

# Case Study 2

## Veronica's Story



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Helen Mia Harris is a registered therapist but offers her insights and advice for guidance only. All dates, place names, titles and events in this account are factual. However, the names have been changed in order to protect privacy and respect patient confidentiality.

# Veronica's Story

## The Broken Saxophone and a Misunderstanding between a Love Addict and a Love Avoidant



Veronica had been in a relationship with Steven (a banker) for five years on and off, ever since they met on a safari in Africa in their mid-30s.

She worked as a travel consultant organising safari holidays and wrote travel articles in her spare time.

Veronica spoke to me about their first meeting during this “trip of a lifetime”, where they experienced Tanzania’s wilderness and wildlife whilst staying in safari lodges, trekking by day and watching the sunset every evening, never knowing what the next day would bring.

**Veronica explains to me that it felt like the perfect meeting of souls...**

**Here's Veronica's story in her own words...**

*“Steven and I ate and trekked together, watched elephants and sunsets and moved on to spend a week on Diani Beach with its tropical white sands, restaurants and beach bars. It was as if this was our honeymoon. We talked all day and all night long whilst we were there, and it was perfect in every way. We were inseparable and everyone could see that.”*

**In Veronica's first session, she tells me how much she doubts that anyone can help her, and regrets a particular episode that she fears may be the final nail in the coffin of their relationship.**

She goes on to explain, *“He provokes me to such a level that I lose it. He then shuts me out and closes down, and will go off to another room to play his saxophone. He thinks more about his saxophone than me and will purposefully play it very loud, even distorting the sounds in order to rile me.”*

*“Well, I've now done something **really terrible**”, she says. “So much so that he has completely shut me out and has switched off all his phones and didn't come home last night.*

*I haven't slept. I can't be without him and yet, when I'm with him, it's awful. I've become weak and pathetic and just want him to respect me, love me, hold me tight and never let me go, but the more I want this, the further away he seems to go."*

*I used to go to work feeling good, knowing that everything was fine and right between us with maybe one or two texts a day. I just knew he was 'there' and I never even gave it a thought.*

**We clearly see here that Veronica is under the impression that she is "safe" with Steven.**



Her attachment bond with him is secure and, knowing this, her equilibrium is steady and balanced as there is no cause for her to think otherwise.

She is able to live her life quite independently to Steven.

**From this safe, secure attachment bond comes this...**

*"Now I feel completely on edge and I'm so agitated and unable to stop myself from texting, emailing and phoning him. It's reached the point where he rarely answers my calls as he knows it's going to be the same grovelling person begging him to respond, love me more and show me how he feels, but his lack of responsiveness is driving me to become someone I don't recognise.*

*Then this awful panic sets in – I get heart palpitations and a terror in the pit of my belly that he is leaving me and I will never survive. I'm frightened, so very frightened. I had noticed only a few weeks ago that our texts during the day seemed rare and distant but then out of nowhere it comes to this.*

*Work has signed me off for a few weeks as unless we are 'good' together, I just can't concentrate on anything. I'm not sure what's worse – being at home all day or being at work.*

*When I know that he's coming home, I'm like a pathetic person and not my normal self, just pleading and begging for his attention. It's beyond words and I don't know where to begin or what to do. I used to be so strong and independent."*

*"Do you think I'll be like this for ever?" She asks me. "I just can't bear how powerless I feel. And the more he rejects me the worse I become."*

After listening to Veronica's story and being attentive and present with her, I ask her to explain what happened that was so terrible that it caused Steven to leave the house.

She explains that she waited for him to go to work before taking his saxophone into the garden and, in a jealous rage, **smashing it to pieces with a garden tool.**

## So why did Veronica behave in this way?



When rejection and loss touch the person suffering from love addiction and abandonment, they can act out in the most vengeful way if they feel they have failed in getting the longed for and desired attention.

They begin to feel traumatised by this lack of emotional response as we can clearly see in

Veronica's story.

As we speak I notice how frail Veronica is. She looks defeated, with her fingers constantly circling around the buttons on her green cardigan.

