UNIT 3

CYBER PSYCHOLOGY

THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN CYBERSPACE

Person versus cyberspace relationships - transient and long term online relationships - the psychology of text relationships - hypotheses about online text relationships - e- mail communication and relationships – transference among people online.

Cyberspace

a place that is not real, where electronic messages exist while they are being sent from one gadget to another.

Relationship

a friendly or loving connection between people

Cyber Relationship

A relationship between people who have met on the **internet** or they know each other only via the internet, is called **Cyber relationship**.
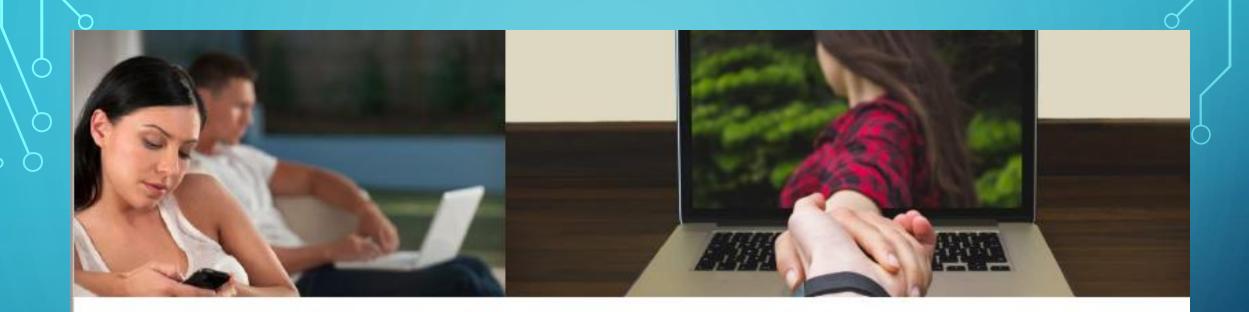
Cyber Relationship

A **cyber or or virtual or online or internet relationship** is generally sustained for a certain amount of time before being titled a relationship, just as in-person relationships.

Types of Cyber Relationship

Cyber Relationship May be romantic, platonic, or even based on business affairs.

Cyber Relationship

The cyber relationship can include relationships based upon

1. text,
2. video,
3. audio, or
4. even virtual character.

Cyber Relationship

Cyber relationship can be among people in different states, different countries, different sides of the world, or even people who reside in the same area but do not communicate in person.

Cyber Relationship

- The cyber relationship is related to social networking. Social networking helps people to connect with each other with the help of internet.
- Sometimes internet relationships are formed through social networking services, including but not limited to Facebook, Myspace, Google plus, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram etc.

Pros and Cons

Pros

1. Stress Free
2. No intimacy
3. Less Conflict
4. Identity Protection
5. Time Saving

Cons

1. No physical presence
2. Identity issues
3. Addictive
4. Sham people
5. Cyber crimes

TRANSIENT OR LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP

- **Transient** is used to describe a situation that lasts only a short time or is constantly changing.

- Transient relationship which doesn't last for long. It's a temporary relationship.

- Long Term Relationships are considered to be permanent if it goes on well with the partner.

- Either its transient or long term the relationship depends upon the compatibility of couple

- In cyber space people has the freedom to decide on whether to continue or to break up with the relationship

TRANSIENT OR LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP

- Some have criticized cyberspace as a realm of superficial and/or transient relationships.

- While these do indeed exist, they nevertheless form a cornerstone of the cyberspace experience and are therefore worthy of psychological investigation.

- What are the interpersonal dynamics of one-time only chat discussions, sporadic flame wars, sexual harassment, or brief cybersex encounters?

- Even though transient relationships exist, there is no doubt that long-term friendships, romances, and marriages have resulted from online meetings

TRANSIENT OR LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP

- Because people have access to numerous people in cyberspace, a filtering process occurs in which a person narrows down (based on both conscious and unconscious motivations) the range of potential contacts - and then chooses someone with whom to develop a relationship.

- This it itself is a fascinating process and one worthy of psychological study. Once the relationship is underway, how do people negotiate emotional expression, intimacy, love, and conflict, especially given the limited experiential dimension of a text-only style of communicating?

