



Facing the ADDICTION

Facebook regulars can hardly leave the online friendship factory long enough to complete homework assignments

BY KARA HANSEN
NEWS REPORTER

"Facebook Addicts," "Facebook Addicts Anonymous" and "Addicted to Facebook."

The names set the tone for serious addiction. And while many members of these groups, spawned by the Web site's popularity, say the addiction is a guise for liking the network, many people admit to wasting countless hours on the site, shirking responsibilities and losing sleep because they can't tear themselves away from their screens.

The Facebook, "an online directory that connects people through social networks at colleges and universities," according to its Web site, lets anyone with a university e-mail address join, post a profile and connect with other users through a social network. Users can also create and join common-interest groups, such as clubs for the "addicted."

One of these groups, "Addicted to Facebook," sets three criteria for its 99 members: You must sign on to www.thefacebook.com multiple times per day, find Facebook "to be an electronic friend" and have met about one-third of your friends through the site. In addition, members might be people who, when they don't feel like sleeping, "sign onto the Facebook and end up staying on for hours, even though you're nearly passing out at your desk," according to the club's profile.

University freshman Kevin Watkins, an officer and self-proclaimed "24 Hour Addiction Therapist" for "Addicted to Facebook," said he logs on to the Web site five, six or seven times a day. He said Facebook gives many students an excuse to procrastinate.

"Half the time I try to do homework

on my computer, I have Facebook open, too," Watkins said. "Everybody and their mother has it."

Watkins said it's not so much a physical addiction, but many people find it hard to stay away. He said they might find themselves repeatedly logging on to check for messages from friends, to view friends' profiles or to search for new ones, especially when they need to do homework.

"A lot of people can't handle not going on to check it," Watkins said, noting he wasn't sure whether he could stay away for a long time.

University freshman Phil Wood, an officer for the 14-member "Facebook Addicts Anonymous" group, said one of his friends was bet to stay off Facebook for two days but couldn't do it.

While Wood logs on periodically throughout the day and only spends about an hour each day checking for messages and viewing friends' profiles, it used to be more.

"For the first couple weeks, I would spend up to three hours a day on it," Wood said. "When you join, it occupies a lot of time, but that gradually decreases."

Wood said Facebook has become more than a habit.

"It's become part of my routine," he said. "Even if I looked at (the Facebook) a half hour ago, I'll check it again."

University freshman Lindsay Brown is a member of "Facebook Addicts," a group with 22 members at the University.

Brown signs on to Facebook "three times a day, at least," but said she isn't really addicted.

"I go on quite a bit," Brown said, "but I don't know about it being an addiction."

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