Her hair looks dishevelled and is fine and limp, reflecting her frail frame. She begins to cry and turns her body away over to the left hand side to cover her hair over her face.

**She is noticeably embarrassed at looking and feeling so weak.**

I hand her some tissues and lean towards her to ask; **“What were you thinking when you smashed Steven's saxophone to pieces?”**

Veronica explains; *“He had given the saxophone a girl's name of Sasha. Every day, the first thing he would do when he came home was to tell me that he was going up to play with Sasha. Not with me. I didn't seem to matter. I hated his saxophone, and often wondered what would happen if I hid it. **Perhaps then he would love me more.**”*

*Every day I'd get home before him and say to myself that tonight I will try harder. I will make him something really special for dinner, put some candles on and lay a nice table. I'll take a shower and cover myself in moisturiser and his favourite fragrance and wear some pretty lingerie, his favourite cream and black set, and do my hair to look nice.*



*And this is the thing. I had always looked forward to him coming home. In fact, I couldn't wait. **Yet for him it wasn't the same at all.** He seemed preoccupied, always somewhere else.*

*He was either on his computer or texting or pouring himself a drink, if he hadn't met up with work colleagues for one on the way home. He was completely in his own world, unable to even notice how lovely the table looked, let alone what I looked like.*

*I'm sorry that I'm not answering your question, but... **it felt like Sasha was another woman.***

*To me, it was someone he preferred to be with, or rather something that made him happier than I ever could.*

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***Jealousy is the result or fear of losing to another person someone or something that one is attached to or possesses. Typically, it is borne out of the transfer, or potential transfer, of a lover's affections.***

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*I was jealous of his saxophone, which sounds ridiculous, but I was. He'd ordered this special brass solution to keep it shiny and new, and he took hours and hours polishing it with these yellow cloths to keep it looking sparkly.*

*The thing that really set me off was hearing that his aim was to form a jazz band with his friends – a bass guitarist, a drummer and two female singers.”*

***Veronica is clearly distressed by this thought.***

*To her, the saxophone was driving her and Steven apart, and she wanted to destroy it to prevent things getting worse.*

*She believed that by destroying the sax, **there would be room for a responsive emotional connection between her and Steven,** without thinking for one moment that this could be the very thing that would drive him away completely.*



It's important to note that jealousy is completely irrational as it can be caused by a person or an inanimate object; in fact, anything which creates a threat to one's own being.

I spoke to Veronica at length about how it was when she first met Steven and their emotional experience and shared connection with Africa.

Veronica tells me it was the most passionate beginning to their love affair and that they would take long beach walks, swim together, light camp fires and talk for hours on end. They dated for one year when they got back to the UK, and it was still a really intense time.

She goes on to explain; *“He did his work and I did mine. **I was completely independent** and preoccupied with writing my travel articles and he loved me being like that, you know, not dependent on him, but passionate about my own work.*

*The phone never stopped ringing with travel magazines wanting one of my stories and somehow I never even noticed whether or not he was paying me any attention.”*

*“I was just free and happy and didn't try hard at all. If anything he would do all the cooking and gardening **and couldn't wait for me to come home every evening.***

*It felt so right, and now I have no words to describe how this has happened.*

*To think that I've smashed up his sax and I don't even know whether I'll ever see him again is frightening. I feel so guilty and I know it's finished. I know this is the end now and that he will never forgive me.”*

## **From Love Addiction to Love Avoidance**

**So what was it that transformed such a spontaneous, playful and independent relationship into this?**

The more we spoke about the relationship, the more it became clear to me that it wasn't only Veronica who felt neglected.

Apparently it was *Steven* who used to ask what time Veronica would be home, yet she was often so busy that she was unable to give him an answer.

In fact, sometimes she'd be working until very late writing her travel articles and Steven would end up going to bed without her.

Here we can clearly see how two people who were once so deeply connected and in love, quite unknowingly, began to occupy two very different lives.

And they couldn't see exactly *how* they fell out of sync with one another.

