

Interview with Estibaliz Ansotegi, psychologist who will give the course 'Current situation of non-substance addictions: Gambling and sports betting'



Throughout the month of May, the course **'Current situation of non-substance addictions: Gambling and sports betting'** will be held at the Gazteen Euskal Behatokia by Estibaliz Ansotegi Guruziaga, a psychology graduate and coordinator of addiction prevention programmes at Ortzadar.

We took the opportunity to talk to Estibaliz and discuss with her how they see the situation in the classroom, whether there have been any changes after the pandemic, etc.

Despite having been working on behavioural addictions in the classroom for many years, have you noticed any changes in recent months?

Although we have been working for many years on raising awareness and reducing the risks associated with behavioural addictions, these last two courses have been very curious. We have collected many testimonies in which they have told us how their habits have changed, both

during and after the pandemic, the difficulties that some people have felt in minimising the hours of use as they gradually return to normality, the gap in their sleep time, etc. Most people commented that they felt much safer socialising on the networks, as they were afraid of meeting people face-to-face. This feeling has been disappearing, although from time to time we come across some people who are still in this situation.

Do you have any examples that have particularly caught your attention?

The truth is that it would be difficult to choose just one example, but to sum up, one of the things that continues to attract our attention is the number of hours they spend on the internet, games, videogames, networks, etc.

Most of the people we work with say that during the first months of confinement they could spend up to 16 hours playing games, watching series, on networks... As they have recovered their lives, most of them have been reducing the hours of use, but some people say that it is very difficult for them.

Another thing that strikes us is that many people go to class without having slept enough hours. This fact is also corroborated by teachers. They say that sometimes in the early hours there is greater absenteeism, in class you see that they are sleepy or half asleep... Most of them say that they go to bed with their phones and lose track of time very easily.

Do you think there has been an increase in the use of the internet, gambling and sports betting?

During the first months of the pandemic, it is clear that the use of technology, consumption of series, video games and these types of games increased, as in many cases there was not much else to do.

When talking to the students we worked with, they mainly commented that their consumption of series and video games increased. Other types of games with money, such as sports betting or games of chance, also increased, although not so much among the students we worked with. According to what they told us, most of them prefer to gamble in person. In summary, what we have observed from the team has been an increase in the consumption of series and, above all, in the number of hours spent on networks or video games.

In our case it has been something more anecdotal, but more and more people are commenting on cryptocurrencies. It is becoming common to find people who are spending their money on this phenomenon. So it will be a point that we will have to pay attention to.

Finally, what recommendations would you give to people working with young people on this issue?

- Emphasise the importance of analysing and reflecting on the real risks that can be involved in sports betting, online games, social networks, etc. Talk about and educate on the subject, fundamentally.
- Control the use made of social networks (what is published and what is shared) and of betting and gambling, especially among minors.
- Raise society's awareness of the real risks of these games and applications; we are all part of this problem and we all have something to do and to say.
- Reinforce self-care behaviours, use limits and rules in their use.
- Encourage self-analysis and criticism of these companies.

