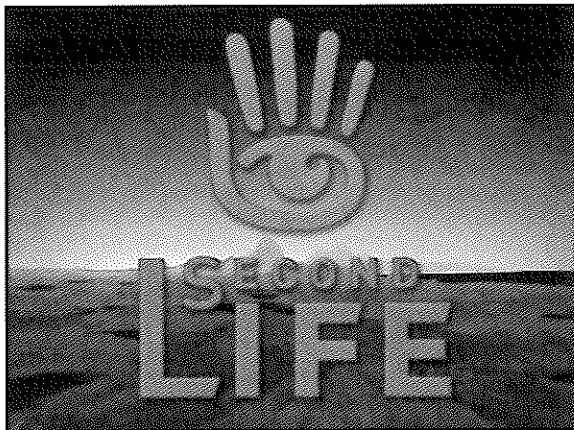






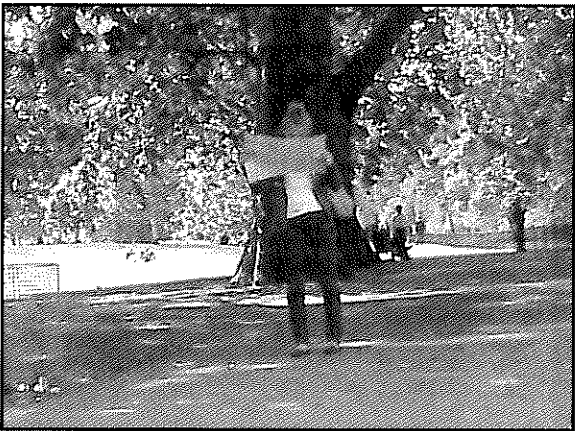
Paths to Connection





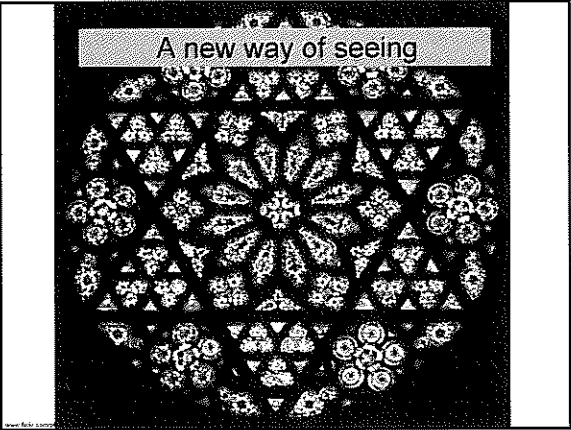


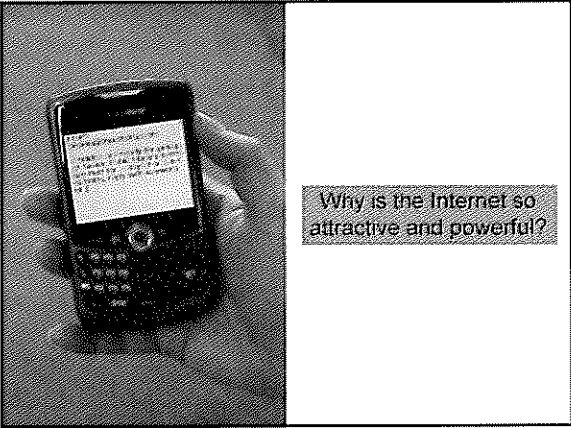


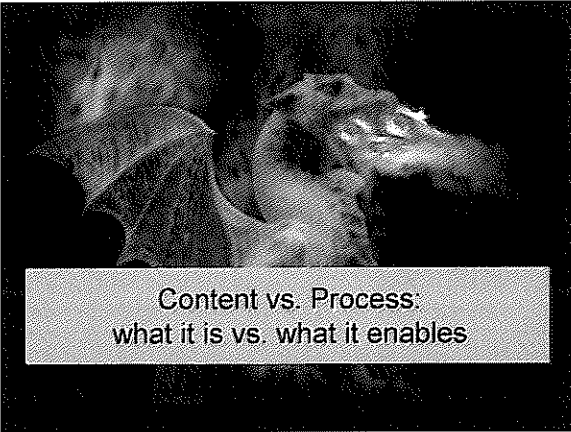


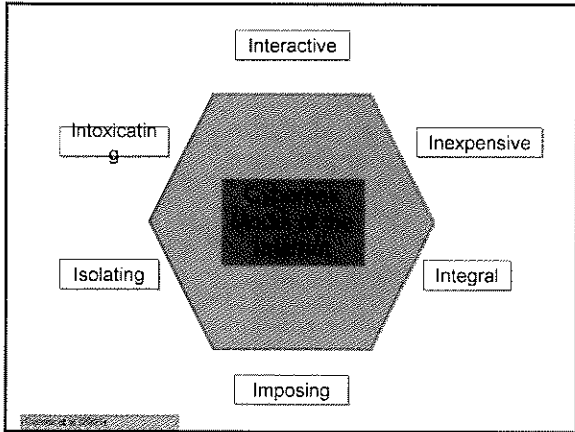
Couples therapists report:

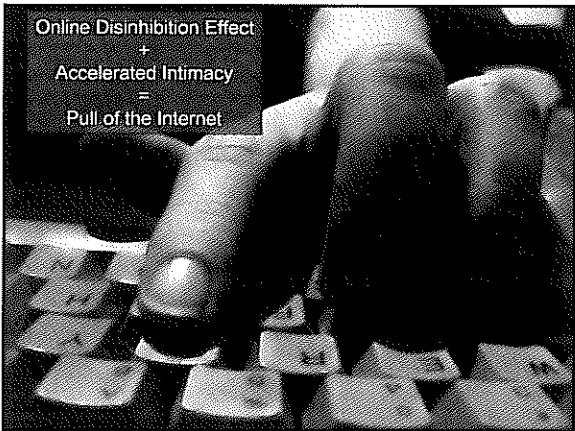
- An increase in the number of cases with an internet component (Cooper & Grillo-Shawley, 2002)
- They struggle with appropriate treatment strategies in these cases (Helson, 2004)
- A majority are not trained in their programs to deal with this problem in treatment (Gulberg, Peterson, Robson and Sara, 2006)



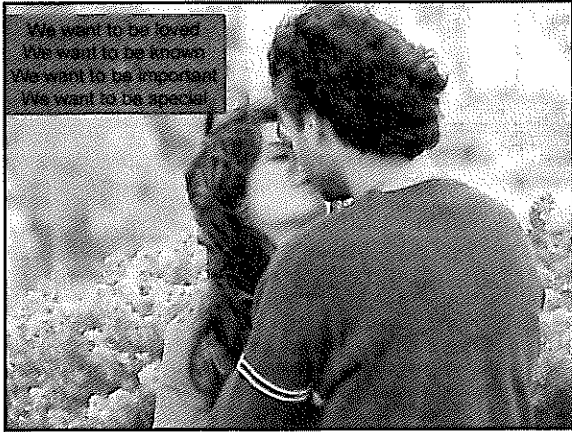








What does the New Technology provide or enable?



Global positives

- > The new technology shrinks the world. Geography is irrelevant
- > It creates new opportunities, professionally and personally
- > It augments personal relationships (Casper, McLoughlin & Campbell, 2003)
- > It increases connection

Positives for Couples:

- Online dating: 1 in 8 marriages started on a dating site (Washington Post, 2010)
- Builds connections with partner (Casper, McLoughlin & Campbell, 2003)
- Can assist with conflict resolution
- People enjoy using technology to communicate with partners or potential partners (Mazur & Harris, 2006)
- Technology as a way to build transparency and intimacy

Negatives for couples:

- Problems with misunderstanding
- Greater chance of "smothering"
- Over-involvement may lead to neglect of "real life" (Harrison & Harris, 2008)
- Issues related to cybersex and infidelity
- Distraction
- Paradox of Technology and Connection

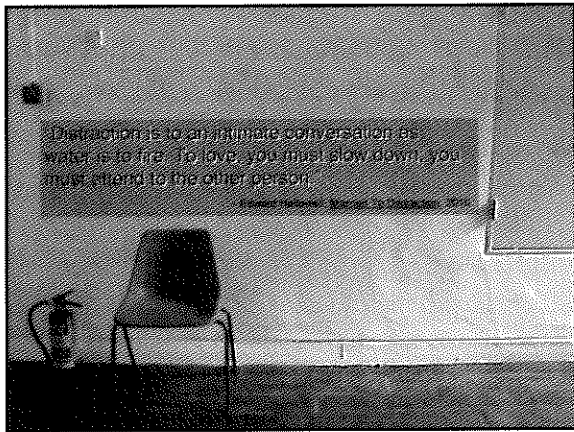
Cybersex

- Approximately 20% of all Internet users report in engaging in some sexual activity online (Cooper, Scherer and Maffey, 2003)
- Cybersex has major negative impact on relationships (Cooper, Coleman, & Borg, 2000; Barak and Fisher, 2002)
- Major factor for women in separation or divorce (Schneider 2003)
 - Decrease in desire for relational sex
 - Comparing oneself negatively to online partner
 - Feelings of betrayal
 - Greater secrecy about internet use – 70% of those who pursue sexual interests online keep secret how much time they spend online (Cooper, Scherer, Boas & Gordon, 1999)
 - Boundary crossings more possible