**They couldn't see where the connection was broken.**



Veronica tells me that on many occasions, Steven would be lying in bed late at night. Unable to sleep he would come downstairs to ask Veronica when she would be joining him, and Veronica would explain that it wouldn't be until later because she had a deadline.

In any other “normal” circumstances, this would be absolutely fine, but for Steven and Veronica, their relationship shifts between a secure emotional and responsive attachment to the opposite, i.e. an insecure emotional attachment and abandonment.

**This feeling of ‘emotional unavailability’ causes a trigger in both of them, but at different times.**

However, the outcome is the same as each one believes that the other is thinking, “I’m okay just doing my own thing and you don’t matter to me anymore.”

This is the cycle that lies at the core of the love addicted relationship...

**When the cycle begins, Veronica abandons her own projects as soon as she notices that Steven is no longer present.**

She believes that Steven inhabits a world of his own, where he has fallen in love with his saxophone and that he, unconsciously, has banished her from his life.

Veronica realises that her secure emotional base and connection has gone. And ironically, when this happens, she is no longer able to be independent as her creativity and passion for her own direction in life was literally based on the knowledge of the security that Steven offered...



**... That he was there, present, and with her.**

Once this is removed, Veronica becomes frail, uneasy and lacks her own internal security. The relationship depended on a secure emotional base, and co-dependency inevitably becomes part of this safety mechanism.

Just knowing that Steven's hands were there to hold her tight, allowed her to feel safe, secure and emotionally connected to him.



Yet the moment Steven becomes preoccupied with his own pleasures and goals, Veronica senses he is no longer there to hold her, contain her and mirror her reality and individuality.

The result is that **Veronica's attachment bond with Steven has been completely severed**, leaving her in a state of child-like emotional deprivation which is reinforced by Steven's unresponsiveness and unavailability.

## **One Month Later...**

After the saxophone incident, Veronica went to stay with her friend for a short while. Steven, meanwhile, concludes that her "illness" (in her words) was more serious than he had ever realised.

Veronica explains to me that Steven had actually become quite frightened of her, and that when they were together, he would sit in a state of "**far away frozenness**", unable to reach out to her and unsure how he should react or comfort Veronica.

This, of course, reinforced Veronica's feelings of primal abandonment just as much as his preoccupations with the saxophone.



It was this, the gulf between them, that eventually drove her to leave home one day (whilst he was out) in order to provoke a reaction from him.

She didn't want him to know where she was staying as she thought that he may *not* try to find her was too terrifying.

**This would be the ultimate rejection which would reinforce her fears of not being loved or wanted enough.**

Being in hiding meant she could imagine that Steven was searching for her.

Veronica had mentioned to me several times that when she was in a deep romantic relationship, she was on a high, but only *if* she felt her love was reciprocated and mutual.

But the moment she sensed that her partner was “somewhere else” and “not present”, she was struck by a feeling of complete and utter loneliness and abandonment, which left her feeling invisible – **as if she no longer existed without a man.**

Veronica believed that going into ‘hiding’ was her only defence against this intolerable devastation of loss and grief.

She reached the point, that many people with similar histories reach, where all secure attachment with the partner is broken, as the thought of not being loved is too unbearable.

**This is experienced as acute bereavement for many people.**

What happened next was a progression of disturbing events and symptoms that left Veronica shattered and lost.

We then look at what Veronica does to survive and how she eventually breaks the pattern that occurred in previous relationships.

**For brevity, the timeline below is outlined in bullet point format...**

- ✓ Veronica stays with a close female friend and disconnects her phone in case Steven *doesn't* contact her or try to find her

