

Up your downtime
How your daily routine can save you from burnout
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'Sometimes, you may look for a high in the wrong places'

Neerja Birla on the need to increase awareness about a dangerous life-threatening game, and online addiction



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The Blue Whale Challenge is an online game, which has been taking more victims from India recently. The online game encourages vulnerable teens to follow a series of challenges, culminating in taking their own lives.

Neerja Birla, wife of industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla and a champion for mental health awareness, came across one such teenager, who is undergoing counselling at her mental health facility. "He is a 17-year-old from a well-

to-do family," says Birla. "Somebody from the family found the kid attempting to play the game and brought it to our notice. That is why awareness is important. The family members knew the dangers of the game, and it helped in timely prevention of any mishap."

Birla believes that most of the youngsters who fall prey to such games have some underlying form of mental problems. "It's a combination of seeking a thrill, while being mentally disturbed to some extent. The thrill some people get out of being in a dark zone is so high that by the time they reach the dan-

ger zone, they are addicted," says Birla.

"We all want to do things that give us a kick of sorts. Some of us get that out of exercise, which is a positive thing. But sometimes, you may end up looking for a high in the wrong places," she adds.

"We all want to do things that give us a kick of sorts"

- NEERJA BIRLA

Risk of online addiction

Birla urges people to watch out for symptoms of online addiction. "If you feel low when you don't have access to the internet, you are probably addicted. Personally, I don't find myself looking at my phone for no reason. I browse through Twitter be-

cause I find it interesting."

Apart from a bit of social media, Birla says she plays Sudoku and crossword games on her phone. "These are like my go-to moments when I want to clear my mind in a jiffy. Other than that, I like to play Candy Crush. My kids get a little annoyed when they see me on the phone, looking busy, only to realise I am playing Candy Crush," she says with a laugh. "It takes away from my time with them, when we are sitting together in a group. My youngest [of three children] gets the most annoyed, but thankfully, I'm not addicted to anything. I use a messaging app to stay connected with family and friends. A lot of work also gets done through this app these days," she says.



Neerja Birla (centre) with her daughters Ananya (left) and Advaitesha (right). A big proponent of family time, Birla believes it can wear one away from online addiction