TRANSIENT OR LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP

- On the one hand, text-only communications restrict the experiential range by which people can express themselves, but at the same time the partial anonymity it offers also allows some people to disclose themselves more freely.

- The fact people may be keeping a permanent record of much or all of their cyberspace relationships (as in email correspondence) offers a unique opportunity for research into how those relationships evolve.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TEXT RELATIONSHIPS

- The nature of text-based relationships, which are either synchronous, as with text messages and chat in real time, or asynchronous, as with email exchanges, message boards, and blogs.

- Psychology of these relationships is explored while pointing out the implications for online clinical work.

- Many of the psychological dimensions of text communication in general apply across the board to the various types of text communication tool in particular—chat, email, message boards, instant messaging, blogs, and others more esoteric or yet to be invented

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TEXT RELATIONSHIPS

- These different modalities differ in sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, ways that make each a unique psychological environment—a fact the online clinician might keep in mind when choosing a communication tool for working with a particular client.

- There are several unique aspects of text relationships for online clinical work: reading and writing skills shape the communication; there are minimal visual and auditory cues; a subjective sense of interpersonal space replaces the importance of geographical space; people can converse with almost anyone online and with multiple partners simultaneously; and conversations can be saved and later re-examined. Several of these factors cause social <u>disinhibition</u>.

- Online clinicians might strive to specialize in a particular type of text medium while recognizing its pros and cons vis-à-vis others.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- E-mail may be the most important, unique method for communicating and developing relationships since the telephone.

- First of all, it is easy to use. People also find it familiar and safe because it is similar in many respects to writing letters - minus the annoyances of addressing envelopes, licking stamps, and trips to the mail box.

- Of all the methods for developing relationships on the internet, it is the most common - and perhaps the most powerful.

- Although friendships and romances may indeed begin in chat rooms, instant messaging, avatar communities, blogs, or other environments, these relationships almost always expand into e-mail as a way to deepen the communication.

- It is a more private, more reliable, less chaotic way to talk.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Even when other online tools improve greatly by becoming more effectively visual and auditory - as in video teleconferencing - e-mail will not disappear.

- Many people will prefer it because it is a non-visual and non-auditory form of communication.

- After all, we don't see people rushing out to buy video equipment to accessorize their telephone, even though that technology has been available for some time.

- E-mail is not just electronic mail sent via the internet.

- E-mail communication creates a psychological space in which pairs of people - or groups of people - interact.

- It creates a context and boundary in which human relationships can unfold.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- **Private Language**

- Like any subculture, the world of e-mailing has developed a unique language.

- Having its own novel terms and expressions that outsiders don't understand gives any group a sense of distinctive identity.

- To be in the group is to be in the know. If you appropriately use the parlance, you are demonstrating your knowledge of and belonging to the subculture.

- The unique language also evolves for purely practical reasons.

- It makes communication more efficient.

- In the world of avid e-mail users, a variety of acronyms and abbreviations have developed. Many of these were borrowed from chat lingo. For example:

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- imho - in my humble opinion
  btw - by the way
  jk - just kidding
  ppl - people
  irl - in real life
  fyi - for your information
  brb - be right back
  afk - away from keyboard

- A private language also may develop between two people or among a small group of people who e-mail each other frequently. It may include unique acronyms, expressions, character symbols and words (neologisms) that only those people understand. The evolution of that private language reflects the evolving identity, cohesion, and intimacy of the dyad or group. Usually the language crystallizes around issues that are discussed frequently and therefore personally important to the e-mail partners.

HYPOTHESES ABOUT ONLINE TEXT RELATIONSHIPS

- Even though cyberspace is filled with all sorts of sights and sounds - and becoming more multimedia rich every day - most relationships among people form and grow within typed text.

- E-mail probably accounts for most one-on-one relating, but message boards, chat, and instant messaging also bring people together. Even web sites, especially those of an autobiographical nature, can lead to friendships and romances.

- The site starts out as a one-to-many relationship between the creator and the readers - and over time, contact via private e-mail between a reader and the writer refines that relationship and moves it to a more personal, one-on-one level.