- ✓ She asks a male friend to record the answering message on her landline answer phone so that if Steven does track her down, he might be struck by jealousy if he thinks she's with another man and will subsequently want her back. (These kinds of jealousy games are common for love addicts who will do anything to get a *response*.)
- ✓ Veronica takes a month off work. This is a further defence against Steven finding her.
- ✓ Veronica continues to write her travel articles, as this is the one thing that gives her any sense of accomplishment. This is not surprising as people who suffer from love addiction and love withdrawal symptoms often inhabit a rich fantasy world, and during this period of writing, she was able to inhabit another reality of far-off exotic places. (Veronica was longing to return to the connection and closeness that she and Steven shared in Africa.)
- ✓ Her writing was accompanied by her photographs of places and people who had captured her imagination. This pleased me as it is paramount that people who are suffering from primal abandonment or broken attachment bonds experience their own internal sense of meaning and purpose to try and alleviate the debilitating symptoms of feeling alone and desolate.
- ✓ Veronica continues to keep Steven at bay, whilst “believing” that he is trying to find her. This way she doesn't have to face the overwhelming rejection that he no longer cares for her.
- ✓ Her temporary home is 10 miles from her ‘old’ home to ensure that she doesn't see him, because she's scared that if that were to happen, he might ignore her.
- ✓ Veronica continues with her therapy but has no idea how to live without Steven. She explains that she feels so consumed with grief and sadness that it feels as if she's lost a part of herself.

## **Veronica's Childhood**

During our sessions we spoke about Veronica's primary care givers as a child.

She was the eldest of three siblings and explained that her brothers bullied her during her younger years.



The brothers made fun of her for being a girl and tormented her girlfriends. She explains that they were very competitive towards her, **putting her down and undermining her if she did well at school.**

They ridiculed her until her late teens, especially about her love of painting and writing stories.

She says, *"I clearly remember hiding down in the cellar when I was about five or six, making a dolls house out of Pepsi Cola crates that I found outside. I'd get some net curtains for the little windows I'd made and make small beds out of cereal boxes.*

*I remember imagining that this was my real house and that no-one could get to me down here with my black Labrador dog, named Pepsi, who was my closest friend.*

*We'd go everywhere together and hold our ears tight if Mum and Dad started arguing. My brothers didn't care about them yelling. They thought it was funny and teased me for being a fairy as it frightened me to death."*

### **Veronica remembers having several dreams of being bullied...**

*"I had a reoccurring dream where I was about 13 or 14 and had a crush on a boy. I was struck in my heart by someone and wanted to kiss him but he was older than me, around 17, so all I could do was follow him after school in order to get closer to him.*

*Suddenly, out of the bushes came my two huge brothers, taller than real life, like giants, making fun of me and chasing the boy I had a crush on, telling him the truth. I felt devastated and remember hating them for making me feel so embarrassed."*

We can see from this dream that Veronica easily feels under threat from external events or internal thoughts, emotions, ideas, yearnings and impulses.

She feels a victim in relation to others, and this sense of “being caught out” by her brothers when she has a crush on a boy at school becomes the ultimate betrayal as it reflects Veronica’s anxieties and insecurities at being exposed, vulnerable and of being taken over by forces beyond her control.

**Her brothers’ cruelty took her self-respect away, leaving her with little self-esteem or individuality.**

Her dreams left her feeling fragile – physically and emotionally – as if the entrance to her own life and imagination was mocked and trivialised as “sentimental rubbish” throughout her early childhood.

As a result, it’s no surprise that she began to escape into far-off distant worlds like Africa, and write travel stories.



Living in a world of one’s own is a typical **love addiction fantasy**. Many people who suffer this way feel isolated and subsequently escape into a fantasy world in order to feel safe and secure.

This also explains how she “almost” forgets that she is in a relationship with Steven and he is “just there”.

It is not until he switches positions that Veronica notices that he is no longer there.

And when she does realise that he is no longer present and close, **her primal abandonment issues erupt** and she is thrown back into a devastating place with no solid foundation or solace for the secure emotional attachment she so desperately needs.

## **Veronica & Her Parents...**

**So what about Veronica’s relationship with her parents?**

Veronica explains; *“Mother was a jealous woman and most of the arguments happened when Dad came home late from work.”*

*She was also jealous of me, my life, my work and even my relationship with Steven (when outwardly it appeared to be a success). Mum would never ever compliment me and I can't even remember her ever holding me."*

As I previously explained in Anastasia's story (Case Study #1), John Bowlby, a British psychiatrist used the term **"maternal deprivation"** to refer to the separation or loss of the mother as well as a failure to develop an attachment between mother and child.

