Internet and ASD

- Common Treatment Patterns
- Technology Concepts for Parents
- Internet Rules
- Internet Psychology
- Systemic Concepts from Family Therapy
- Behavior Analysis and Technology Use
- Digital Age and Our Brains
## Common Treatment Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy patterns can be developed from a young age</td>
<td>Internet is an unregulated society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same individual child’s strategies for “walking-talking” world supervision and safety can apply to the virtual world</td>
<td>Children often freely navigate this virtual world without the proper tools or supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can improve communication through the use of technology</td>
<td>When concerns arise, often treatment protocols don’t account for ASD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teens and young adults with ASD report meaningful online relationships</td>
<td>Providers and parents struggle to compete with the power of internet and technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bottom Line

- Understanding of a young person’s internet experience leads to:
  - Informed interventions that work!
    - Internet management using knowledge of:
      - autism
      - behavioral science
      - iGeneration
      - Internet psychology
  - Promotion of overall safety and happiness
Challenging behaviors relating to internet use are maintained by a behavioral function.

Consider executive functioning and impact of screens.

Addiction Vs. Perseveration (know the difference for treatment)
- CBT
- Brief Family Therapy
- ABA **
- Social Skills **

Internet Natives Vs. Immigrants – iGeneration concept

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think About</th>
<th>Be Specific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent or Supervised Use</td>
<td>Which websites are supervised or independent? How much time is supervised or independent? What does supervision look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filters</td>
<td>Always have a plan for when your child escapes a filter, finds a password, or breaks a rule – not all plans should be punitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start small with time limits and expand</td>
<td>This can go in either direction – start with how much internet is currently used and work up or down based on what a functional schedule dictates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t under estimate physiological needs</td>
<td>Body parts that need breaks from technology: Hands Eyes Lower Back Neck Brain!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multi-tasking: Is it really possible?

- Bowman’s article found:
  - Slows down information retention

- Your brain will learn what you practice!
  - Are you practicing multi-tasking or easy distractibility?

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Internet Psychology: Our Brains Online

- The Disinhibition Effect - John Suler, PhD
  - Dissociative Anonymity
  - Invisibility
  - Asynchronicity
  - Solipsistic Introjection
  - Dissociative Imagination
  - Minimizing Authority
  - Altering self, boundaries, safety

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# Internet and Neurological Differences (ASD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain Online</th>
<th>Impact with ASD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissociative Anonymity and Invisibility</td>
<td>Appearance (e.g. hygiene, age, physical traits) Non verbal cues (e.g. seeing or expressing feelings or reactions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronicity</td>
<td>Processing concerns Communicative timing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solipsistic Introjection</td>
<td>Theory of mind Perspective-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissociative Imagination, Minimizing Authority, and Altering Self</td>
<td>Social learning, awareness, and safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Family Systems

“[teens or children]...they are the first generation to be born into a technological world where nearly everything is computerized...” Larry Rosen, PhD

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**Family Systems and Generational Values**

- Values change with generations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation Labels</th>
<th>Simplified (stereotyped) Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers (1946-1964)</td>
<td>Hard work and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X (1965-1979)</td>
<td>Finding oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y (1980s-90s)</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Generation</td>
<td>Instant Gratification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iGeneration</td>
<td>Personalized Instant Gratification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Values Related to ASD Shared by Parents

Is technology/internet interfering or helping:

- Trust (building relationships)
- Education
- Communication (non-verbal cues, relationship maintenance)
- Boundaries
Systemic Intervention

- Intervening on challenging online behaviors often takes a village:
  - Parents
  - School
  - Peers
  - Family
- Cyberbullying Example: LGBTQ community and autism community are often most targeted group

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Self-Esteem and Identity

Examples

- World of Warcraft (WOW) – fan fiction
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s810b56LR70](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s810b56LR70)
- Video games – fan videos and art
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkiNqEMDXqw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkiNqEMDXqw)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ellqzoEMGwk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ellqzoEMGwk)

Case Example: MLP – My Little Pony

- MLP accumulated cultural meaning and prominence in asd community
  - Messages of friendship and inclusion
  - Bronies/Pegasisters
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Est3UNs-LIk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Est3UNs-LIk)

Everything that is connected to self-esteem, brings with it both positive and negative consequences in these online spaces

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Behavioral Functions of Gaming or Internet-use

- Serve behavioral functions (four functions of behavior)
  - Automatic (self), Escape, Attention, Tangible
- Online world:
  - is more appealing than non-electronic regulation strategies (self-maintained behaviors)
  - can boost self-esteem and offer relationship safety (escape-maintained behaviors)
  - can offer as a social medium for those who struggle in the social world (attention-maintained behaviors)
  - visually pleasing and personalized items are attained (tangible items)

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Concrete Ideas

- Ideas from parents about managing technology world
  - 15 min non-tech per hour of tech
  - 3-4 non-tech family dinners/week (30-45 min long)
  - Weekly 10-15 min tech chats without actual tech present, between parent/child
    - 5-7.5 min. for parent, 5-7.5 min. for child
    - Talk about what’s going on the individuals’ tech world
    - Non-judgmental

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Managing Internet Use

- Authoritarian Style
- Permissive Style
- Consistency

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Parent Involvement

- Talk to child about online danger
- Assess your child’s functioning – use real world information
  - Can they be safe online?
  - Can they recognize when something is unsafe?
- Discuss access to child’s online activity
- Spend time with them online
  - Go to their favorite websites
  - Discuss safety per site

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For More Information...

Questions?

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General References

Contact me for specific sources

- Larry Rosen Phd: IGeneration, Multi-Tasking Madness
- Dr. Kimberly S. Young –The Center for Internet Addiction Recovery
- John Suler PhD: The Disinhibition Effect
- Marc Prensky: Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants