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Mar 2, 2007

Mobile phone addiction may cause psychological problems

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LONDON: Teenagers who use mobile phones for many hours a day - talking and sending messages or missed calls - may develop psychological disorders, says a study that advises "a reasonable use" for positive effects.

Francisca Lopez Torrecillas, a lecturer at the department of personality and psychological assessment and treatment of the University of Granada, surveyed several 18 to 25-year-olds from the city of Granada in Spain, said the health portal News Medical.

Torrecillas said this addiction was the result of social changes that occurred in the last decade. The main difference between this kind of addiction and alcoholism or drug addiction is that mobile phones do not apparently cause physical effects - only psychological ones.

"Mobile-addicts can be seriously affected at the psychological level but, as they don't show any physical symptoms, their disorder goes unnoticed to others," she said.

About 40 percent of young adults admit using their mobiles for more than four hours a day. Most of them say they spend "several hours a day" on their phones. Many of these people are "deeply upset" if their missed calls or messages do not elicit a response.

Mobile addicts tend to neglect important activities (job or studies), drift away from friends and close family, deny the problem and think about their mobile constantly when they do not have it with them, the study says.

"Most mobile-addicts are people with low self-esteem, have problems with developing social relations and feel the urge to be constantly connected and in contact with others," the study says.

Torrecillas says these people "can become totally upset when

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deprived of their mobile phones for sometime, regardless of the reason".

"Switching off their phones causes them anxiety, irritability, sleep disorders or sleeplessness, and even shivering and digestive problems," she added.

However, Torrecillas said that making "a reasonable use" of mobile phones can be even positive for teenagers, "since it enables them to keep their friends near and feel backed by their peers", but misusing this device "can have irreversible effects on the development of teenagers' personality".

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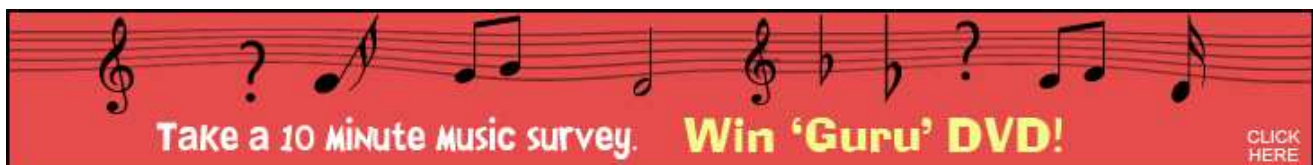
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