In addition, the little girl needs to "hear" her father express appreciation and value for her femininity and for the mother's femininity.

With Veronica's father emotionally unavailable and her mother giving little respect or value to her father, it seems clear that she had no secure base, and understandably felt that she only "existed" in relation to her partner Steven, subsequently relying on him to give her a secure and dependable foundation.

However, when she believes Steven is no longer as accessible or responsive to her, **Veronica's sense of self fades**, which leads to an emotional breakdown as she becomes **paralysed by the fear of more rejection**.



Veronica explains how her Mother would pace the floor and become highly agitated when waiting for her husband to return home, drinking gin to settle herself down, followed by another one, and another one...

If he was more than an hour late, her Mother would cry and become hysterical, and would often grab him, sniffing his shirt collar for the scent of another woman.

Veronica goes onto explain that her Father was, in fact, **a womaniser**, and can now relate to how her mother must have felt.

**She now sees how she relates Steven's saxophone to another woman.**



When her parents argued, she said, it was the most frightening thing she had ever heard.

She explained that her Father just seemed defeated and unable to protect himself in any way. She spoke about the deadly silence afterwards as she hid down in the cellar with the dog whilst the Father retreated to his garden shed and her Mother hysterically

sobbed, before collapsing in bed.

**And overlaid onto this scene were her brothers ridiculing her reaction to the arguments.**

## **Making the Connection**

Veronica pauses and then, in a very quiet voice explains, ***“I’m just like my Mum, aren’t I?”***

*“Looking back now”, she continues, “I can see that she would have felt as if all that she was, wasn’t really appreciated. Not when compared to Dad, as Mum had no real life of her own outside of the house and us kids. I knew I didn’t want to “just” be a housewife and mother, I knew I had to do something different.”*

I say to Veronica, “And you did. You have done something different.”

We continue to reflect on Veronica’s success, and the fact that as long as she knew that Steven was “right” behind her, she continued to feel secure and safe.

I explained that it was Steven who didn’t feel that Veronica was “there” for him, hence **the shift from secure attachment to insecure attachment** whereby the roles can reverse in a relationship.

**So Steven buying his saxophone was the first step towards him finding his own sense of fulfilment.**



The outcome was that Veronica was thrown into a state of abandonment, believing that his sax fulfilled him more than her – **exactly how her mother would have felt when her father came home late.**

Veronica begins to see clearly what happened and says she felt sorry for her Dad. She couldn't believe that he'd betrayed his wife, but on some level he must have felt as if he had to 'look after' her Mother.

*“Looking back on all of that”, Veronica continues, “I wonder what it must have been like, coming home to all the yelling and screaming with Mum blaming him.*

*I think Mum must have felt so alone and unloved, and immensely jealous of his full, busy life, and the potential for him to meet other women, as he really did have a lot of charisma.*

*Mum used to be confident too, but somehow lost it whilst focusing on keeping the house together. And with my two brothers being so defiant towards her, it was little wonder that she was intimidated by them.*

*I think she was scared of them really, but she'd do anything for them, as if they were still babies; yet she wasn't like that with me, as it was me who looked after her.”*

## **Growing Stronger**

This moment in the therapy is crucial as Veronica begins to understand and make sense of the “bigger picture”.

The blame was first put on Steven, then her brothers, followed by her mother, and then her father. Now she is looking at it in a different kind of way, with empathy for both her parents' position.



**She is even seeing things from Steven's point of view.** This begins to reduce her anxiety and abandonment fear as she gains an in-depth knowledge of “how” something like this could have happened.



It's actually a small miracle watching Veronica begin to gain strength and self-esteem. **She appears lighter and more open**, shifting her orientation from that of a victim to being more positive with an empowered sense of who she was before the breakdown.

This was a real breakthrough and Veronica regretted more than ever that she had destroyed Steven's saxophone. However, she begins to speak about replacing it, whether they stay together or not.

