

Millions gripped by NEDS

*New study findings link heavy Internet usage, information overload and social isolation to NEDS
(New Economy Depression Syndrome)*

Tim Sanders and HeartMath® are releasing new findings of a national study that links depression and symptoms of depression with the always-on-economy. The project spokesperson and founder is Tim Sanders, Internet executive and author of the New York Times Bestseller LOVE IS THE KILLER APP.

Tim worked at the core of the new economy during its birth and wrote a book about how to survive and thrive during this time of technical efficiency and inhumanity. “In a world of constant interruption and too much information, Love is the Killer App. In short, the solution is not to turn off your computer, but to build your resiliency through warm living,” says Sanders. Tim believes technology is good for many things and says it’s here to stay but warns that the isolation often created by technology can be devastating.

Over the last two years, as he traveled the globe giving keynote speeches and presentations he heard an alarming number of stories from people who are struggling with what he has coined, NEDS – New Economy Depression Syndrome.

NEDS is a self-reinforcing depression brought on by information overload and frequent interruption leading to an erosion of close personal relationships. Symptoms of NEDS include anxiety, exhaustion, burn-out, difficulty making decisions, irritability, sadness, and sleep disturbances. Tim believed underlying many of these symptoms is information overload. For example information workers scan hundreds of pages of information daily while enduring a constant flow of interruptions from cell phones, blackberries, instant messaging and pagers. At the same time, many people lack quality interaction in relationships. Some of us even email the person in the cubicle next to us instead of walking five feet to ask a question. There are also countless others whose primary communications and contact occurs in cyberspace. This combination of information overload, constant interruption and social isolation can be emotionally and physically devastating.

Tim realized work had to be more personal. Life in Cyberspace is missing the warmhearted connections that come from more intimate contact -- meeting with people in person, talking live on the phone. "As I traveled the world sharing my theory," he says, "I began to get inundated with emails from people saying that their lives were empty because they lived only in cyberspace—a cold place. Research from around the world suggested the existence of internet addiction and technology related depression."

Based on the Japanese research by Chiba University, combined with the domestic user research by Metafacts, Tim has estimated that over 8 million Americans qualify as NEDS victims. The health effects include heart disease, high blood pressure and reduced immune system performance. The impact on business includes lost productivity. A recent study by the Journal of the American Medical Association estimates that 44 billion dollars are lost each year in productivity because of work related depression - NEDS could cause a large segment of that loss. This motivated Sanders to create this research project to confirm the relationship between technology use and depression.

To validate his theory on NEDS and to help find solutions, Tim teamed with researchers at HeartMath to create and analyze a study aimed at uncovering the symptoms linked to NEDS and to confirm the NEDS hypothesis. The survey was completed in early August 2003.

HeartMath is best known for their cutting-edge research and scientifically validated solutions to stress. (<http://www.heartmath.com>) For over a decade, their research has helped to define the role of the heart in connection to our emotional experiences and how this relationship affects our health, quality of life, cognitive function, and performance.

Over 1,500 people participated in the survey testing the NEDS theory. The study, based on survey data from the general population was designed to test the significance of the relationship between PC and internet usage, information overload and depression. The results were controlled for recent stressful life events such as major changes in business and, or personal life. Following are some of the survey findings:

- There is a significant relationship between symptoms of depression and the experience of information overload and the number of hours using the Internet.

- The more the hours spent on the Internet, the higher the symptoms of depression.
- Of those who reported more than 30 hours of weekly Internet usage, 45% feel exhausted often or most of the time and 37% reported having sleep related problems.
- Of those who reported more than 30 hours in weekly Internet use, 17% feel less connected with friends and family than they did a year ago.
- Those who experienced high levels of information overload also reported increased symptoms of depression.
- Of those who reported feeling information overload three or more times per week, 41% feel tense and 43% have difficulty remembering things often or most of the time.
- Of those who reported being interrupted by digital devices more than ten times per day, 41% feel exhausted often or most of the time.
- Measuring symptoms of depression and information overload, 6.3% of the respondents are candidates for New Economy Depression Syndrome.
- Candidates for NEDS were more likely to be male than female. 7.7% of the male participants in the survey were candidates for NEDS, verses 5.6% of the women.
- Those who felt warmhearted, and easy-going more often, reported less depression symptoms.

These findings were not surprising to HeartMath. HeartMath trains thousands of people each year in major corporations on how to increase workplace performance and reduce stress. HeartMath's work has been published in journals such as the *American Journal of Cardiology*, *Stress Medicine*, and *Preventive Cardiology*. Their POQA survey data of over 4,600 working professionals represents the current workforce and documents a growing trend in stress related issues and symptoms of depression. Of the 4,600 people surveyed by HeartMath as part of their pre-training process, 32% reported feeling exhausted and fatigued often or most of the time and 29% reported feeling anxious often or most of the time.

Says Tim, "HeartMath has completed over a decade of research on the subject and has developed a powerful system for helping people deal with anxiety, stress, and feelings of overwhelm. Their training programs emphasis the intelligence of being warmhearted. HeartMath has relevant research that can provide scientifically validated solutions for NEDS. When I wrote my book, *LOVE IS THE KILLER APP*, I advocated my own personal system that included building powerful and warm relationships with knowledge sharing, networking, and acts of compassion. This

system helped me and many others overcome the general level of unhappiness which I now know was NEDS. I needed the warm compassion of others to overcome this. HeartMath's research and solutions support my theory."

Terry Real, a leading expert on the subject of depression, and founder of the Relational Recovery Institute, approached Sanders about his findings and offered to contribute valuable thinking based on his clinical experience and knowledge on depression. Real was the first person to discuss male depression in his New York Times best-selling book, *I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT*. Terry Real has been involved in screening respondents to the recent NEDS survey to identify personal stories from people that have recovered or suffered damage to their job, family, health and/or mental well being as a result of NEDS. Terry reflects, "One of our respondents was a doctor with a clear case of NEDS. Her hospital changed to computer-based records. That sounded great on paper, but now instead of talking to a specialist whenever she had a question, she needed to sift through hundred of pages of written materials- -far more than she could possibly digest. She lost her relationships, her sense of creativity and slammed into information overload. The result was a clinical depression." These personal stories may be available as content for an extended show or segment on NEDS.

As a therapist Real is particularly impressed with the role of relationships in the NEDS equation. According to Real, "Rich relationships buffer us from the stress of information overload. I am just beginning to look at the solutions, but the direction is clear: High Tech Plus Low Relationships = NEDS. We need to reverse that, encouraging tech-free zones in our workspace and nurturing human interaction."

Real sees "Internet Addiction" as part of the larger NEDS picture. He observes, "Addiction is the most extreme form of the process affecting all of us. Technology is seductive, it's fast and easy - a psychological junk food. The more we turn to it the less satisfied we feel. Then we go back to our emails and cell-phones for another "hit." As a society I think we need to learn how to unplug and hug. You will be more productive, and a lot happier, in the long run."

Tim Sanders, Bruce Cryer, President and CEO of HeartMath and depression expert, Terrence Real will be available for national broadcast, print and radio segments and tapings. For More

Information and to get advanced information on the complete survey, NEDS and/or any of the partners please contact: Heidi Krupp @ Krupp Kommunikationen 212/579-2010 HKrupp@KruppKommunikationen.com or www.kruppkommunikationen.com or Gabriella Boehmer @ HeartMath 831-338-8710 gboehmer@heartmath.com or go to <http://www.timsanders.com/neds>.