

Addicted to Love



“LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED.” For the person addicted to love, this becomes more than a popular lyric. It becomes literal. What is love addiction? How can the problem be identified, and how can those addicted be helped?

A Psychological Addiction

Love addiction is a psychological addiction, possibly a result of unfulfilled childhood needs. Children whose needs remain unrecognized may adjust by learning to limit their expectations. This limitation process may take the form of harmful ideas such as, “My needs don’t count,” “Getting close will hurt” and “I’m not worth loving.” Such ideas don’t satisfy childhood needs, leaving them still to be met later in life. As adults, addictive lovers remain dependent upon others to care for them, protect them and solve their problems.

Love addicts are characteristically familiar with desperate hopes and seemingly unending fears. Fearing rejection, pain, unfamiliar experiences, and having no faith in their ability to inspire love, they wait, wish and hope for love, perhaps their least familiar experience.

Characteristics of Addictive Love

For addicts, love:

- ♥ is all-consuming and obsessive.
- ♥ is inhibited.
- ♥ avoids risk or change.
- ♥ lacks true intimacy.
- ♥ is manipulative, strikes deals.
- ♥ is dependent and parasitic.
- ♥ demands the loved one’s devotion.

Effects of Love Addiction

Addictive love is obsessed with finding the world in one lover. Their own growth and development having been thwarted earlier in life, addicted lovers attach themselves to their lover’s identity. Often, this dependency results in their drawing unearned pride from their lover’s accomplishments. Sometimes it leads to their demanding, for themselves, undeserved recognition for their lover’s achievements.

Fearful of change, addictive lovers will stifle development of their own self, finding the ultimate security in believing they can become indistinguishable from their mate. Sometimes the fear of change is so great, all individual development of abilities, interests, and desires is suppressed. Stagnation is a common characteristic of addictive love relationships.

The desperate need for security leads to emotional scheming. Addictive lovers are inclined to think that doing things for their mate will secure their love. The resulting opportunities for disappointment and resentment are sufficient to make such scheming futile. But addictive lovers are obsessed with impossible needs and unrealistic expectations. Love demands honesty and self-integrity. And it’s a dynamic relationship, itself cultivating growth and change in lovers. The dependent, frightened attachments of love addicts are destructive to love.

Freedom From Love Addiction

If you discover you’re in an addictive relationship, you may want to seek professional assistance.

Specialized counseling is available for those dealing directly or indirectly with this form of addiction. Your company’s Employee Assistance Program may provide a referral, or your health plan may offer such counseling services.

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