

# Overcoming Escapism, part 1

The life-and-death battle for your mind



# What is escapism?

- es·cap·ism
- əˈskɑːpɪzəm/
- noun: escapism
- the tendency to seek distraction and relief from unpleasant realities, especially by seeking entertainment or engaging in fantasy.
- The avoidance of reality by absorption of the mind in entertainment or in an imaginative situation, activity, etc.

# A few forms of escapism:

- Food
- Fantasy
- Pornography/sex/lust
- Music
- Shopping
- Movies
- Social networking
- Popularity
- Compulsive behaviors
- Romantic relationships
- Substance abuse

# Why do people escape?

“Individuals have been shown to watch TV when they have a lower ‘need for cognition,’ or, in other words, to prevent them from thinking. *Escapism is the opposite of mindfulness.*”

<http://www.berndhenning.de/joc-nfc.pdf>

Is escapism really all that dangerous?



Escape...or the opposite?



“In a large survey of Korean internet users, overuse of the internet was associated with depression, loneliness, and compulsiveness....Many of these addicts, when surveyed, said that they use the internet to avoid reality, and were significantly more likely to use the internet in response to feelings of sadness or depression.”

<http://69.164.208.4/files/Internet%20Over-Users'%20Psychological%20Profiles-%20A%20Behavior%20Sampling%20Analysis%20on%20Internet%20Addiction.pdf>



“A study on adolescents found that those who employed avoidant coping strategies (as opposed to ‘approach oriented’ coping) reported the highest levels of depressive symptoms up to two years later.”

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1026440304695>

[http://journals.lww.com/jonmd/Abstract/1990/08000/Avoidant\\_Coping\\_Predicts\\_Psychological\\_Disturbance.10.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/jonmd/Abstract/1990/08000/Avoidant_Coping_Predicts_Psychological_Disturbance.10.aspx)



**Logout**

**is the hardest  
button to click.**



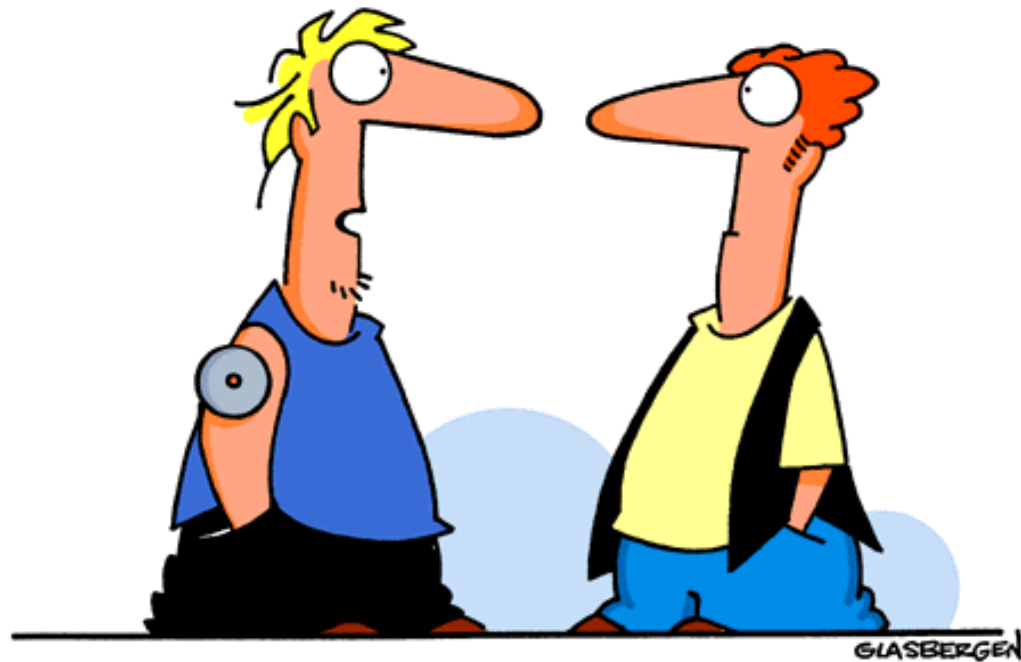
Mom said  
Go play outside

“Television exposure and total media exposure in adolescence are associated with increased odds of depressive symptoms in young adulthood, especially in young men. And, for adolescents, use of role-playing games is predictive of internalizing problem behaviors such as anxiety or social withdrawal.”

[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3004674/?  
iframe=true&width=100%25&height=100%25](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3004674/?iframe=true&width=100%25&height=100%25)

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140197110000370>

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"IT'S NOT A NICOTINE PATCH, IT'S A CD-ROM.  
I'M TRYING TO OVERCOME COMPUTER ADDICTION."

# Food addiction



# Visible side effects







# Invisible side effects

“Seeing a milkshake can activate the same areas of the brain that light up when an addict sees cocaine.” Dr. Chad Larson

“These findings support the theory that compulsive food consumption may be driven in part by an enhanced anticipation of the rewarding properties of food.”

