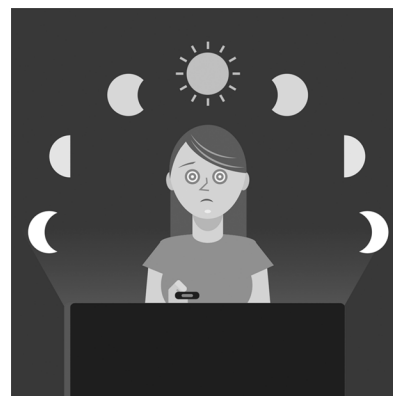


Lees eerst de opgaven voordat je naar de tekst gaat.

To Binge or Not To Binge

adapted from an article by Mark Griffiths, Director of the International Gaming Research Unit and Professor of Behavioural Addiction, Nottingham Trent University

- 1 The term “binge-watch” was a contender for the Oxford English Dictionary’s 2013 word of the year. Although it didn’t win (“selfie” ultimately took the crown), this pointed to the rise of what was becoming a popular activity of watching multiple episodes of a TV show in a single sitting.



- 2 Today, millions of us – including me – regularly consume our favourite series in this way. The proliferation of streaming services over recent years has made it very easy to do. But can binge-watching become problematic or addictive? And if you can’t tear yourself away, what can you do?

Binge-watching addiction

- 3 Problematic binge-watching isn’t defined by the number of episodes watched, or a specific number of hours spent in front of the TV or computer screen. As with other addictive behaviours, more important is whether binge-watching is having a negative impact on other aspects of the person’s life.
- 4 Like many other behavioural addictions, binge-watching addiction is not officially recognised in any psychiatric manuals. We also don’t have accurate estimates of the prevalence of problematic binge-watching. But research into this phenomenon is growing.

Research on binge-watching

- 5 In the latest study on this topic, a research team in Poland surveyed 645 young adults, all of whom reported that they had watched at least two episodes of one show in a single sitting. The researchers wanted to understand some of the factors underlying problematic binge-watching.
- 6 The authors used a questionnaire they developed in an earlier study to assess problematic binge-watching among participants. Questions included: “How often do you neglect your duties in favour of watching series?” and “How often do you neglect your sleep to binge-watch

series?” Participants had to give answers on a six-point scale from one (never) to six (always). A score above a certain threshold was deemed indicative of problematic binge-watching.

- 7 Using a range of other scales, the researchers found that impulse control difficulties, lack of premeditation (difficulties in planning and evaluating the consequences of a given behaviour), watching to escape and forget about problems, and watching to avoid feeling lonely were among the most significant predictors of problematic binge-watching.
- 8 Using the same data, the researchers reported in an earlier study that problematic binge-watching had a significant association with anxiety-depressive syndrome. The greater the symptoms of anxiety and depression, the more problematic a person’s binge-watching was.
- 9 Other studies have reported similar findings. An American study found the behaviour was associated with depression and attachment anxiety. Most related studies have also shown escapism to be a key motivation of problematic binge-watching.
- 10 In terms of personality traits, research has shown that problematic binge-watching appears to be associated with low conscientiousness (characterised by being impulsive, careless and disorganised) and high neuroticism (characterised by being anxious and prone to negative emotions). We see these types of associations in addictive behaviours more generally.

Recommendations

- 11 If you want to cut down on the number of episodes you watch in one sitting, my golden rule is to stop watching mid-way through an episode. It’s really hard to stop watching at the end of an episode as so often the show ends with a cliff-hanger.
- 12 I also suggest setting realistic daily limits. For me, it’s 2.5 hours if I have work the next day, or up to five hours if I don’t. And only start watching as a reward to yourself after you’ve done everything you need to in terms of work and social obligations.
- 13 Remember, the difference between a healthy enthusiasm and an addiction is that the former adds to your life, whereas the latter detracts from it. If you feel binge-watching is taking over your life, you should seek a referral from your GP to see a clinical psychologist. Most addictions are symptomatic of other underlying problems.

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