

# Love Addiction

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Breaking free of love addiction/avoidance

<https://www.loveaddictionhelp.com>

**We can break free from unhealthy dependency and live in healthy loving relationships.** In so many relationships there is considerable imbalance. This is often seen in **an overly dependent addict and an avoidant** who cannot bear intimacy. Why is there such fear of intimacy or desperate need for it?



What is love addiction? - Falling in love can be the most wonderful of all emotions, except when love turns to an addiction. **Addictive relationships significantly diminishes the capacity to experience healthy relational intimacy.** And when rejected, some people contemplate stalking, homicide or suicide. Love addiction is an obsessive and dysfunctional dependency on a person in a relationship, who in reality is a fantasy. In their deep infatuation, the love addict never notices who their partner truly is. They are "hooked" on a fantasy. Physical and/or psychological withdrawal symptoms occur when the addiction is stopped. We all need to feel love and to be loved. Nevertheless, when we rely on or "need" someone in a relationship solely to feel alive, gain acceptance, a sense of self-worth and validation - this creates a powerful dependency/addiction **leading to painful relationships, a destroyed sense of self and unhappiness in life.**

The love addict - The love addict is in constant pursuit to get closer and closer which causes the avoidant partner to distance themselves. **They feel they need a person in a romantic relationship** to feel alive, valued, and worthy. **They view their partner as being better than** - "the strong and independent person who has it all together." They will give up his/her own identity in the relationship. In time the love addicts become angry and resentful because of **their partner's failure to meet expectations that are impossible** for any person to meet. **Their partner further creates distance** by focusing outside the relationship, and the love addicts denial slowly begins to crumble. Reality becomes more present.

The no contact rule - Healing from a breakup requires moving on by cutting all contact with the ex-partner. The primary purpose of No Contact is to Heal. The no contact rule is a crucial aspect of **recovering and regaining your dignity and self-respect--** including putting a stop to obsessive thinking of an ex. It's about taking care of

yourself. **No more fueling your ex-partners wants and needs while disregarding your own.** When you keep the connection going you put yourself in a less than position - you put him/her on a false pedestal making him/her your higher power.

As long as the relationship is addictive, toxic, or unhealthy; No Contact must be ongoing and permanent. Your value, worth and existence is not based on someone else. **This is to honor who you are as a human being, honoring your personal wants and needs, and learning to love you is the answer to your problems.** Hang In There And In Time This Mental Shift Will Come To You.

Stop obsessing over an ex -

1. ACCEPTANCE - Accept you are obsessed with a person, that you are responsible- and it's a problem you want to address.
2. KNOCK HIM OR HER OFF THE PEDASTAL - No one deserves to be on a pedestal above you (or any other).

Withdrawal - It is such an excruciating experience for most. You feel completely diminished and insufficient as a person. You feel a loss of self-identity. For love addicts, rejection by an ex-partner sends a false message that reinforces what they already believe inside--they are not worthy of being with. **The experience of withdrawing from an addictive relationship is a tremendous opportunity for growth.**

Distancing strategies of Love Avoidants - Growing up, the Love Avoidant **developed defensive coping mechanisms** in order to protect the self from a controlling, demanding, or needy person. Such defensive patterns are what I call Distancing Strategies. A Love Addict can often obsessively pursue romantic love with individuals (a Love Avoidant). Initially, a Love Avoidant will seem very eager to connect with their Love Addict partner. But **once hooked... the Love Avoidant flip-flops, seemingly changing into an entirely different person.** Instead of displaying a desire to connect, he/she emotionally disengages, becoming cold. They all share **a profound fear of intimacy.** Too much closeness can literally cause them **to feel suffocated, like they are losing themselves**, and yes, it can even feel like dying. They feel overwhelmed by their partner's desire for closeness. Love Avoidants fear of intimacy, vulnerability, and closeness are recurrent and pervasive. They are afraid to genuinely love and be loved by another. **They prefer independence to intimacy.** The more the Love Addict pursues, the more the Avoidant distances.

1. Avoid physical closeness— reducing sexual contact or physical affection.
2. Shun commitment to a relationship, yet appear like a committed relationship.
3. "I'm okay, my partner is the problem" ... to keep one at arm's length
4. Make him/her seem unimportant by comparison. "you're not that important to me"
5. Focus is outside/away from relationship— creates external distractions; diverts essential time and energy away from relationship.