Ashley N. Gearhardt, MS, MPhil; Sonja Yokum, PhD, PhD, et al. Arch Gen Psychiatry. Published online April 4, 2011

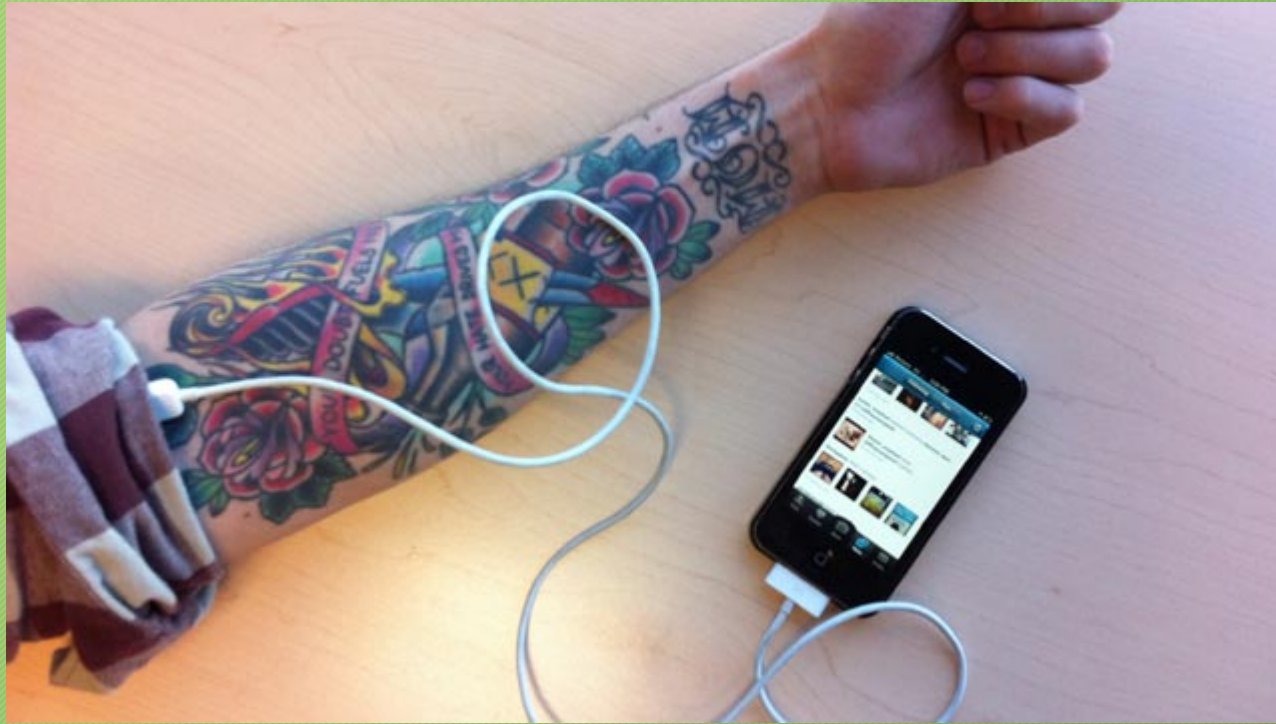
“It seems reasonable that there is some psychic cost to living outside of reality. The use of escapist/avoidant coping, including the excessive withdrawal into technology, is a recipe for negative feelings and disconnection from others.”

<http://feelhappiness.com/escapism-leave-fantasy-world-live-reality/>

# The cycle of escape



# Four deadly laws of escapism



# 1. Escapism destroys relationships



# God wants us in healthy, happy relationships

- Love the Lord with all your heart
- Love your neighbor as yourself

# Why is escapism such a big deal?


- How do relationships grow?
  - Quality time
  - Communication
- What does escapism steal?
  - Quality time
  - Communication





"Now we are learning the more time you spend on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, the more likely you are to feel depressed." Dr. Christine McGrath, psychologist

<http://www.kcrg.com/news/local/New-Study-Suggests-Link-Between-Facebook-and-Depression-231068251.html#lL0fHbMVshj1vP5S.99>



**“Having more internet relationships is associated with higher levels of emotional loneliness than having face-to-face relationships.”**

<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/109493101300210303>

## 2. Escapism destroys the power of connected, vigorous thinking

“Even fiction which contains no suggestion of impurity, and which may be intended to teach excellent principles, is harmful. It encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading, merely for the story. Thus it tends to destroy the power of connected and vigorous thought; it unfits the soul to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 383

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### 3. Escapism weans from prayer and love of spiritual things

“You are indulging an evil which threatens to destroy your spirituality. It will eclipse all the beauty and interest of the sacred pages. It is love for storybooks, tales, and other reading which does not have an influence for good upon the mind that is in any way dedicated to the service of God. It produces a false, unhealthy excitement, fevers the imagination, unfits the mind for usefulness, and disqualifies it for any spiritual exercise. It weans the soul from prayer and love of spiritual things.”