## **Self-Forgiveness Vs Conscious Understanding**

We can clearly see that when reality and empathy becomes conscious, Veronica's jealousy turns into regret.

However, it is also important to note that for many people, this regret can easily shift in to self-abhorrence if the act of vengefulness becomes an "unforgiveable" act. With this in mind, we have to walk a fine line between self-forgiveness and conscious understanding

### **Our treatment included...**

- ✓ Working through Veronica's anxious attachment and fear that she won't survive without Steven
- ✓ Exploring Veronica's fear of falling out of an emotional connection with Steven, leading to her feeling completely disconnected and anxious
- ✓ Understanding the mother/daughter relationship and sibling rivalry
- ✓ Working through issues regarding her father's absence and unavailability
- ✓ Projection: How all the boys/men Veronica had a crush on were ways to recreate what she wanted from her father in early childhood
- ✓ Separation anxiety and a longing for a secure base with a maternal mother
- ✓ Facing the overwhelming effects of primal abandonment and separation anxiety

- ✓ Addressing the longing for love and how to experience a sense of self love, self-generosity, self-validation and emotional self-reliance
- ✓ Working through panic, anxiety and fear of separation and being alone
- ✓ Self-development exercises and visualisations, to gain strength, self-worth and lovability
- ✓ Re-directing her craving for love to new connections with herself
- ✓ Building healthy and vital self-esteem. Veronica needed to believe that she could survive love withdrawal and be “alone” if she and Steven were to completely separate
- ✓ Recognising connection and closeness; being mindful and open hearted to the needs of her partner
- ✓ Understanding the difference between healthy love and insecure, anxious love
- ✓ Knowing that when love hurts you need to let go, even though Veronica had no idea just how much Steven was affected by her absence
- ✓ Self-empowerment and self-validation – as Veronica’s sense of self-worth was immensely low
- ✓ Surviving a painful separation and heartbreak that can occur through loss and abandonment
- ✓ Understanding what it is to love too much and finding a way through romantic love addiction
- ✓ Discovering a way through rejection and insecurity
- ✓ Working through past hurts and moving forward
- ✓ Working through shame and blame: parents, primary care givers and past relationships that led to rejection, co-dependency and abandonment issues
- ✓ Working through issues of being drawn to narcissistic or emotionally unavailable partners which would often trigger abandonment issues and emotional exclusion

- ✓ Understanding that Steven felt abandoned too (Veronica's exclusion of Steven was not dissimilar to his exclusion of her. She so readily escaped to her own private world, never believing for one moment that he'd ever feel excluded or unappreciated)

The focus of all our therapy sessions was geared towards working through Veronica's inability to give and receive affection and addressing her problems with control and self-destructive behaviour, **due to her lack of bonding and her insecure attachment in early childhood.**



**PLEASE NOTE:** The Love Addict suffers this insatiable need to be loved and cherished *because* of the lack of bonding and secure emotional connection in childhood. As a result, they try to recreate a secure healthy attachment in all their relationships. This longing to be loved, loving too much and loving others more than their own lives is the bedrock of my work on Love Addiction.

## **HOW MY RECOVERY PROGRAM HELPED VERONICA OVERCOME LOVE ADDICTION & CO-DEPENDENCY – AND HOW IT CAN HELP YOU TOO!**

Below are some of the key steps I used to help Veronica reclaim her independence and reverse her self-abandonment, together with advice and guidance on how you can do the same.

- ✓ **We addressed how Veronica's self-esteem depended on her being a care giver and rescuer with all her partners in the past.**

Veronica always felt secure with Steven whilst she was able to help him out in some way, but towards the end when he had retired into a world of his own, preoccupied with his music, it brought back and reinforced Veronica's acute abandonment issues and disappointment. Note that if the love addict becomes a rescuer or care giver, it allows them to feel of some use in the relationship, reinforcing the desire to be needed, wanted, appreciated and attached.

- ✓ **I showed Veronica how to use her history to build a better future.**

Keeping a journal and a timeline from when Veronica was eight to fifteen years old helped her to see how far these repetitive patterns went back in her

relationships and why she had these “crushes”. For Veronica, this was a very powerful exercise and she used her writing to turn very raw experiences of love, loss and grief into a therapeutic process.

