Addiction To Selfies: A Mental Disorder?

If you’ve taken up to three selfies today, consider yourself nuts. At least, in the eyes of the American Psychiatric Association and countless others, who are igniting a global movement to recognize that an addiction to selfies can be indicative of a mental disorder.

We all know that certain someone who is intent on capturing every waking moment with a duck-faced selfie. They even have that one specific expression set aside, ready to plaster it on in a whim the very second an iPhone is pulled out.

It never seems concerning until you look through a compiled, endless list of someone’s Instagram selfies – and even then, it could be more funny than worrisome. Now I’m not one to typically draw concern towards trivial matters, especially something that sounds as ridiculous as an addiction to self-portraits.

You’d never expect to learn that Vincent Van Gogh had been considered mentally unstable – oh wait, never mind. I personally never understood the fascination with snapping pictures of myself at every semi-interesting moment of my day – maybe I’m too ugly to consider it.

It wasn’t until I stumbled onto the story of Danny Bowman, a 19-year-old British teen who exemplifies the worst case scenario of a selfie addiction – living proof that a new vice may currently be emerging. How far did he take his obsession? Snapping over 200 photos a day, he didn’t leave his house for six months, during which time he lost 30 pounds and dropped out of school.

Growing increasingly frustrated with his inability to capture the perfect selfie, he eventually tried to commit suicide. Fortunately, much like his attempts for a picture perfect image, he failed in doing so.

Recently, the American Psychiatric Association actually confirmed that taking selfies is a mental disorder, going as far as to term the condition “selfitis”. The APA has defines it as: “the obsessive compulsive desire to take photos of one’s self and post them on social media as a way to make up for the lack of self-esteem and to fill a gap in intimacy”, and has categorized it into three levels: borderline, acute, and chronic.

http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/addiction-selfies-mental-disorder.html
How extreme is your selfitis? If you find yourself taking up to three selfies a day but not posting them on social media, consider yourself borderline.

If you’re posting at least three images of yourself a day, that’s acute.

Lastly, if you’re experiencing an uncontrollable urge to take and post up to six photos a day, congratulations – you have chronic selfitis.

Danny fit quite comfortably into the third category, perhaps even deserving his own echelon of selfie insanity.

“I was constantly in search of taking the perfect selfie and when I realized I couldn’t, I wanted to die. I lost my friends, my education, my health and almost my life,” he told the UK Mirror.

What can we learn from Danny? Well for starters, we live in a society that is provoked into an infinite pursuit of superficial perfection that can never be attained. In a world where people are addicted to plastic surgeries and countless forms of body enhancement (from Goodlife to Sephora), foregoing things like knowledge and experience in their sole focus on living life ostensibly. We’re now at the verge of insanity, if not well over it.

The solution? Psychiatrists treated Danny and others in a similar way they’d treat any addict – minimizing exposure to the addiction and breaking down the dependence on it. What may be called for is a reality check to do away with digital narcissism – to live with social media rather than living through social media.

It seemed rather comical that Danny’s psychiatrists would take his phone away for intervals of time, first for 10 minutes, then for 30 minutes and so forth. Is that really so difficult? But when you pause to think about it, when was the last time you had gone an hour or two (or maybe even 10 minutes) without touching your phone?

I challenge you readers to leave your phone behind the next time you embark on a picture-perfect moment or to do away with posting pictures of every meal on Instagram (seriously?! That’s another issue for another article).

Speaking on the selfie craze, Benedict Cumberbatch summarizes it well in his comments to Business Standard, “What a tragic waste of engagement. Enjoy the moment. Do something more worthwhile with your time, anything. Stare out the window and think about life”

So if you find yourself snapping away and capturing life through the lens of your camera, add a new perspective. Work to minimize your social media presence, take in the best of life’s moments without the need to seek approval or commentary from others. Live your own life – don’t live before the eyes of others.

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