*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 241, 242

# Depression and anxiety

“Escapism allows us to numb ourselves to a reality that we do not want to accept....It allows us to avoid feelings of shame or emotional pain. By imagining ourselves as someone who doesn't have the constraints that we do, or who possesses something that we lack, we can 'experience' that life without having to do the work (and have the luck) necessary to achieve it.”

<http://feelhappiness.com/escapism-leave-fantasy-world-live-reality/>


## 4. Escapism corrupts and destroys the soul

“A large share of the periodicals and books that, like the frogs of Egypt, are overspreading the land are not merely commonplace, idle, and enervating, but unclean and degrading. Their effect is not merely to intoxicate and ruin the mind, but to corrupt and destroy the soul.” *The Adventist Home*, p. 415



# Why is escapism such a big deal?





The more you escape, the more you paralyze your motivation to  
stop escaping.

But in order to escape escapism,

**YOU MUST TAKE ACTION.**

# Overcoming Escapism, part 2

The life-and-death battle for your mind

# Why is escapism such a big deal?

- God is relational
- God's law is relational
- How do relationships grow?
  - Quality time
  - Communication
- What does escapism steal?
  - Quality time
  - Communication

# God's perspective on escapist waste of time

“God grants men the gift of time for the purpose of promoting His glory. When this time is used in selfish pleasure, the hours thus spent are lost for all eternity.” *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 354

“Moments are more precious than gold. We have been redeemed by the blood of Christ; our time, our talents, belong to him.”  
*Review and Herald*, June 15, 1886

# Entertainment vs. recreation



“I was shown that Sabbathkeepers as a people labor too hard without allowing themselves change or periods of rest. Recreation is needful to those who are engaged in physical labor and is still more essential for those whose labor is principally mental. It is not essential to our salvation, nor for the glory of God, to keep the mind laboring constantly and excessively, even upon religious themes.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 514

“We can and should conduct our recreations in such a manner that we shall be fitted for the more successful discharge of the duties devolving upon us, and that our influence shall be more beneficial upon those with whom we associate.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 586



“There are persons with a diseased imagination to whom religion is a tyrant, ruling them as with a rod of iron. Such are constantly mourning over their depravity and groaning over supposed evil. Love does not exist in their hearts; a frown is ever upon their countenances. They are chilled by the innocent laugh from the youth or from anyone. They consider all recreation or amusement a sin and think that the mind must be constantly wrought up to just such a stern, severe pitch. This is one extreme.” *The Adventist Home*, p. 493

“Others think that the mind must be ever on the stretch to invent new amusements and diversions in order to gain health. They learn to depend on excitement and are uneasy without it. Such are not true Christians. They go to another extreme. The true principles of Christianity open before all a source of happiness, the height and depth, the length and breadth of which are immeasurable.--AH 493

# Five keys to escape from escapism

1. Temperance
2. Reflection
3. Discipline
4. Prayer and communion with God
5. Sharpen your Sword of the Spirit!

# 1. Temperance

- Go to sleep early.
- Exercise.
- Avoid unhealthy food, drink, etc.
- Take time for recreation.
- Invest in quality relationships.

## 2. Reflection

- Ask yourself questions like these.
  - What am I fleeing from?
  - In what situations do I typically engage in escapist behavior?
  - Is there a specific feeling or mood that triggers the urge to escape?
  - What is it that I enjoy about my fantasy?
  - What do I feel as I “come down” after a fix?

## 3. Discipline

- Set a timer.
- Keep phone, computer, etc. away from bed.
- Set up accountability system.
- Set goals.
- Have devotions.

“The tempted one needs to understand the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man--the power of decision, of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. Desires for goodness and purity are right, so far as they go; but if we stop here, they avail nothing. Many will go down to ruin while hoping and desiring to overcome their evil propensities. They do not yield the will to God. They do not choose to serve Him.”  
*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 176

## 4. Prayer and communion with God

All of the previous ingredients are powerless without this one.



“God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. We cannot change our hearts, we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for God's service. But we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will; then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ.” *The Ministry of Healing*, p.176

“Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in the life. By yielding up the will to Christ, we ally ourselves with divine power. We receive strength from above to hold us steadfast. A pure and noble life, a life of victory over appetite and lust, is possible to everyone who will unite his weak, wavering human will to the omnipotent, unwavering will of God.”  
*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 176

## 5. Sharpen your Sword of the Spirit!

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Luke 21:34-36

## 5. Sharpen your Sword of the Spirit!

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” I Cor. 10:13, 14

## 5. Sharpen your Sword of the Spirit!

“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matt. 26:41

# Dangers of addiction/idolatry

“What we do not overcome, will overcome us and work out our destruction.” *Steps to Christ*, p. 32