Signs your partner is love avoidant - **Some love avoidant parents can be too vulnerable and enmeshed - becoming love addicts in relation to their children.** You may have been too clingy, or too needy, and you may have made mistakes and blunders along the way--- but these are not the reasons for why they are the way they are. Unless and only unless they are willing to look at themselves, can they change. If you are love addicted you probably draw relationship partners that are Love Avoidant.

Is my partner a love avoidant?

- My partner is compulsively focused away/outside our relationship (with work, hobbies, sports, internet, shopping, volunteering, time with friends/family, etc.).
- **My partner evades physical closeness-** such as holding hands, caressing, hugging, walking ahead, sleeps in a separate bed, etc.
- My partner wants to manage/control most aspects of our relationship (rigid view of how relationships should be; uncompromising rules).
- **My partner complains that I am too needy/sensitive/demanding.**
- My partner is someone, in whom, I am not sure I truly know.
- **My partner is hyper-focused on independence and self-reliance.**
- My partner suggests that only he/she knows what should, or should not be done in our relationship.
- My partner rarely provides me reassurance that he/she is entirely dedicated/devoted to the long-term growth of our relationship; seems to have “one foot out of the door”.
- **My partner commonly withholds sex.**
- My partner seems unconcerned to whether I am happy/satisfied in our relationship.

The love avoidant - There is a spectrum of love avoidance, from low to high in how avoidant they are.

Love addiction relationship cycle - The love addiction cycle is driven by the love addict's **strong fear of abandonment**, which clashes with a love avoidants **strong fear of intimacy**. In a healthy/secure relationship— couples cycle between engaging in intimate closeness and mutually withdrawing to integrate into their respective senses of self.

### **Understand the Meaning of Healthy Relationships**

- Each partner accepts who the other person is, strengths and weaknesses.
- Each partner values his/her self and does not hide who they really are from their partner.
- Each partner supports one another's goals and aspirations in life.
- Each partner is honest and communicates congruently, which engenders safety and trust for each other.
- Each partner is open to the other's point of view and does not shame or ridicule when opinions differ.
- Each is open and willing to discuss, negotiate, or compromise when conflicts arise.

Positive Affirmations - what fuels love addiction is false beliefs of unworthiness, unlovability, or inadequacies.

What makes a romantic relationship secure?

In a Secure Relationship you feel content, satisfied, and hopeful.

**S**afety: You trust each other and see each other as reliable. You feel secure in disclosing vulnerabilities or sharing inner heartfelt thoughts or feelings.

**E**steem: You know your partner wants you, and you want your partner. You don't view each other as being superior or inferior, but as equally valuable and deserving of love.

**C**ommitment: You see each other as having the capacity of sticking around for the long haul. Through ups and downs, good and bad times-- the commitment to one another endures.

**U**nderstanding: You know the importance of allowing for each other's autonomy and independence, with a healthy balance of dependency.

**R**espect: You each share a deep respect for one another, including each other's commonalities and differences. You see each other as the best of friends.

**E**ffective Communication: You're mentally "checked in," not shut out or turned away. Shared communication is never from a 'one-up' or 'one-down' position.

Don't buy into any false notion that given a shaky relationship history you can't have a healthy, secure relationship. Strive for S.E.C.U.R.E. Relationships. YOU DESERVE NOTHING LESS!

Grief vs. Love addiction withdrawal - For love addicts however, the normal stages of grieving evolves into morbid and/or pathological grief process, characterized by obsession, denial, chronic depression, avoidance of normal activities and powerful desire to escape from reality.

The grief turns into extremely painful withdrawal where you feel crazy, even like dying. It is necessary for addicts to grieve the loss of their addiction if healing is to occur. To break-through grief and withdrawal of an addiction, **it is important addicts allow themselves to grieve the loss (feel, and validate your emotions; without letting them control you).**

Fantasy, a love addicts true drug - A love addict tends to enter relationships in a disorienting fog of romantic idealism. Expecting anyone to makes us complete is by itself a delusion. Love addicts eventually discover the person they imagined their romantic partner to be (their fantasy)... is NOT that person at all.

