

# The Imago Concept

Susan Peabody

The Imago is in your imagination. It is a fantasy person you have created in your childhood of the perfect man or woman—your soul mate. You slowly create your Imago over your childhood, based on significant people in your life and figures presented in movies and books about romantic love. Sometime, in early adolescence, your Imago is finished and you go hunting for him or her. You never really stop looking no matter how old you get.

With love addicts, the Imago is a very important person. When you meet him, you feel an instant attraction and intimacy that you think you have been waiting for all of your life. Your Imago seems perfect and you are very excited about finally meeting him.

At this point, love addicts lose all perspective. They begin to ignore things that should be noticed like this person being unavailable or distant. This is when you get addicted. No matter how many negative things are going on, you dismiss them as being irrelevant. Then out of the blue your Imago declares that the relationship is not working for him and you are left heartbroken.

People with high self-esteem move on, but love addicts dig in their heels and try to win the Imago back. If your Imago is a seductive withholder, he will come back and you will begin the dance all over again. However this time you get more hooked on the relationship.

As the addiction progress, you get more and more desperate and start doing things that you would never do under ordinary circumstances. You obsess. You become self-destructive. You try to make contact over and over again and you may even drive by his house to talk to him. It is at this point that addicts end up in jail for stalking and then a mental hospital. All because of their Imago whom they feel they cannot live without.

In the conscious mind, the Imago is whomever you want him to be. In your unconscious mind he is the only one you want. You may leave a good marriage or even be willing to die for this person. Many people want to kill themselves rather than let go of what they think is their soul mate.

Everybody has an Imago, but if you grew up in a loving home, and your Imago is a good person, things may work out when you meet him. But love addicts always have a “Negative Imago,” which is unavailable, narcissistic, selfish, controlling, and unable to reciprocate your love. All this is disguised in the beginning of course.

To end this cycle, you must awaken yourself to the truth that you are in love with a fantasy as much as the man or woman you are chasing. Then you must let go of both the fantasy and the person and move on to recovery. Recovery is about letting go and moving on.

Many people would rather be alone than give up the excitement of a relationship with their Imago. Their other relationships seem boring and seem to have something missing. This is the way all addicts are. They chase after the high that they had in the beginning of the addiction. Rarely are they able to hold on to it. After awhile, the addiction becomes all about avoiding withdrawal.

When you are in recovery and ready to date, you want to look at your Imago and talk to your inner child about creating a new, Healthy Imago. There will be less excitement and drama, but this is better than having to go into withdrawal again with another Imago.

LAA has a dating plan for those who want to look for a healthy person and give up the Imago of your imagination. This will all take time, but it is worth it. You will be happier than you have ever been before. Less drama and more happiness.

The concept of the Imago is described in the book, *How to Get the Love You Want*, by Harville Hendrix, or for singles, *Keeping the Love You Find*.