Are You Too Plugged In?

1) Evaluate. Answer the following questions to get a better understanding of whether your online habits are causing you problems:

☐ Do people in your life complain that you spend too much time online, or that you are distracted by your computer or hand-held when they are trying to get your attention?

☐ Have you skipped out on a social invite to spend time relating or playing games on the Web instead?

☐ Are your closest friends online or in-person friends?

☐ Are you accomplishing what you want and need to accomplish by the end of the day?

☐ Is online distraction and procrastination making you less productive?

☐ Is it rare for you to go longer than a half hour without checking your hand-held?

2) Analyze. Use the list below to tally the time you spend on various online activities daily:

Activity	Minutes Per Day
Personal email	
Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	
Watching online video (YouTube, etc.)	
Online games (solitaire, Farmville, etc.)	
Banking and bill paying	
Monitoring stocks and investments	
Browsing, reading news	
Shopping, researching products, downloading music	
Blogging	
Forums or groups	
Other recreational or administrative online activities	

TOTAL _____

3) Assess. Multiply your total by 5 (for five days a week, if you generally spend your weekends away from the computer) or by 7 (if you spend a lot of weekend time online): _____. Multiply the result by 52 (for the number of weeks in a year): _____. Divide the result by 1,440 (the minutes in one day) for the sum total of complete 24-hour days you spend online annually: _____.

Weigh that net result against the time you spend doing other things (like exercising or spending time with loved ones). If you're uncomfortable with the outcome, consider making some adjustments to your online habits to better reflect your true priorities. For a checklist of Internet-addiction warning signs, visit www.netaddiction.com.

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