

The science behind why we binge-watch

Binge-watching is an easy, feel-good fix

For many viewers, binge-watching gives us an escape from the day-to-day grind. Entertainment has always offered a way to escape from the pressures of daily life, and binge-watching is no exception. [...]

“TV viewers are no longer zoning out as a way to forget about their day, they are tuning in, on their own schedule, to a different world. Getting immersed in multiple episodes or even multiple seasons of a show over a few weeks is a new kind of escapism that is especially welcomed today”, cultural anthropologist Grant McGracken says. [...]

The line between enjoyment and unhealthy habits

Binge-watching can be a great way to relax and de-stress, but it can easily become a problem when you regularly prioritize it over other important activities.

Like gambling and other behavioral addictions, binge-watching activates the part of our brain responsible for

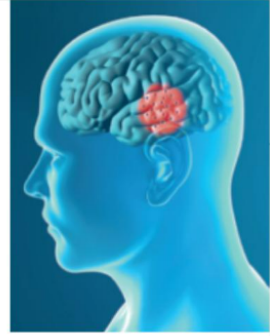
“reward” functions, producing dopamine and making us feel good. [...] It takes more and more of the same activity to give us that same feeling of enjoyment, making binge-watching that much harder to stop.

When we’re forced to stop watching (usually when we finish the entire series), we quite literally “mourn” the loss—a kind of “post-binge malaise” [...].

Striking a good binge-watching balance

[...] It’s important to remember that there’s a fine line between healthy viewing habits and addictive behavior. Commit to only watching a certain number of episodes in advance, then cut yourself off and balance your binge-watching with activities like exercise or spending time with friends.

Adapted from Jenny Mudarri, 2 April 2019, © wistia.com



1 Read the first part, concentrate on what you understand and on the repetitions.

Can you explain the word “fix” and why people binge-watch?

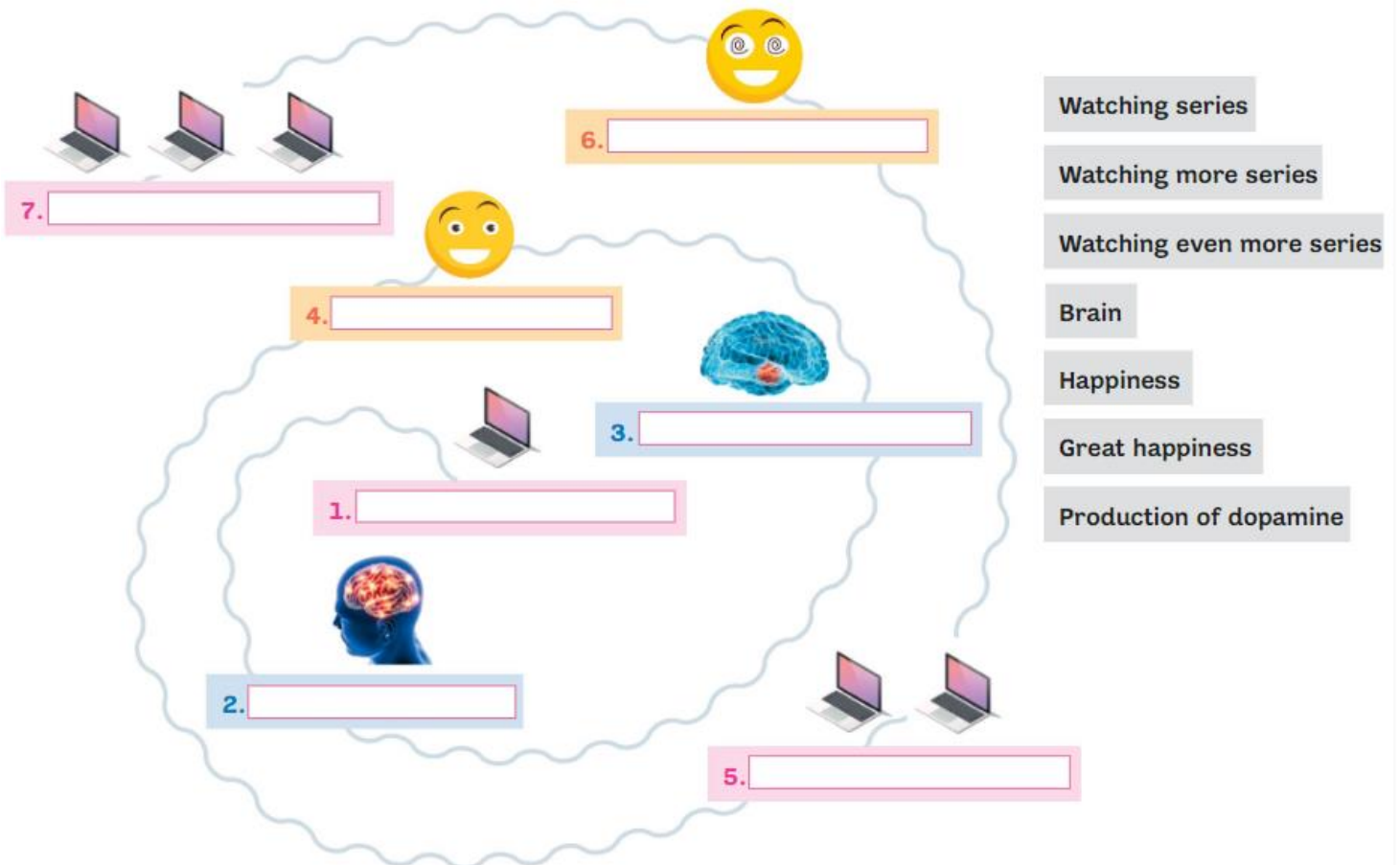
Your notes:

