

# LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP ADDICTION

## The Problem

This group provides a safe place to deal with the depression, isolation, lack of trust, and the unhealthy use of love and relationships as means of achieving worth, that are characteristic of Romance and Relationship Addictions.

## Addicted to “Love” characteristics are:

- Lack of nurturing and attention when young
- Feeling isolated, detached from parents and family
- Outer facade of “having it all together” to hide internal disintegration
- Mistake intensity for intimacy
- Hidden pain
- Seek to avoid rejection and abandonment at all cost
- Afraid to trust anyone in a relationship
- Inner rage over lack of nurturing, early abandonment
- Depressed
- Highly manipulative and controlling of others
- Perceive attraction, attachment, and sex as basic human needs, as with food and water
- Sense of worthlessness
- Escalating tolerance for high-risk behavior
- Intense need to control self, others, and circumstances
- Presence of other addictive or compulsive problems
- Using others alter mood or relieve pain
- Continual questioning of values and lifestyle
- Driven, desperate, frantic personality
- Existence of secret “double life”
- Refusal to acknowledge existence of problem
- Defining out-of-control behavior as normal
- Defining “wants” as “needs”

## The Solution

The goal of recovery is to achieve and maintain sobriety. In most addictions, sobriety can be defined simply by ceasing the unhealthy behaviors. Stopping and staying stopped are the goals. For most types of problems, the slogan “just say no” is appropriate.

Staying sober is more complicated with people addictions. The aim of recovery cannot be the complete avoidance of all forms of romance and relationships. It is similar to the challenge faced by people addicted to overeating; they cannot simply give up food. Rather, they must learn the difference between healthy and unhealthy eating. They must eliminate the unhealthy while promoting the healthy behavior. In the same way, for those addicted to love, the goal of recovery is not to become a hermit living in the mountains. The goal is to foster healthy relationships and eliminate unhealthy ones.

Asking the following questions can help you determine if a particular behavior will contribute to a healthy relationship or lead to addictive behavior.

1. Will I later have to deny that I did it?
2. Is it self-centered?
3. Is it abusive to myself or to others?
4. Is it inconsistent with my values?
5. Would I refuse to do it if Christ were standing here with me?
6. Is it an action without an underlying commitment?
7. Will I feel better or worse about myself for having done it?
8. Will someone else feel worse for my having done it?
9. Is this a waste of my time or the time of others?
10. Am I doing this to escape painful feelings of reality?

A yes to any of these questions should be a “red flag” that the behavior being considered may be unhealthy. When romance and relationships proceed with these types of dynamics, they are likely to be dysfunctional and addictive.

Sobriety means establishing and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. At the same time, staying sober is always more than the mere presence or absence of certain behaviors. Sobriety is more than just “not doing” certain things. It involves personal growth. It is not what we avoid, but what we grow toward, that makes sobriety meaningful. As we have seen, growth must occur in several areas of our lives. We must look to our physical health. We must be concerned for our emotional, social, and mental welfare. Spiritual growth must be the foundational block, upon which, all other growth is built and sustained. Balance is the key. Romance and relationships have been the dominant factors in the life of one addicted to love. Recovery is the time for these relationships to find their rightful and healthy place as a part of the whole person, not as tyrants which control and consume a person.

- Recovery is meant to be far more than survival or another coping strategy. Recovery is to lead to an intimate relationship with Christ, and to a re-birth of the heart. The goal is for the healing of a broken and empty heart and the filling of that heart with a love for God, for others and for yourself. Life’s central truth is that GOD LOVES US. Christ sacrificed himself because of His love for us. His sacrifice made it possible for us to be women who love. Entering into God’s love, making it our own, and being able to share it with others—that is the goal of recovery.