

## Net Addicts

### Disorder poses new threat for netheads

BY BRIAN FLEMING  
The Battalion

Imagine browsing the Web, surfing through the endless array of chat rooms and Websites. Suddenly there is an interruption. It is a Website called [www.virtualaddiction.com](http://www.virtualaddiction.com).

It asks, "Do you use the Internet often? Do you ever find you remain on it longer than you had intended? Does it give you a sense of no boundaries? Do you feel that you are out of control, carried away or emotionally and sexually aroused by it? If so, you could have a problem: Internet addiction."

Dr. David Greenfield said in his book, *Virtual Addiction: Help for Netheads, Cyberfreaks and Those Who Love Them*, that addiction is one of the many problems that emerges in this period of great technological change.

"The potential social implications here are staggering," Greenfield said.

"It can connect you with everyone in the world, and it can also isolate you as well."

This is what Greenfield calls the "Internet paradox." Although much good can come from the Internet, Greenfield said it can also isolate people.

"There is some preliminary research that suggests that more time spent online and on computers correlates with higher degrees of social isolation and depression," he said.

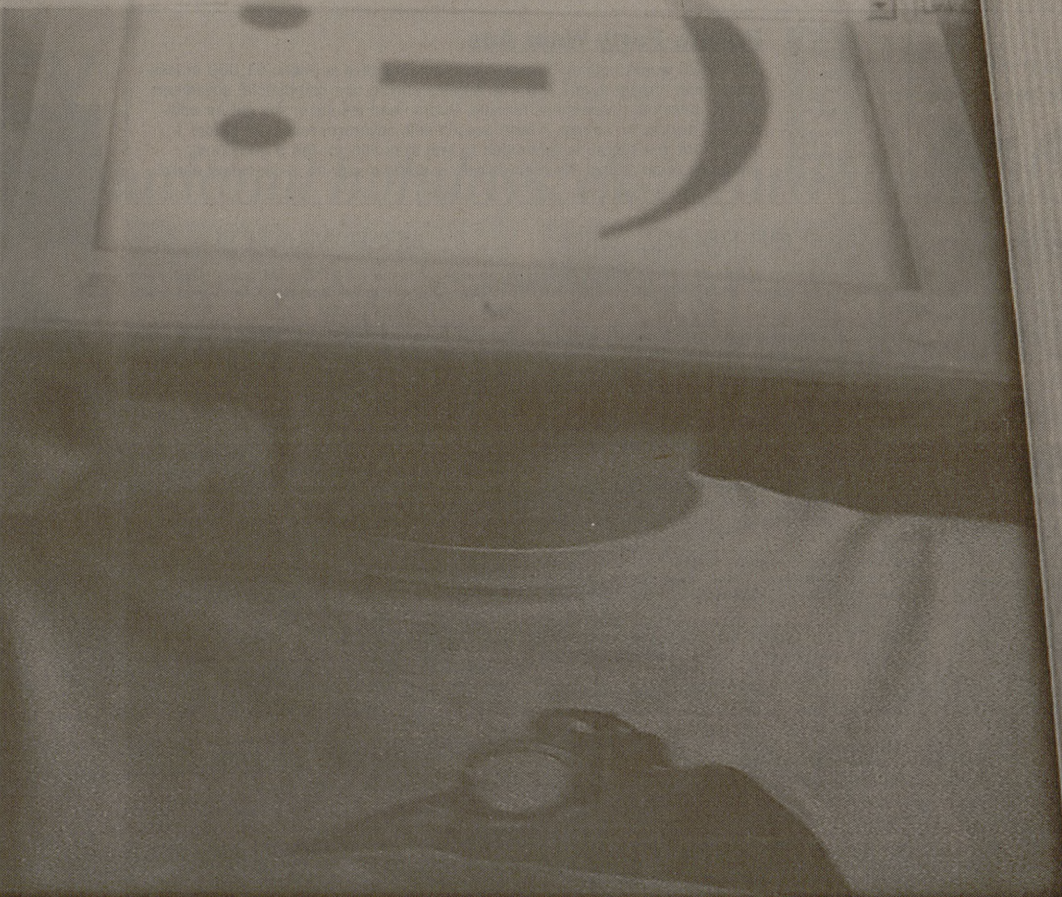
Greenfield said his research shows the number of isolated addicts is growing.

"Nearly 4 percent of my survey of almost 18,000 Internet users met the standards for a compulsive use pattern," he said. "At this level, based on 50,000,000 users worldwide, it means there are nearly 2,000,000 Internet addicts."

Greenfield said online intimacy is one cause of addiction that can lead to numerous problems.

"There have been numerous cases, of which I am aware, in which people started out on the Net only for the purposes of engaging in casual conversation, which ended up being highly sexual in nature."

SEE NET ON PAGE 4.



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