

The Love Addict's Quest

Susan Peabody

I was with one of the people I sponsor today, and we were discussing the question of why love addicts work so hard to find limerence. Limerence is the scientific word for romantic love or passion—moods that you experience when you fall in love.

We discussed how natural it is to want romantic love in our lives, even though with some people it can become addictive. We discussed how good it feels and how it distracts us from our traumatic childhood experiences—then and now.

Finally, I said that the main reason we chase after romantic love, as if it were a life or death matter, is because it (as well as sugar), is a natural source of serotonin.

What is serotonin? “Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that sends signals between nerve cells. The main function of serotonin is to stabilize your mood as well as provide feelings of happiness and well-being . . .”

So, my friend said, “We are actually chasing serotonin not love.” “Exactly, I said.” We are chasing a lot of things. We are chasing romantic love to take the place of the maternal or paternal love we did not get as children. We are chasing our dreams of falling in love and living happily ever-after. We are chasing the memory of our first love, which is usually our father or mother. But, more importantly, for love addicts, we are chasing serotonin—a fix for our depression and despair.

Everyone wants a serotonin fix, but love addicts need it. We crave it. We look for it. We find it for short periods of time. We can't let go of it. We chase after it when it is gone. Most of all, "we look for it in all the wrong places—in all the wrong faces." In other words, we look for it where it is unavailable. We scour the earth to find it. We never give up. We obsess about it. We will, sometimes, die for it.

Recently, I lost a good friend to love addiction. She was in so much pain. She could not accept the fact that her relationship was over. This simple inability to accept the reality of her life, led her to despair. Then, she gave up on recovery. I am very sad right now.

I am writing this, because I want people to know that there are other sources of serotonin. I found it in service, charity, teaching, writing, and counseling. I was "surprised by joy." It came from an unexpected source—an invisible Higher Power and finding my bliss (Joseph Cambell)

So today, I sent my friend in search of serotonin instead of romantic love. That would come later. After she has built a foundation of healthy relationships, she can fall in love without becoming addicted. This is what happened to me and I am, as a result, "happy, joyous, and free."