

## Net Compulsions

Written by Dr. Kimberly Young

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### Net Compulsions

Net Compulsions are a new and increasingly worrisome category under the umbrella diagnosis of Internet Addiction. Net compulsions are related to [Compulsive Online Gambling](#) , [Online Auction or eBay Addiction](#)

, or

[Obsessive Online Gaming.](#)

Our company has seen a dramatic rise in these issues over the past year alone due to the popularity of auction houses, virtual casinos, and online gaming sites. In fact, we have partnered with several sites to help counseling and information to their customers.

Why is online auction house, gambling, or gaming so addictive?

The **ACE Model**, an acronym for ACCESSIBILITY, CONTROL, and EXCITEMENT best explains the three main reasons underlying these addictive behaviors.

**ACCESSIBILITY** – Before the Internet, gambling meant trips to Las Vegas or nearby casinos or the local convenience store to buy lotto tickets or attendance at church bingo's. Gaming was limited to college students who knew how to access these site. Shopping meant, waiting in long check out lines, fighting the mall crowds, or spending hours searching for a specific item. After the Internet, we now have immediate access to hundreds of virtual gaming sites, gaming sites that make it simple enough for the non-techno-savvy adult use, and online auction houses to find any item imaginable. This accessibility makes it convenient to gamble, game, or shop at anytime day or night, without the hassles and limitations of real life, we now live in a culture where we can indulge in these activities to seek out immediate gratification and satisfy our impulsive whims.

**CONTROL** – Control literally refers to the personal control that one can now exercise over his or her own online activities. This is a particularly salient issue with respect to online trading. In the past, people had to rely upon brokers to advise, make purchases, and monitor accounts. Today,

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the ability to take control over one's own investing has the potential to fully replace the need for brokers leaving such personal control to become an major obsession. Additionally, online auction houses create a climate to control shopping opportunities such that rare or unique items can easily be located and one can anonymously transform into an aggressive bidder to win over the competition.

**EXCITEMENT** – Excitement represents the emotional "rush" or "high" associated with winning. In gambling, one wins the bet, wins money, and it becomes a great reinforcement to keep playing. In gaming, there is an excitement associated with being good at the game, as players can earn respect and recognition from other players, and this multiple user environment creates a parallel life online that is more interesting than a player's real life. Auction houses create a stimulating place where users can conquer others as the highest bidder can be intoxicating as one beats out others in the last precious seconds to win the desired prize. In each case, the excitement surrounding the activity becomes a powerful hook that continues to reward future behavior. How can you tell if you suffer from a Net Compulsion? Take one of the self-tests listed below:

**SELF-TEST FOR ONLINE GAMBLERS** – Do you spend too much money gambling online? Have you been unable to stop betting once you start? The invention of online gambling has not only become a political and legal concern, but a serious health issue. Compulsive gambling has already been established as a clinical disorder, but now the Internet makes the ability to extend one's gambling habit to virtual casinos immediately available without the hassles of traveling to Las Vegas or Atlantic City. This ability allows people with an established gambling problem to freely explore the net as another vehicle to satisfy their addiction. This accessibility also encourages a new breed of gambling addicts to those curious individuals who otherwise might not have tried it such as **teenagers or college students**. Young adults who seek admission to an online gaming site can enter freely as no one is there to check for proof of age. This has already created a stir among college campuses who have discovered students using their Internet privileges to gamble and for parents concerned about their young children having access to such sites.

**SELF-TEST FOR EBAY ADDICTS** – Have you woken up at strange hours just to be there for the last remaining minutes of an online auction? Do you feel a sense of accomplishment when you discover you are the highest bidder? Forget QVC or the Home Shopping Network – online auction houses will be the next frenzy leading to shopping addiction. In a panic, one woman fought desperately to gain access to her Internet service provider, whose line was busy. It was 5AM, just minutes before the online auction was over for a rare teapot she found on the eBay web site. She had intentionally set her alarm to be the highest bidder. Click after click, she tried to log on. Finally, success – as the modem dialed into the service and she quickly tapped away

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at the computer to be the highest bidder, with just seconds remaining. Relief and satisfaction exuberated from her as she won. This is a typical case of how one can get caught up into the excitement of online auction houses. People begin to buy items they don't need just to experience the rush of winning – sometimes to the point that they go into financial debt, take out a second mortgage, or even go into bankruptcy just to afford their online purchases.

**SELF-TEST FOR ONLINE GAMING** – Are you completely absorbed in online fantasy games? Spending too much time in your character, the fantasy, the game, leaving others to wonder what you do online for so long, isolating yourself at the computer, letting important aspects of your real life fall to the wayside? One gamer spent nearly 16 hours a day playing EverQuest - it gradually became an addiction. He gamed at work and at home, eventually losing his job and his wife, all because he couldn't break free from the game. In fact, in particular, EverQuest Addiction has become a new subtype of online gaming addiction, and as the game quickly grows in popularity, could become a global epidemic.