- ✓ **I showed Veronica that she should no longer change herself to please her partner. She should be who she is.**

In only six months, Veronica had bought ten sets of lingerie including Basques, stockings and suspenders along with short flimsy dresses and an array of sexual clothing and shoes to attract Steven’s attention. None of this worked, which threw Veronica into an even deeper sense of abandonment and rejection which struck deep at the core of her womanhood. She’d also go on fad diets to shed weight and change her body shape in order to acquire a more voluptuous, sensual look that she thought Steven would approve of. He never noticed.

- ✓ **I showed Veronica how important it was to stick to her treatment program – no matter how low she felt.**

Remember, this kind of treatment takes time. There were occasions when Veronica longed to call Steven and believed things would be different next time. So I worked with her using “the no contact” strategy, as love addiction, like drug addiction, means that one small taste can pull you back in again. In fact, when it comes to love addiction and co-dependency, love withdrawal and rejection are the most debilitating symptoms to overcome.

- ✓ **Finally, we worked through a number of very painful issues from early childhood in our sessions; the fear of abandonment due to Steven’s emotional unresponsiveness was one of Veronica’s most primal fears.**

The anxiety and emotional pain was completely overwhelming. In the midst of her hurt, it was hard to see an end to the feelings of rejection, shame and weakness so mirroring and self-validation was central to the therapeutic process. It is common for the love addict to form an addictive relationship with an emotionally unavailable, unresponsive love avoidant partner.



Although Veronica and Steven’s cycle of **love addict/love avoidant** wasn’t apparent at the beginning of their relationship, it is first seen when Veronica feels an emotional lack of responsiveness from Steven.

He then experiences counter-dependency and fears being taken over, drowned, engulfed and smothered by Veronica’s desperate need for love and attention.

Therefore, it was important to find a way to move beyond the past and work towards integrating the past hurts into present and future reality which can be truly life-changing.

## The Letter...



After some weeks had past, Steven got in contact with Veronica's parents and sent her a letter through them, which she brought to our session.

Steven clearly wanted to work things out and describes what had happened in their relationship from his point of view.

**It came as no surprise when he expressed to her that during the year prior to their break-up, he felt dismissed by Veronica, unappreciated and emotionally excluded.**

**It was this that led him to retire into his own world of music and work.**

The letter wasn't one of blame or criticism. Instead, he suggested that they see a couple's counsellor together.

Of course, this needed to be a different therapist to me, as I was already working with Veronica on a one-to-one basis, and so could not also see them as a couple.

I was delighted to hear this, and as you can imagine, Veronica beamed with hope and joy!

She felt as if she'd come back from a long desolate journey, returning from a place she never wanted to return to.



**Veronica and Steven married 15 months later after twelve sessions of couple's counselling.**

When I heard this, I felt incredibly happy for them. It reminded me just how important it is to live an emotionally responsive life where we never take another person for granted.

We need to realise that our partner can feel just as excluded by us as we do by them, and how misunderstandings can happen even between two people who are deeply in love.

This is exactly why I'm so incredibly passionate about the work I do, because I know that I'm able to make a tangible difference to people's lives, and put them back on the path to happiness.

**And I hope that my *Surviving the Addictive Love Cycle Program* will do the same for you too.**



**HELEN MIA HARRIS**  
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*"I just wanted to let you know how much your recovery programme is helping me. I cannot put into words how happy I am that I found you. I never even understood until now why I am the way I am and I finally see a light at the end of the tunnel. It's the first time any one has ever understood what I'm going through; an addiction to love and it makes me feel like I'm not alone and not crazy. With much gratitude and appreciation." Yolanda*

[www.lovingtoomuch.com](http://www.lovingtoomuch.com)



**Best Wishes,**

Helen Mia Harris x

MBACP Registered, MNCS Accredited Relationship  
Therapist, Marriage Coach & Love Addiction Specialist

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