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By: Stefan Anitei, Science Editor



Addiction to Video Games Is Just Like Drug Addiction

The same brain pathways

Being addicted to love can be extremely real. In fact, many obsessions - such as the one some people have for sex, food or video games - act just like drug addictions. You may have noticed some similarities between them, but the reactions taking place in the brain of the people addicted to gambling or video games are similar to those encountered in the brains of the alcoholics and cannabis addicted people. Parents may helplessly witness how their children change habits becoming, from a normal kid, a miserable, withdrawn person, skipping school, being always angry when confronted, and stealing from family and friends to fuel their obsessions. And this personality and behavioral change can last for years. Any difference from a cocaine addict? These addictive behaviors are ahead of anything: eating, drinking, sleeping, hygiene, sex, social relationships, and not because the addict enjoys the activity, but because he/she has to do it. In other periods they were considered just excesses, but physiological and brain research shows no difference from drug addiction. The stimulation generated by the excess of video games playing can boost the secretion of dopamine inside the brain of the player. Dopamine gives a sensation of "feeling good" which subsequently causes addiction. It is also released by the body during sexual arousal. The reaction can emerge in 10 % of the players. And there's no difference with gambling, computer gaming, workaholism, training dependence, pornography, eating, sex or love (affective dependence). This is exactly the same pathway followed by drugs in the brain, involving the reward system. Gamblers or video game players exhibit the same increased heartbeat rate. There may be no individual choice in that. Over 10 % of the Americans are addicted internet, no matter if we're talking about gaming, gambling, chatting or email. All these addictions display withdrawal symptoms. The affective withdrawal is characterized by anxiety, irritability, nausea, stomach cramps, headaches and sweats. And just like in the case of the drugs, these addictions are connected to exposure, timing, personality and genetic factors.