

Teenage Love Addicts

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Prospectus

I believe there is a very clear causal relationship between love addiction and teenage pregnancy, abusive relationships, promiscuity, and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. In my opinion, treating the love addiction will result in a lower occurrence of these problems.

Love addicts typically lack self-esteem. They are impulsive. They romanticize everything and fall in love too quickly. They do not discriminate when they fall in love. For a teenager this is a lethal combination.

While there are adult male love addicts, teenage love addicts are generally female. The addiction can start as early as the sixth grade.

Teenage love addicts have usually suffered from abuse, neglect, and/or peer rejection as children. (Sometimes the neglect can be mild, but still have devastating effects, if the child is very sensitive to her surroundings.) As a result of these three things, maturity becomes stalled and self-esteem is severely compromised during adolescence. This results in an emotional roller coaster of anxiety and depression, as well as unwise choices concerning boys and sex.

Teenage love addicts romanticize conception, pregnancy, and motherhood. They fall in love and want to have "his" baby. They lack the maturity to set aside this inclination and use birth control. Sometimes when a teenager gets pregnant and gives birth, her love addiction gets transformed into a strong maternal instinct and she becomes an inexperienced, but adequate, mother. More often, the love addiction takes hold and taking care of the child takes a back seat to being with the father of the child or to begin this cycle again with a new boy.

Teenage love addicts are often attracted to troubled boys whom they hope to "fix" with love and attention. This can be the start of codependency that carries on into their adult years.

Teenage love addicts are anxious to please boys. As a result they will not insist on using condoms when they should. This can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

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Teenage love addicts crave attention from boys to make up for neglect in their family of origin. They often use sex to please boys and sometimes end up being promiscuous.

Usually teenage love addicts lack the ability to choose a healthy boyfriend. They become involved with whomever they are attracted to or whomever gives them a lot of attention. They are particularly susceptible to the seduction of boys because of their low self-esteem.

Once involved in toxic and abusive relationships, teenage love addicts find themselves unable to let go. Love addicts, in general, cannot end even the worse relationships, and teenagers are even more susceptible to this phenomenon. There is so much pressure to have a boyfriend in high school, that girls who don't, feel unpopular and undesirable.

Teenage love addicts who have grown up in a dysfunctional home will have a high tolerance for neglect and abuse and may not even see their relationships as unhealthy. Even if they do, they may be too "in love" to get out. The "battered woman syndrome" can start during the teen years.

Course of Action

Early intervention is imperative. Potential love addicts should be identified (see High Risk Assessment Questionnaire), and placed into special classes that educate them about this disorder. This should be followed up with professional counseling and peer support groups. They should also be exposed to the hard work of caring for a child and encouraged to delay motherhood. Most of all, teenage love addicts need to be taught impulse control and shown how to raise their self-esteem. Much attention should be given to what a healthy relationship is—how it looks and feels.