To overcome a fantasy of a romantic partner, **we have to first start accepting that we've been in fantasy and this is a drug**, the real drug. We have to explore:

- What we initially 'made-up' about the person, what the fantasy looked like (who we thought he/she was in fantasy); and thoughts and feelings of the fantasy.
- We then have to examine the reality of the person/who the person, in fact, really is. This part is the bigger challenge. This takes some legitimate work and effort, and brutal honesty.

Over time we clearly begin seeing the distinction of what we made up about someone (fantasy) vs the reality of the person.

Benefits of Recovering from love addiction -

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging other people or self
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
- A loss of the ability to worry.
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation (self and others).
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- Frequent attacks of smiling and affirming ME.
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.
- Increased susceptibility to the love of others as well as the urge to extend it.

The power of denial in addictive relationships -

If you're convinced that you are the reason your partner has become emotionally unavailable, uncaring, ... you are in denial!

If you've been hooked to the "potential" of who your partner could be, yet has not been... you are in denial!

Denial is a defense mechanism used to escape or avoid pain and discomfort when life's realities seem too much to bear. Denial is to avoid reality. Not only do love addicts deny a partners reality and the consequences in their relationship-- they deny their own truth. They deny their needs and wants (e.g., intimacy, closeness), their own identity.

Awareness is the first step to breaking denial. However in most cases, once a client breaks free from denial and comes to accept the reality of 'who their partner is'-- what they discover is how little they genuinely loved or respected about their partner--- and that they never could have been happy or satisfied given the reality of their partner.

The process of moving into reality and overcoming denial is an amazingly transforming experience. **Breaking denial is what opens the door to authentic healing and recovery, something you and all who are challenged with this problem, fully deserve.** Love Addiction Recovery is About Living in Truth... Denial is the fuel of love addiction.

The love addict's identity is formed only through their relationship with their partner. Because of impaired boundaries, they are in **constant pursuit to merge with their partner**; therefore, they become clingy and smother their partners. They try to earn love and attention that will guarantee they will not be left, abandoned, and alone, one of their greatest fears. The Sex and Love Addict is highly preoccupied with sex with only ONE particular person. **They aren't in love with their partner so much as they are in love with sexual acts with their partner.**

Desperate for a HIT - If you want to heal and survive your withdrawal— trying to return to your ex or trying to escape with another addiction are the last things you want to do. Your compulsive behaviors will merely continue in other future relationships-- yes, over and over again. **With relentless and persistent effort in your recovery, you will eventually look back on this experience and will wonder why you were so desperate for this “hit”** and pined for someone unable to meet your needs for intimate connection.

Toxic relationship warnings - Western culture worships and idealizes romantic love — not the healthy/functional type of romantic love, but the highly irrational and bewildered romantic love that somehow finds obsession and the turmoil so enchanting.

1. You constantly feel hurt by his/her behaviors or choices.
2. You suffer in silence-- **often feel lonely, unheard, unimportant, or invisible.**
3. You feel like you don't really matter to him/her, that somehow you don't measure up.
4. More often than not, you live in a state of unease, tension, and/or deliberation.
5. You constantly convince yourself that things will get better, that positive change is 'right around the corner'- it never happens.

People in a toxic relationship are chronically dissatisfied, embittered, and unhappy.

Saving a toxic relationship - A willing partner is essential to any possible healthy change. **Self-care is a key component to a healthful life and relationship happiness.**

The lack of self-care can show up in many ways:

- Abandoning, minimizing, or devaluing your own needs and wants.
- Enduring a relationship where loneliness and pain are the norms.
- Allowing a partner's identity to become your own identity.
- Trying to “earn” a persons approval of you.

Recovering: the power of choice... a choice to take action: to learn, grow, and desire something different, something better. If we stay stuck in a victim mentality - if we are stuck in believing for example, "I'm in pain because of him/her" ... then we lie to ourselves; and we choose to be a victim to a situation or occurrence. **You are not a victim** to your love addiction patterns. You have more power than you realize **—you have the power of choice.**

Learn to love and establish fulfilling love relationships in your life and **establish a healthy/strong loving relationship with yourself**. When You Choose To Change The Way You Love... You End The Self-Abandonment... and You Embrace Yourself ... You Embrace Your Life. What A Gift!