- Such text relationships are not unique to cyberspace. Writers have connected to their readers for as long as there have been books. Letters have supplemented f2f relationships since the birth of the alphabet. It's just that cyberspace has made text relationships so much easier and efficient as on a day-to-day level.

- So how do text relationships work? What are the pros and cons? Below are a list of hypotheses that I've gather from articles I read and written, and from my discussions with all sorts of people, online and off. I've gathered them loosely into 7 categories. Some of these hypotheses are more robust than others, but they are JUST hypotheses - not truths etched into stone. If there is any single truth in psychology, it's the fact that people are different. Which of these do you find to be true?

- **1. <u>The subjective experience of text communication</u>**

- 1.1. Text talk is a sophisticated, expressive art form. People vary greatly in their ability to express themselves via text. While it can be learned, some people are naturally good at it.

  1.2. Some people are more sensitive in detecting the meaning and mood expressed "between the lines" of text communication. There is a special type of interpersonal empathy that is unique to text relationships.

  1.3. The psychological meaning people associate with "writing" (often related to school years) will affect how they experience text communication. People with insecurities about writing may prefer chat over e-mail.

  1.4. Some people may experience text communication as a type of "merging" with the mind of the online other.

  1.5. People experience the other's text message as a "voice" inside their head.

  1.6. Text communication restructures the way people think about their relationships and themselves.

- 1.8. Some people experience their message as a piece of themselves

1.9. Even though we may not be fully aware of it, we always develop a mental image of the other person in a text relationship.

1.10. Humor, and especially sarcasm, is difficult to express in text relationships.

1.11. Text relationships lend themselves to "multi-tasking" - i.e., carrying on multiple relationships simultaneously.

1.12. In text relationships one participates in the relationship while simultaneously observing oneself in the relationship ("seeing" oneself on screen).

1.13. Receiving no reply in a text relationship tends to result in projections as to why the person did not reply.

1.14. A person's ambivalence about intimacy may be expressed in text communication, which is a paradoxical blend of allowing people to be honest and to feel close, while also maintaining their distance.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN F2F AND ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

- 2.1. For some people, text relationships encourage more self-expression and self-reflection than f2f communication. For others, less.

2.2 Some people experience text relationships as more predictable, safe, and less anxiety-provoking than f2f relationships.

2.3. People who are very verbal and expressive offline may not be in an online relationship. And vice versa.

2.4. People who lack f2f verbal skills may prefer text relationships.

2.5. Some important aspects of a person may be obvious in-person but almost invisible online.

2.6. Some people prefer the text relationship over knowing each other f2f.

2.7. Elements of people's online relationships may reveal what's missing in their f2f relationships.

- 2.8. In text relationships, some people explore their interpersonal style and experiment with new behaviors. What is learned online can be carried into offline relationships.

2.9. Online relationships form and disappear more easily than f2f relationships.

2.10. Intimacy develops more rapidly in text relationships than in f2f relationships

2.11. Combining f2f contact with online contact of various types offers people the opportunity to explore and integrate different cognitive styles and ways of being. Different channels of communication may work best for different people.

2.12. Close online relationships naturally progress to f2f meetings.

2.13. Meeting f2f for the first time changes how one subsequently perceives the other online.

2.14. Meeting f2f enriches the online relationship and/or challenges the image one had of the online other.

2.15. Interacting with someone online and offline on an ongoing basis may result in a "separate tracks" relationship. The relationship may be a bit different online than it is offline.

3. ABSENT F2F CUES AND STIMULATION

- 3.1. Lacking f2f cues, text communication can be limited, ambiguous and an easy target for misunderstanding and projection.

3.2. Lacking f2f cues, text communication disinhibits people, encouraging them to be more open and honest than usual, or encouraging them to act out inappropriately.

3.3. The lack of touch and body contact can significantly reduce the experience of intimacy in text relationships.

3.4 Some people are attracted to the silent, less visually stimulating, and non-tactile quality of text relationships.

3.5. People struggling with social anxiety or with issues about shame and guilt may be drawn to text relationships in which they cannot be "seen."