Online Infidelity

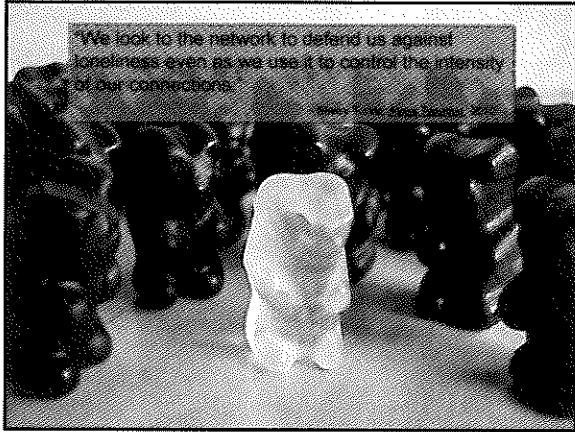
- What is it? Ambiguous nature, differing opinions
- Those in committed relationships saw online sexual chat and emotional involvement with an online contact as being unfaithful to the primary relationship (Hartline, Lanks & Howard, 2007)
- Online betrayal = offline betrayal (Whaley, 2005)

What is the cost of constant connection?



The Culture of Distraction in The Age of Interruption
February 2010

- Attention = intimacy
- Distraction interrupts the dance
- We're too busy to pay attention to loved ones, difficult to get their full attention too
- FAST FAST FAST = continuous partial attention
- The new pressure is to make time and pay attention



The Paradox of Technology and Connection
Talen 2010

- We have many "friends", but little connections
- We want more connection, but also want easy escape
- Tech promises to free us up, but fetters us to it
- Technology instead of community
- Boundaries eroded between "real" life and online life
- "Crazy busy"
- Relationships → mere connections → intimacy
- Cyberintimacies slide into cybersolitudes
- Off the grid, we feel adrift

How do we know when technology is a problem for our clients?

Need for Thorough Assessment

- Only 20% of therapists ask their clients about cybersex use (Goldberg et al., 2009)
- Failure to ask can lead to significant omissions in treatment planning and subsequent clinical interventions (Goldberg et al., 2009)
- There is a real need for simple tools to assess the technology use of family members who are coming for therapy treatment (Herben & Watson, 2009)
- Proper assessment can break through "don't ask, don't tell"

Assessment Tools

Facebook Compulsion Inventory (Pile, 2009)

Use of Technology Questionnaire/UTQ (Fay, 2011)

Internet Sex Screening Test/ISST (Delmonico, 1999)

Boundaries and Expectations

- ✓ Sharing usernames and passwords
- ✓ Post pictures with you and your partner
- ✓ Include partner in status updates
- ✓ Keep partner aware of "friends"
- ✓ Develop a mutually agreed-upon policy regarding friending exes, members of opposite sex
- ✓ Don't criticize partner online
- ✓ Don't say anything online you wouldn't say to your partner face to face
- ✓ Don't share anything online you wouldn't want your partner to see

Questions for Couples to Consider when Developing an Acceptable Use Plan (AUP)

1. How much time is acceptable to spend on social networking sites? On technology in general?
2. Should we be friends on Facebook?
3. Do we link our profiles to show that we are together?
4. Is it appropriate to share passwords?
5. Do we "friend" exes?

Case Examples

Crackberry

The List

Facebook

Sample Treatment Protocol for Internet Infidelity

- Assessment of what the infidelity was:
 - intensity x frequency x duration
- Get the story from each point of view
 - What need did it meet/what did it give
 - What did it cost/steal/take
 - Can they each see it from the other's side?
- Regret?
- Assessment of commitment to relationship and to therapy
- Goals – what do we want our relationship to look like?

Moving Forward

- With a clear picture of new relationship in mind
- Plan for new commitment to connection through transparency
- Communication:
 - Frequent
 - Face-to-face
 - As a top priority
 - Technology-free times together
 - Freedom to bring up fears, concerns – building on therapy gains

New Boundaries Around Relationship

- Discussion of "real life" boundaries
- Discussion of online boundaries
- Acceptable Use Plan for technology
 - Mutually agreed-upon (no parent-child)
 - Times used
 - Password sharing
 - Facebook boundaries (status, chat, wall, privacy, friends)
 - No secret computers
 - Conceptualized as externalizing threats to couple – more time in the "new" = more trust

Using Technology to Build Up the Relationship

- Assess if this is too difficult, too charged
- Can we "untaint" it and take technology back?
- Secret email accounts to build sexual tension (Perel)
- PAIRS app
- Intimate texts
- Facebook
- Online marriage support sites (Power of Two)