Overcome addictive loving -

1. **You are enough just as you are.** You are enough, all of you. Acknowledging, 'I AM ENOUGH,' is letting go of old lies again and again. You Are Enough because you are you... and that my friend, is enough.
2. You ARE inherently worthy, valuable, and lovable. Self-love comes from an internal awareness that you are inherently worthy... and nothing can take this away. Nothing that occurs in your life determines your worth. **Your worth is innate and permanent.**
3. Acceptance is essential to your well-being. Acceptance of reality keeps us from living (or loving) in a fantasy. In recovery, we come to accept realities we've denied. **Accepting all of who you are allows you to be more authentic** and relational with others.
4. Self-Care around a person when you have to start compromising yourself and your values. The alternative is to stay and to continue compromising and losing yourself, and going in a direction you don't genuinely want, self-abandonment.
5. You are not your love addiction. **There is nothing of which to be ashamed.** It does not define who you are.
6. You do not need romantic love to be okay. I can thrive, and feel alive without a romantic partner. "I 'need' a romantic partner" is erroneous, deceptive, and naive.
7. Feelings are not based on facts. You may feel "I am unlovable", and this does not make it true.
8. Who your partner is (or was), is not about you. It is about one thing, WHO HE OR SHE IS.
9. **You CAN be free from your love addiction.** Sometimes it is one step forward, two steps back; or three steps forward, one step back. Breaking free from these unhealthy chains is virtually guaranteed if you give the recovery process a chance. Love addiction is a learned behavior and belief system that can change if given a chance.

Unrealistic expectations - The most significant impossible expectation love addicts tend to have, is that their partner is the one person (and is responsible) who will provide them continual unconditional positive regard and reinforcement. **No one can be accountable for our emotional well being.**

Personal 'Bill of Rights' -

I have the right to love, to accept, to embrace, and to fully appreciate myself unconditionally.

I have the right to be in relationships without losing my identity; abandoning my interests, needs, and wants.

Treating love addiction, the core issues

No one is going to make you happy until you 'get' happy internally and gain the awareness you need.

1. **Fear of abandonment**... one of the love addict's greatest fears and emotional triggers in relationships.
2. Impaired Self Worth and insecurity... **false beliefs of victim hood**.
3. **Unrealistic expectations**... expect more from a relationship than any relationship can deliver.
4. Boundary impairment... **extreme neediness**.

When we come to recognize and clearly identify them, we become more able to let them go through the treatment process and become more able to establish healthy behaviors. **We need to learn how to hug our feelings and emotions instead of ignoring, minimizing, or beating ourselves up for having feelings.**

Consequences to addictive love - Guilt, shame, emotional pain, loss of identity, self-abandonment, denial, remorse, resentment, anger, depression, divorce, broken relationships, obsession and compulsion, loss of values, helplessness, hopelessness, ... Since the relationship has been **the person's one essential contact point with life or their only identity was the relationship**-- its removal leaves him or her in disoriented agony-- as withdrawal occurs and reality is seeping in.

Obsessive seeking of approval - In relationships we allow our lives to be controlled by our efforts to gain this approval. We give up our choices, opinions, likes, dislikes, even our own values. We let our thoughts and feelings be dictated by others, and lose touch with our own true selves. **We all were born with inherent worthiness and lovability. I no longer give that power up to anyone else.**

Setting boundaries - The people we relate to need to know we have boundaries. If we don't let others know, we get used, manipulated, controlled, and give up important parts of ourselves. **With healthy boundaries, we claim ownership and responsibility for ourselves.**

Only WE are responsible for letting others know our limits.

Only WE are in control of whether people violate our boundaries or not.

When WE don't, WE choose to be the victim.

Letting go of the past - We become conscious that being adults, falling into **dysfunctional and painful relationships was a choice we made— we become liberated from being a victim of circumstances**, which fuels a new experience of healthy-empowerment in our lives.

Finding gratefulness - If you are a love addict with a genuine desire to recover – I strongly encourage you to-- never give up- no matter how much you slip, no matter how many times you fall into the old painful love addicted patterns in your effort to change. A healthier life, fulfilling love, and authentic inner-love will come.

