

Love Addiction & Love Avoidance

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When it comes to toxic love and relationships, there are two kinds of people, those who love too much (the *Love Addict*), and those who love too little, (the *Love Avoidant*). If you vacillate between the two you are an *Ambivalent Love Addict*.

Love Addicts

Love Addicts obsess about someone, and they cannot let go, even if their PoA (Person of Addiction) is unavailable or toxic. By this I mean they are:

- Afraid to commit;
- Cannot communicate;
- Unloving/distant;
- Abusive/controlling and dictatorial (narcissistic);
- Addicted to something outside the relationship (hobbies, drugs, alcohol, sex, someone else, gambling, shopping etc.).

Love Addicts who obsess for years are called *Torchbearers*. This used to be called unrequited love. This kind of love addiction, more than any other, feeds on fantasies and delusions. Torchbearers often believe that their infatuation is reciprocated (returned) when it is not (erotomania).

If the Love Addict is not in love anymore, but is just hanging in there for the companionship, they are a *Relationship Addict*. If they are also codependent they are a *Codependent Relationship Addict*. Usually, these kinds of love addicts are unhappy, and the relationship is affecting their health, spirit and emotional well being, but they cannot move on. Even if their partner batters them, and they are in danger, CRA's cannot let go. They are afraid of being alone. They are afraid of change. They do not want to hurt or abandon their partners. I describe this kind of addiction as "I hate you don't leave me."

People in long-term marriages are likely to be Codependent Relationship Addicts. They want desperately to move on but can't face their fears. It is common for a CRA to overlap relationships. They find a replacement before they let go, so they don't have to experience withdrawal (separation anxiety). Even if someone is not waiting in the wings, within days of a breakup they enter into another dysfunctional relationship. They never learn that self-esteem blossoms in solitude. They are true love addicts, but it's the relationship they are addicted to.

Love Avoidants

Love Avoidants suffer from some form of childhood of incest (overt, covert, or emotional) and they fall in love but abort the relationship when it gets too serious. (By incest I mean overt (sexual molestation and rape); covert (sexual energy without touching); and emotional incest (being forced to be a surrogate partner.) Research this. I recommend *The Emotional Incest Syndrome* by Patricia Love or *The Courage to Heal* by Laura Davis. Avoidants come in several types.

Saboteurs are Avoidants who destroy relationships when they start to get serious or at whatever point their fear of intimacy comes up. This can be anytime (before the first date, after the first date, after sex, after the subject of commitment comes up) whenever. Men are more likely to be Saboteurs than women, but there are no statistics on this.

Seductive Withholders run hot and cold. They always come on to you when they want sex or companionship. When they become bored or frightened, they begin withholding companionship, sex, affection, anything that makes them feel anxious. If they leave the relationship just once, they are Saboteurs. If they keep repeating the pattern of being available/ unavailable in the same relationship, they are Seductive Withholders. SW's offer more intimacy each time they come back. They up the stakes with offers of commitment, living together, marriage, children, etc.. They rarely keep their promises to change.

Romance Addicts are Avoidants who are simultaneously addicted to multiple partners. Unlike sex addicts, who are trying to avoid bonding altogether, Romance Addicts bond with each of their partners, to one degree or another, even if the romantic liaisons are short-lived. By romance I mean "limerence" not love (sexual passion and pseudo emotional intimacy, see Dorothy Tennov). Romance Addicts are often confused with Sex Addicts. Tiger Woods was a Romance Addict. Male Romance Addicts used to be called "womanizers." There were many labels for women but they are too derogatory to repeat.

Switch-Hitting

Switching between obsessing and avoiding is very common. Long-term love addicts, after years of obsessing about one person or another, can switch to avoidance. And more surprising, is the life-time Avoidant who suddenly falls in love and becomes addicted.

Ambivalent Love Addicts

Those who vacillate between love addiction and love avoidance are called *Ambivalent Love Addicts*. Most Love Addicts and Love Avoidants are ambivalent at one time or another. They crave love but they also fear it;

The most famous kind of Ambivalent Love Addict is the Narcissist. On the surface, the Narcissist appears to be an Avoidant. He or she is usually aloof, detached, self-confident, self-centered, domineering, and/or afraid of commitment. However, when you leave Narcissists they can turn into Love Addicts because they *can't* handle being rejected. They turn to manipulation, aggression, and even violence to hold on. (O.J. Simpson was an Love Avoidant (Romance Addict) turned Love Addict.

Author's Note: I have been in the recovery business as a Wounded Healer for 27 years, and I am ready to state firmly that most Love Addicts and Avoidance Addicts are really *Ambivalent Love Addicts*, especially if they make it all the way to recovery.

The Ambivalent Love Addict in Recovery

It is a common pattern for Love Addicts to obsess when someone is unavailable and then become ambivalent when a healthy person comes along. This happens a lot in recovery. For more about this, read *Finally Getting it Right* by Harville Hendrix.

The Roots of the Problem

While I stand behind my own book *Addiction to Love*, the best book about the relationship between dysfunctional relationships and our childhood is Howard Halpern's book *How to Break Your Addiction to a Person*. Halpern and I both agree that love addiction and love avoidance stem from the emotional wounds of our childhood. In general, abandonment wounds lead to obsessing, and incest wounds lead to avoidant behavior. The Ambivalent Love Addict usually has both wounds.

Conclusion

Like Goldilocks, we are all looking for the relationship that is “just right.” So whether you love too much, too little or just can’t make up your mind, take the information you have gained from this pamphlet and create a recovery program suitable for your situation. Get help and CHANGE. Remember there is hope. You are not alone and there is a brighter tomorrow.

*For more about recovery, see the recovery section in my book *Addiction to Love* and my new book *The Art of Changing*.*



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