

# RECOVERY

## A Case Of Love Addiction

### Are You A Love/Sex Addict?

1. Do you feel desperate to find a new lover or mate when a relationship ends?
2. Do you feel anxious or uneasy when you are away from your lover or sexual partner?
3. Do you believe that your life is unbearable unless you're in a relationship?
4. Do you make promises to yourself about your sexual or romantic behavior that you cannot follow?
5. Do you keep secrets about your sexual or romantic activities?
6. Have you been in a relationship that you knew was bad for you, but felt powerless to leave?
7. Do you get a "high" from sexual or romantic activity, followed by a "hangover" (feelings of shame, remorse or fear of abandonment)?
8. Do you keep a list of your sexual partners, or, on the other hand, have you lost track of how many partners you've had?
9. Do you vacillate between feelings of extreme shame and pride about the number of sexual partners you've had?
10. Does your sexual behavior include activities that are illegal (voyeurism, exhibitionism, prostitution, sex with minors, indecent phone calls, etc.)?
11. Do you feel that your life would be meaningless without a partner?
12. Do you have a pattern of recreating the same type of dysfunctional or abusive relationship?
13. Have you suffered negative consequences at work because of your obsession with a relationship?
14. Has your obsession with sex and/or romance negatively impacted your health or finances?
15. Have you neglected your children due to your obsession with a romantic or sexual partner?
16. Are you plagued with a constant feeling of loneliness?
17. Do you spend hours downloading erotic pictures or engaging in sexual chat on the Internet?
18. Do you feel powerless to stop being unfaithful to your spouse or significant other?

By Mary B.  
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"I have no reason to live anymore." So said the 15-year old sophomore accused of opening fire on his classmates in the recent Georgia school shooting incident. Friends said his grades had slipped recently and he was heartbroken after his girlfriend ended their relationship.

Just as the consequences of President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky have increased public awareness of sex addiction, so this story can provide us with some insight into another common compulsion in our addictive society: love addiction (also referred to as romance or relationship addiction).

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines addiction as a "compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance (as heroin, nicotine, or alcohol) characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal"; or "persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful". In the last twenty-five years, the concept of addiction has broadened to

include what are called "process addictions": sex and love, as already mentioned, plus gambling, work, relationships, money (compulsive spending), and food (overeating, anorexia, bulimia).

Love addicts can become so obsessed with their relationship that they risk their career, their health, their finances, and their other relationships. This approach to romantic relationships, unfortunately, is seen as normal in our addictive culture. We are immersed in songs, television programs, and movies glorifying the intensity of "love at first sight". Sadly, the relationship that starts intensely often ends that way too. Many suicides and criminal acts (stalking, homicides), are performed by rejected lovers.

Those persons with a substance abuse problem will likely increase the use of their drug of choice when an addictive relationship ends, with the resultant toll decreased productivity on the job, car accidents, etc.

According to Pia Mellody, in her book *Facing Love Addic-*

*tion*, "Three characteristics sum up the major behavioral symptoms of a Love Addict.

1. Love Addicts assign a disproportionate amount of time, attention, and 'value above themselves' to the person to whom they are addicted and this focus often has an obsessive quality about it.

2. Love Addicts have unrealistic expectations for unconditional positive regard from the other person in the relationship.

3. Love Addicts neglect to care for or value themselves while they're in the relationship."

Just as alcoholics support each other in becoming sober and maintaining their sobriety by following the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics

Anonymous, there are many support groups for people suffering from Sex and/or Love Addiction. These groups can be found in the white pages of the phone book, or on the Internet.

#### Phone numbers for the local Twelve Step groups are as follows:

- CoDA (Codependents Anonymous) 503/285-8891
- CoSA (Codependents to Sex Addicts) 503/452-5961
- S-Anon (family of SA members) 503/299-4442
- SA (Sexaholics Anonymous) 503/224-9840
- SAA (Sex Addicts Anonymous) 503/452-5961

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*Universal*
3. ENTRAPMENT  
*20th Century Fox*
4. THE MATRIX  
*Warner Bros.*
5. THE LOVE LETTER  
*DreamWorks*
6. A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT DREAM  
*Fox Searchlight*
7. NEVER BEEN KISSED  
*20th Century Fox*
8. BLACK MASK  
*Artisan Entertainment*
9. LIFE  
*Universal*
10. ELECTION  
*Paramount*

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