

Relationship Addicts

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There is a lot in the media about love addiction, but what about Relationship Addicts? How do they differ from Love Addicts? What makes them special and harder to treat? Why are they more likely to relapse?

Relationship Addicts [RA] were the first type of love addict to be recognized. They were first called co-alcoholics and then later co-dependents. As the media moved on to write extensively about the Love Addict, Relationship Addicts have been left in the dust until recently. Now there is a resurgence of interest in the RA.

Let me begin, by stating that what sets a RA's apart from a Love Addict is that he or she is in a relationship. Love Addicts are often obsessing about someone who is unavailable. Furthermore, most RA's are also co-dependent. [Please note that there are as many male RA's as women.]

According to *Love Addicts Anonymous*, there are two types of Relationship Addicts (RA):

Type One are RA's who no longer love their partner romantically. The honeymoon is over. Still, they cannot let go. Usually, they are so unhappy that the relationship is affecting their health, spirit and emotional well being. Even if their partner batters them, and they are in danger, they cannot let go. They are afraid of being alone. They are afraid of withdrawal. They are afraid of change. They do not want to hurt or abandon their partners. I describe this as "I hate you don't leave me."

Type Two are RA's who are addicted to a relationship with a parent, child, friend, sibling, or anyone for whom they have never had romantic feelings.

Type Three is the RA who goes from one relationship to another without taking a break in between. They are terrified of being alone. Often they seek out a new relationship when the one they are in begins to deteriorate. Some RA's of this kind have never lived alone in their entire life. Relationships are their life.

Signs to look out for.

1. You are too dependent on this person (financially or emotionally).
2. You do not know where you leave off and they begin.
3. You hang out with them too much.
4. You cannot make decisions without their input.

5. This person comes first. You always do what they say to do. You give in to them.
6. You doubt your own decisions.
7. Your needs are less important than the needs of this person.
8. When you are not in contact you go into withdrawal.
9. You have overwhelming compulsion to contact them even when you are living your own life.
10. You always want to make sure they are ok.
11. Everyone has told you the relationship is unhealthy but you keep hanging on.

At the later stages of the addiction, you can't stand this person but you can't let him or her go. You feel relief initially when they are not around, but then panic and want to make contact for no explainable reason.

Treatment for RA's is more complicated because RA's want to continue their relationships with their children, parents, or friends. Sometimes they have financial ties, shared custody, or a business relationship with an ex-partner. No Contact does not work for them. This is why RA's relapse more often.

Relationship addicts who need or want to stay involved such in such relationships need to approach recovery differently. They need to create healthy boundaries which help them stay connected and yet enjoy their own lives. This is not easy. I suggest they read about boundaries and learn what they are. Where does their relationship with their husband, ex, or child start and leave off?

Once you know what healthy boundaries are enforce them. This is a process and will take time, but don't give up. As Robin Norwood explained in her book, *Women Who Love Too Much*, the people you have been addicted to will rebel when you start taking care of yourself, but they will fall in line and actually encourage you if they really care. If they don't care then just live with this.

You are as important as everyone in your life. Creating your independence is the first step in establishing healthy relationships. When you love and honor yourself you have more to offer others. Not all the things you think they want, but the gift of yourself which is even more meaningful to them if they really care about you.