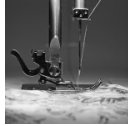


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ARE YOU A CLOSETED CYBERSTALKER? 6 WAYS TO KICK THE HABIT

by Krissy Brady on November 5, 2013 in SEX

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It's totally normal for cyberstalker tendencies to flare up occasionally, especially post break-up. But if your dirt-digging skills are so refined Olivia Pope's demanding you become a Gladiator, it might be time to re-evaluate.

Because the term "cyberstalker" makes us feel like we're one step closer to becoming a bunny boiler, many of us hide in our proverbial closet, laptop in hand, scanning for the latest news on our crushes, boyfriends, or exes (or all three).

"Once we begin to check another person's profile compulsively, the need to re-check grows stronger, especially after finding information that's of great interest," says psychotherapist and relationship expert **Kimberly Moffit**. This inevitably leads to an addiction to online stalking – and the more we avoid admitting to the habit, the stronger our inner cyberstalker gets.

"Dan Wagner of Harvard University describes this as an 'ironic process,'"

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says **Emma Seppala**, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University. “When we attempt to resist a certain action, the effort can easily backfire under stress. In the realm of the mind, what we resist persists.” (Crap.)

Whether you’re insecure about your relationship, determined to prove your instincts right, or just plain obsessed with your ex’s new life, let’s face it ladies: there are times when our actions deserve a face palm, am I right? “I hear from *many* women who are astounded and embarrassed at their own behavior,” says relationship expert **April Masini**.

6 Ways To Pump The Breaks on Online Stalking

If you’d like to kick your cyberstalker habit for good, try these tips on for size:

1. Make the decision to change. Most women who get in touch with Masini about online stalking aren’t just uncomfortable about their behavior, they feel terrible about what they’re doing. Once you’ve decided to change, forgive yourself for cyberstalking and purpose to put the behavior behind you.

2. Stop cyberstalking immediately. “You may feel anxiety or even panic at first, but this is just a sign of withdrawal,” says Moffit. “Checking simply leads to more checking.” Don’t set a date or write in your journal about it: just stop being a cyberstalker.

3. Check-in with yourself. Try and figure out the underlying reasons why you’re engaging in online stalking: What void is it filling? “Isolating the reason why you might be insecure, lonely, or bored will give you more insight into your own behaviors,” says Moffit.

4. Build new habits. Breaking the cyberstalker cycle takes practice. “If you’ve built a habit of looking at your ex’s Facebook profile first thing in the morning, you’ll have to create a new habit – in particular, a self-care habit,” says Seppala. “Focus on creating habits that make you feel deeply nurtured.” You’ll be less likely to look for happiness outside of yourself or in self-destructive ways.

5. Reward yourself. Every day you don’t engage in this online stalking, reward yourself in some way. Use the time you’d normally spend as an undercover cyberstalker to accomplish healthy goals, such as fixing up your apartment or going for a run.

6. Be cyberstalk-worthy. “Some women try to make their own profiles seem more happy and interesting as a way of getting their target’s attention,” says Moffit, “But what could be better than actually being happy?” When you’re leading a meaningful, satisfying life, not only won’t you want to cyberstalk, but you won’t have time to!

How do you deal with your inner cyberstalker?

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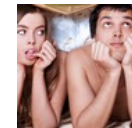
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