Grief vs. Love withdrawal - It is important to recognize at this time many of the painful withdrawal feelings- sense of un-lovability, desire to get ex back, etc.- is a childhood emotional reaction to early abandonment experiences. **Your inner child is desperate to be loved.** You take a failed relationship to heart, falsely personalize it and injure yourself, internalizing the rejection, just as a child would. Pathological pain is real in withdrawal, yet this extreme pain and preoccupation and obsessing about the fantasy of what you thought you had is a big part of the addiction to love.

1- **Allow yourself to grieve the loss (because it is).**

2- Take this experience as an opportunity to make a big jump into a new healthy way of being and relating.

3- Be 100% responsible for doing the right thing to **love yourself** (if you aren't feeling that 'love' for self; then at least ACT like it for the time being)- self love comes by positive actions/behaviors that promote your health and emotional well-being.

Ground rules to break your addiction -

Blaming will get you nowhere.

You will feel worse in the first stages of recovery. We will need grieve our fantasies.

**There's no quick fix. This is for the rest of your life.**

Progress may be happening when you don't even realize it.

Being honest with confronting your denial is part of loving yourself.

Realisms - Our thinking is impaired when we think that someone who is unable to love back will change and be different at some point.

1. Your change is possible. Believe it.

2. You are not the cause of your partner's behaviors. Her dysfunction is NOT ABOUT YOU.

3. You do have the internal strength needed to successfully grow- if only you allow it.

4. **You were born on this earth to honor, respect, and value your desires. This is not selfishness, or egotism, or mean, it is healthy, functional, mature, self-love.**

If I didn't experience the pain and anguish at the time, if I didn't go through the treatment to learn what I really needed to learn to change and grow... then I would not be where I am today.

Don't quit - At times you will think, "Is my work in recovery all worth the effort?"

It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit!

Feel good about yourself -

1. Put your wants and needs first, and foremost.

2. Set firm and functional boundaries with people who tend to be toxic.

3. Learn to be your "self"; honor your "self"; love your "self." Stop trying to be who others want you to be.

4. Acknowledge and accept where you are in the moment. For example, if you are struggling with recovery, simply validate the struggle. It's ok (you are not alone).
5. Follow your passion.

The meaning of love addiction -

Addiction is characterized by the compulsive seeking or use of a substance, behavior, or **activity to reach euphoric states in the brain**, despite negative consequences. It is often accompanied by **physical or psychological dependence, withdrawal syndrome** and tolerance.

Acknowledge the fact that addiction is NOT who you are-- it is a problem you have and CAN overcome if you choose.

How is it possible?

There's a dependency component. Love addiction an addiction to a pseudo, or false love. The fantasy interconnected with denial is what creates the "high". It turns on the brain chemicals that make a love addict feel alive, or "high." To put it simply, **love addiction is a psychological addiction to a person or the fantasy of the person** which results in certain behavior's, compulsions, and obsessions.

The myths of love relationships - Love addicts fall victim to many of society's toxic messages and carry unrealistic expectations in their love relationships as a result.

- If we disagree, something is wrong with the relationship
- I should take care of ALL of my partner needs and wants
- If I am obsessed and preoccupied, it means there is true love
- If he or she can't love or desire me, no one will, and therefore, I am unlovable and inadequate
- If you lose a relationship partner, you will never find another partner
- My life will only have meaning and purpose if I am in a relationship
- If you just care enough, love enough, and give enough, your partner will change and give all the attention and love you desire

Detachment and Self Care - When we cease to live our own lives because we are so preoccupied with the life of another person, our behavior is motivated by fear, largely the fear of abandonment. Genuine, healthy love is not a preoccupation or obsession.

**Detachment is one of the most valuable things we can do as love addicts in recovery to reclaim ourselves. Detachment means to separate ourselves emotionally when to engage emotionally is not in our best interest for our well-being.** Detachment is a mechanism of a healthy boundary. No unrealistic expectations like reading another's mind. We have no ownership of their behaviors.

