

## Immersive Illness

### **World of Warcraft: My Addiction**

*Written by "John" in July 2007 (reflecting on the past year)*

I've played various MMORPG games over the years, some being fairly addicting, some not even catching my interest, but one stands out above the rest as the most addicting and life consuming thing I've ever encountered in my life. You might have guessed it already, but that game is World of Warcraft, a game that I would recommend everyone stays away from.

Like most addictions, it didn't start out that way. It was just harmless fun; I'd log on for a few hours every day and level my character, talk to some friends I had on the game... it was nothing that took me away from other things. I was in high school at the time, and was still managing to get on with my work at first, even though that was a struggle in itself sometimes, and I kept in touch with my friends and saw them regularly.

At first I was surprised at how little interest I had in playing the game for long stints, as I had heard some things about how enticing and gripping the game was, and the first few months were fine, until I started to get near the level cap. Approaching the maximum level I began to play the game more and more, as reaching the end game content opened up a whole new world. I became involved with a hardcore raiding guild, competing to be the best guild on the server, and it all went from there.

The first thing that changed was that I now had raiding times to meet every weekday evening in addition to the gold farming I had to do during the day in order to be able to afford all the potions and items I needed to raid, and somehow, my guilds progression through the bosses in the game became the most important thing to me in my life, and I slowly started to phase out my friends. At this point I was still going to school, so between the school day and the game, I had no time for anything else.

Contrary to what people might think, I didn't lack a social life at all, even without seeing or

talking to any of my friends from school. In fact, it was quite the opposite, I had a whole new group of friends... in World of Warcraft. Now I didn't even have to leave my room to hang out with my friends, I could just pop on my headset and hang out with them in the game.

Now, to rewind a bit, I remember when I was creeping up on the level cap, and my parents were beginning to get concerned with how much I was playing the game, I kept telling them that it would be all over soon. Heck, even I thought it would! Little did I know, the game would be even more demanding of me after that.

I wanted to be the best, I wanted to have the best items, I wanted to have the most gold. I wanted to be popular with the people on my server, I wanted to be known. I wanted to top the damage meters on every single fight. I don't know why, I can't explain it, but the game was just the most important thing to me, I wanted to do nothing else. I wanted to play every single day all day and night and would do whatever I could to keep myself awake and at the computer. Whatever it took, energy drinks, amphetamines, I would keep myself awake for hours on end, not getting any exercise and rarely leaving the house.

The more and more I played, the more and more things I felt compelled to spend my time doing inside the game. It seems that they create the game in such a way that even though there technically is a way to have the ultimate everything and clear all the bosses etc.. etc..... By the time you get close they add more content to the game to keep you going, its a never ending story. I would pick up my prescription for amphetamines just so I could stay up all night farming items to sell for gold, I wanted to have the best enchantments and to get all the rare random world drops... and so much more. I completely stopped going to school, completely stopped seeing my friends.... and the most worrying fact was that I didn't really care. It just stole my heart and mind from everything else, gave me a false sense that everything was okay and that I wasn't ruining the rest of my life. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't stopped, I had stopped going to school and cut off social contact with everyone but the people I knew in the game, it was like a world within itself. I didn't even want to stop

until I had a taste of life without it, a taste that was forced, however. If I hadn't been forced to live somewhere without a computer I don't know what would have happened.