and fixing the person and winning his or her love and approval.

To heal from the destructive effects of a loved one’s internet and technology addiction, one must place a priority on his or her own basic needs. We encourage the use of literature, fellowships and counseling that guide those affected along a path of growth and healing.

ITT-Anon - Meetings for family and friends

A group of family and friends of internet and technology addicts hold regular weekly IT-Anon meetings to share their experience, strength and hope. If your loved one is suffering from internet and technology addiction and you would like to participate in IT-Anon’s meetings, they meet twice a week on Mondays at 9pm ET/3am CET and Wednesdays at 8am ET/2pm CET:

Every Monday Night:

9pm US Eastern Time

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81728740770#success>

Meeting ID: 817 2874 0770

Passcode: ITAnon4Me

Every Wednesday Morning:

8am US Eastern Time

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81728740770#success>

Meeting ID: 817 2874 0770

Passcode: ITAnon4Me

*Note: During the few weeks out of the year when the change to Daylight Savings Time is out of sync, we follow US Eastern Time.

For more information, you are welcome to reach out to itanonwelcome@gmail.com.

Other Helpful existing fellowships and resources

There are some existing fellowships and resources that may be very helpful for family and friends of internet and technology addicts. They can provide clear guidance on dealing with addiction in general, on healing from its effects, and on how to go about building a recovery fellowship. Meetings are available in many places. Al-Anon, Nar-Anon and CoDA each has its own recovery literature.

- **Al-Anon**. The Al-Anon fellowship has existed since 1951 for the family and friends of alcoholics. As the oldest and most well attended of the fellowships for family and friends, its members have a wide breadth and depth of experience to share on living with addicts and healing from the ill effects and dysfunctional patterns.
- **Nar-Anon**. The Nar-Anon fellowship has existed since 1968 for the family and friends of those suffering from addiction.
- **CoDA**. Co-Dependents Anonymous has existed since 1986 and is a fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships.

The Big Book of AA also has several chapters written for family and acquaintances of addicts:

Chapter 8 To Wives

Chapter 9 The Family Afterward

Chapter 10 To Employers