Is your behaviour normal or compulsive?

If you’re reading this article, chances are good that you’re concerned about your own, or a loved one’s behaviour. Though drinking, drug use and gambling are known—and increasingly common—forms of compulsive behaviour, some patterns around internet use, food, sex and even shopping can also be unhealthy.



The following quick test can help you assess whether your behaviour is within your control or compulsive:

Does the activity/activities you’re involved in make you feel better when you are doing it?
Are you more likely to engage in the activity when you are under stress or feeling anxious, sad, depressed or lonely?
Is the time you spend on the activity on the rise, or do you need to do it more frequently or for longer periods of time to obtain the same feelings of pleasure or satisfaction?
Do you engage in the activity even when you should be doing something else, or are you neglecting your work, family or friends in order to participate in the activity?

5. Have you tried to cut back and either don't or can't; or do you stop for a while only to return to your previous behaviour after a short period of "abstinence"?
6. Are you hiding the activity, the consequences of it, or your levels of use, from your partner, family members or friends?

If you've answered "yes" to any of these questions, your habit may be more harmful than helpful. But, you're not alone and there is help.

Recognizing that there is a problem is an important first step. If your family and friends are expressing concern, or if—after honestly answering the self-assessment questions posed above—you think you're at risk, reach out for help.