3.6. Text communication enables people to avoid the f2f cues that are distracting or irrelevant to the relationship.

3.7. Without the distraction of f2f cues, text relationships enable people to connect more directly to the other's psyche.

4. <u>SAVED MESSAGES</u>

- 4.1. Saved messages can be accurate information for reliving and reevaluating the relationship. They provide continuity in the relationship.

  4.2. Quoted text may be cited as "proof" of something someone previously said, but quoted text can be taken out of context and juxtaposed with other quoted text, which distorts its meaning.

  4.3. Saving text dialogues can help people reduce errors in recall, some of which might be due to distorted perceptions of the other person.

  4.4. Saved text read at different points in time will be interpreted differently based on changes in the person's state of mind and the overall psychological context in which the text is read.

  4.5. People vary widely in how much of their messages they save and what types of messages they save. This reflects their attitude and style of being in the relationship.

  4.6. By using several sections of quoted text within a single message, multiple layers of one's online relationship can be addressed simultaneously... sometimes considerably different layers.

5. TEMPORALITY AND PACING (ASYNCHRONOUS/SYNCHRONOUS FACTORS)

5.1. The ability to delay responding in e-mail and message boards can enhance self-control, self-reflection, and the assimilation of experiences in the relationship.

5.2. Delayed text communication enables people to say exactly what they want to say.

5.3. During emotional points in an asynchronous text relationship, people sometimes respond immediately without taking advantage of the time delay.

5.4. Because text communication is slower than speaking, people are motivated to "get to the point."

5.5. People vary widely in the intensity and frequency that they communicate via text. Adjusting to the other person's pace is important in the relationship.

5.6. The short and long delays in text exchanges require people to get "in synch" with each other for communication to be more effective.

5.7. A change in the pacing of messages reflects a change in the relationship.

5.8. In the course of an ongoing text relationship, there will be a changing rhythm of spontaneous and carefully thought out messages that parallels the ebb and flow of the relationship itself.

- 5.9. The easy and continuous opportunity to send a message to the other person can create a comforting feeling that the connection to that person is "always there" or even that the other is "always present." Feelings of separation may be eased.
5.10. The feeling of the other's presence is stronger in synchronous communication in that they are present in-the-moment. The feeling of the other's presence is stronger in asynchronous communication in that people have more opportunity to express complexity and subtlety in what they write about themselves.
5.11. Meeting an e-mail or message board friend in chat is a sign of increased intimacy and/or commitment to the relationship. Contacting a chat friend via e-mail is a sign of increased intimacy and/or commitment to the relationship.
5.12. Some people enjoy and benefit from the spontaneity and specific temporal boundary that is involved in chat meetings.
5.13. Chat meetings create a point-by-point connectedness that enhances feelings of intimacy, presence, and "arriving together" at ideas.

6. <u>MESSAGE CONSTRUCTION</u>

- 6.1. Text relationships are not the same as traditional "writing" activities, including letter writing.

6.2. The overall visual construction of a text message (frequency of line breaks, size of paragraphs, insertion of quoted text, etc.) reveals a person's mood and state of mind.

6.3. Writing style and effectiveness changes as a result of what is happening in the ongoing relationship. Composition can become more casual, detailed, and expressive as the relationship develops and people feel safe to explore; it regresses when they feel threatened, hurt, or angry.

6.4. In an ongoing text relationship, the people involved develop their own private "language" of abbreviations, symbols, and phrasings.

- 6.5. The subject title of a message is an important layer of the communication. It can lead into, highlight, elaborate, or even contradict a particular idea in the message.

6.6. Even very simple behaviors, like saying "hello," can be expressed in many different, subtle ways.

6.7. Parenthetical expressions (behaviors or internal thoughts described as "asides" in parentheses) can be as expressive or perhaps more expressive than f2f cues.

6.8. The use of emoticons, trailers, caps, and other keyboard techniques adds an almost infinite variety of creative expressiveness to a text message.

7. ONLINE IDENTITY AND INTERPERSONAL STYLES

- 7.1. The person's writing style and message format reflects his/her personality. Changes in style and format reflect changes in mood and thinking.