Your summary:

Your explanation:

2 Use the elements given to label the diagram.

The mechanism of addiction



3 In the second part of the text, find the sentence that best explains this mechanism.

4 Now that you understand addiction, explain the expression “post-binge malaise” (l. 28).

5 In the last part of the text, find the activities to “strike a good binge-watching balance”.



How addicted are you? Take the quiz with a partner

ASSESS YOUR LEVEL OF ADDICTION

1. How many episodes have you watched without interruption?

- I don't watch series.
- Between 2 and 6.
- A whole season.

2. Have you ever felt frustrated not to have time to watch the next episode of your favourite series?

- No, I have never felt any frustration.
- Yes, I have sometimes felt really frustrated.
- Yes, I have often been very frustrated.

3. Have you ever followed the latest news on your favourite series / actor / actress?

- No, I haven't. I only follow my friends.
- Yes, I sometimes have.
- Yes, I often have.

4. Have you ever felt a little depressed at the end of a season?

- No, I never have.
- Yes, I have felt depressed once or twice.
- Yes, I always feel a bit low at the end of a series.

5. Have you ever been aggressive towards the person trying to interrupt your binge-watching?

- No, I haven't.
- Once or twice.
- It happens all the time.

6. Have you ever felt really sad because your favourite character is having a hard time in the series?

- No, I never think about series.
- Yes, I have once or twice.
- Yes, I have.

7. Have you ever had a crush on the actor/actress in your favourite series?

- No, I never have.
- Yes, it has happened once.
- Yes, I have.

How addicted are you? Take the quiz with a partner

ASSESS YOUR LEVEL OF ADDICTION

1. How many episodes have you watched without interruption?

- I don't watch series.
- Between 2 and 6.
- A whole season.

2. Have you ever felt frustrated not to have time to watch the next episode of your favourite series?

- No, I have never felt any frustration.
- Yes, I have sometimes felt really frustrated.
- Yes, I have often been very frustrated.

3. Have you ever followed the latest news on your favourite series / actor / actress?

- No, I haven't. I only follow my friends.
- Yes, I sometimes have.
- Yes, I often have.

4. Have you ever felt a little depressed at the end of a season?

- No, I never have.
- Yes, I have felt depressed once or twice.
- Yes, I always feel a bit low at the end of a series.

5. Have you ever been aggressive towards the person trying to interrupt your binge-watching?

- No, I haven't.
- Once or twice.
- It happens all the time.

6. Have you ever felt really sad because your favourite character is having a hard time in the series?

- No, I never think about series.
- Yes, I have once or twice.
- Yes, I have.

7. Have you ever had a crush on the actor/actress in your favourite series?

- No, I never have.
- Yes, it has happened once.
- Yes, I have.