

# Ambivalent Love Addicts

Susan Peabody 2004

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.

Characteristics of the Ambivalent Love Addict:

- Ambivalent Love Addicts (ALAs) crave love, but they also fear it.
- They avoid intimacy altogether by obsessing about love through romantic fantasies about unavailable people.
- They only get involved and obsess about emotionally unavailable people.
- They become addicted through romantic affairs rather than committed relationships.
- They become addicted to people and then sabotage the relationships when their fear of intimacy comes up.
- They often initiate relationships with more than one person at the same time in order to avoid moving to a deeper level with any one person, and then become addicted to the whole group.
- They break up and make up over and over again in the same relationship and become addicted to this pattern.
- They sexualize relationships to such a degree that emotional intimacy is non-existent, and then become addicted to either the sex or the relationship—often both.

- No matter how addicted they are, they cannot commit to the future. They live in the moment.
- They can love, commit, obsess, and even become addicted; however this will go hand in hand with avoidance tactics, like a difficulty with affection and opening up emotionally. They are there, and they are not there. They come close, and then move away. They let other things outside of the relationship get in the way, i.e., hobbies, work, friends, lovers, addictions—anything. They just cannot open up to a deeper level of emotional intimacy, and yet they are unable to let go of the relationship.

While these are the characteristics of the Ambivalent Love Addict, you can also understand this concept by researching the characteristics of the love addict and then the love avoidant, and noting how over the years you have been one or the other.

Ultimately, when you get to the very bottom of it all, the ALA will realize that the love addiction is also a smoke screen for avoiding love. By obsessing and chasing an unavailable person you are canceling out an opportunity to find love with someone who is ready for emotional intimacy.

If any of this applies to you, try to discover where you are in the addictive cycle. Are you a love addict trying to find love with the wrong person, or are you a love avoidant avoiding love (or a relationship) outright?

The Ambivalent Love Addict/Love Avoidant is a complicated person. One needs to understand their script and change. That is the only way to find healthy love.

### **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 Howard Halpern.

Recovery is the process of changing from addict to non-addict. May everyone begin their recovery with their head held high and their courage in tact

### **The Roots of the Problem**

While I stand behind my own book *Addiction to Love*, the best book about the relationship between our childhood and dysfunctional relationships is Howard Halpern's book *How to Break Your Addiction to a Person*. Halpern and I both agree that love addiction and love avoidance are rooted in 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.

### **Addendum**

Since 1990, I have used the term "brighter tomorrow" frequently in my work. It is my hope for you. While we live in the moment, and learn from the past, it is tomorrow that draws us forward. Be careful to be optimistic about the future. The glass is half full—really. Tomorrow will be brighter. Stumbling blocks and setbacks are negligible compared to that.

### **Rebirth**

You writhe till you die.  
You pray till you lay  
In God's loving arms,  
Awaiting new dawns.  
Where you feel till you heal.  
Where you gro till you know,  
The gain from the pain.  
The new that comes from the old.

1982



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