  7.2. Some people express their "true self" in text relationships, or believe they do.

  7.3. Despite conscious attempts to present oneself exactly as one wishes, hidden elements of one's personality unconsciously surface in text communication.

  7.4. The online name/s and identities that people choose for themselves reflects their personalities.

  7.5. Socially anxious people may enjoy and benefit from text relationships. Text relationships can be used to desensitize social anxieties and build social skills.

  7.6. Talking about one's online text relationships with friends and family helps one gain a better perspective on those relationships.

  7.7. As a way to avoid "saying their goodbyes," online relationships and groups may tend to "fizzle out" by people gradually sending fewer and fewer messages.

  7.8. Even though audio and visual internet technology will become easier and less expensive to use, text communication will never disappear and will be preferred by some people.

TRANSFERENCE AMONG PEOPLE ONLINE

- Transference occurs when a person redirects some of their feelings or desires for another person to an entirely different person.

- One example of transference is when you observe characteristics of your father in a new boss. You attribute fatherly feelings to this new boss. They can be good or bad feelings.

- As another example, you may meet a new neighbor and immediately see a physical resemblance to a previous spouse. You then attribute mannerisms of your ex to this new person.

- Transference can happen even in the face of distinct differences. It often makes you look past these dissimilarities to the likenesses.

TRANSFERENCE AMONG PEOPLE ONLINE

- It is common for people to transfer feelings about their parents to their partners or children (that is, cross-generational entanglements).

- Another example of transference would be a person mistrusting somebody who resembles an ex-spouse in manners, voice, or external appearance, or being overly compliant to someone who resembles a childhood friend.

- In *The Psychology of the Transference*, Carl Jung states that within the transference dyad both participants typically experience a variety of opposites, that in love and in psychological growth, the key to success is the ability to endure the tension of the opposites without abandoning the process, and that this tension allows one to grow and to transform.

TRANSFERENCE AMONG PEOPLE ONLINE

- **Transference** is a phenomenon within psychotherapy in which the "feelings, attitudes, or desires" a person had about one thing are subconsciously projected onto the here-and-now Other.

- It usually concerns feelings from a primary relationship during childhood.

- At times, this transference can be considered inappropriate.

- Transference was first described by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, who considered it an important part of psychoanalytic treatment.

TRANSFERENCE AMONG PEOPLE ONLINE

- Transference can also happen in a healthcare setting. For example, transference in therapy happens when a patient attaches anger, hostility, love, adoration, or a host of other possible feelings onto their therapist or doctor. Therapists know this can happen. They actively try to monitor for it.

- Sometimes, as part of their therapy process, some therapists even actively encourage it. As part of psychoanalysis, therapists try to understand a person's unconscious mental processes. This can help them comprehend that patient's actions, behaviors, and feelings.

TRANSFERENCE AMONG PEOPLE ONLINE

- The psychoanalytic concept of "transference" is especially important for understanding online relationships.

- Because the experience of the other person often is limited to text, there is a tendency for the user to project a variety of wishes, fantasies, and fears onto the ambiguous figure at the other end of cyberspace.

- The "blending" of one's mind with the other, as some users describe the experience of relating in cyberspace, may reflect this transference process. In fact, some users describe this blending of mind with the computer itself.

- Transference to the computer and to other users may interact in very subtle, complex ways. As one avid cybernaut once told me, "wherever I go on the internet, I discover myself."

TRANSFERENCE AMONG PEOPLE ONLINE

- Unconscious motivations related to the transference will also affect the "filtering" process that determines the choices the user makes in establishing relationships. Users may be surprised to find that the close friends they make online all seem to be the same types of people, even though this was not immediately obvious at the start of the relationship.

- This unconscious "homing" device can be very sensitive. Even when communicating only via text and in cumbersome or distracting online environments, we nevertheless zoom in on relationships that touch some hidden need within us.

- When people exchange photos, call on the telephone, or finally meet the other, they are often surprised at how the real person does not always match the image they had developed in their mind.

- Meeting face-to-face challenges and reshapes the transference reactions.