Men in love Addiction - Men are just as likely to suffer from love addiction as women are. They feel ashamed, embarrassed, or yes, weak. **Men are left in isolation and on our own to deal with internal distress- and this is very unhealthy.**

Suicide (4x more likely than women)

Alcoholics (3x alcoholic rate in men than women)

Porn, gambling, sex, work, you name the addiction-- much higher rates in men

Murder, domestic violence - much higher in men

Recovering love addicts - Realize, if you are alone or feeling lonely, it doesn't mean you're not worthy. Nurture yourself; know you are worthy of self-love/self-care. Reparent your inner child; tell him or her you are intrinsically valuable. **Let go of unrealistic expectations.**

Healthy relationships - Each partner doesn't rely only on the other to make them happy; they know they can be happy with or without a relationship. Each partner has his/her own individual interests and friends outside the relationship.

The pearl and the love Addict -

"An oyster creates a pearl out of a grain of sand.

The grain of sand is an irritant to the oyster.

In response to the discomfort, the oyster creates a smooth, protective coating that encases the sand and provides relief. The result is a beautiful pearl;

for an oyster, **the irritant becomes the seed for something new.**"

Similarly, a decision to change what hasn't worked (love addiction) will help you develop something valuable from your current discomfort. The clarity and skills learned in recovery will help you discover abundance in your life long after these problems are gone. **The Oyster (YOU) has the power to change this irritant to something beautiful inside of you, the pearl.** It only takes one tiny step at a time, and builds on itself one by one.

Celebrity rehab - What Rachel Uchitel admits, and like all love addicts in their addiction do, is to mistake intensity and obsession for intimacy and I mistake that for love. **For love addicts, having a meaningful and truly fulfilling relationship that's calm and without high intensity is actually uncomfortable, feels 'weird', and even feels boring.** What they fail to see is they need to learn and be acquainted with deep inside is, "I am safe. I am lovable. I am valuable. I accept me. I am okay. And if a partner leaves for whatever reason, I am still lovable and worthwhile - no matter what." In other words, to embrace that they are inherently worthy and valuable. When people first learn of their love addiction and intense feelings of having shame or embarrassment, they need to understand that **there is nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about.** Acceptance is critical if love addicts want to break their toxic and painful patterns of love addiction. "What I've come to realize is that love addiction hasn't been recognized in the addiction community. I think it's the most common addiction that people suffer from and yet the least common addiction that people talk about or give credibility to," Rachel Uchitel.

Addict Signs -

1. **Confuses love with obsession, neediness**, enmeshment, rescuing another or need to be saved, and-or excessive physical attraction.
2. Having little or no boundaries becomes too vulnerable too fast, becomes attached to others without truly knowing them.
3. **Intense fear of being alone, rejected or abandoned**- as a result, may tolerate emotional and-or physical abusive behaviors by a partner.
4. Fears real intimacy, despite a desperate desire to feel close and connected to someone; may 'run' or disengage from healthy intimate contact if it is available.
5. Despite pain or chaos, a relationship may bring, feels powerless to get out or leave; may hold onto desperate hopes things will eventually get better.
6. **Becomes obsessed and preoccupied with relationship partner**; gives up activities, interests, or goals- may grow more isolated and alienated from friends, loved ones, self, and spirituality.
7. Desperately believes that one person in a romantic relationship will make him/her valuable, alive, worthy, and admirable.
8. When alone or not in a romantic relationship, there is an internal void; a sense that "I don't matter"; emotionally empty; **feelings of being unworthy, unlovable, or undeserving**.
9. **Confuses emotional dependency, drama, and negative intensity for real intimacy**, authenticity, or healthy connection.
10. When emotional insecurity increases, tries to meet needs and feel better by manipulating or controlling tactics with a romantic partner.
11. Can feel immobilized or become acutely **preoccupied with romantic fantasies** of a relationship partner; or even when not in a committed relationship.
12. Becomes attached to people who are emotionally unavailable, distant, avoidant; some become dangerously attached to narcissistic, psychopathic, or sociopathic individuals.
13. Idealizes; assigns magical qualities to him/her; often perceives their partner as better than, stronger, more powerful.
14. When a relationship ends, or breakup occurs (no matter who ended it)- experiences **painful withdrawal and obsessions** (similar to drug withdrawal): may feel an extreme sense of betrayal, anger, and pain; avoiding responsibility; blames an ex for not fulfilling unrealistic expectations and relational fantasies.