

Is there a cure for Love Addiction?

A powerful healing system for women
who love too much



HELEN MIA HARRIS

Expert Marriage, Relationship
and Couples Therapist

(MBACP Reg) MNCS (Accred) Specialist in Love
Addiction, Heartbreak and Codependency.



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**Helen Mia Harris – BACP Registered, MNCS Accredited
Relationship Therapist, Marriage Coach & Love Addiction Specialist**



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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.

“Is there a cure for love addiction?”

I'd like to begin this e-Book by asking you the following questions, so please take a moment to answer them as honestly as you can...

- Do you feel overly dependent on a significant other, as if you couldn't survive without them or their approval?
- Do you crave your partner's full attention and reassurance, giving them responsibility for your emotional wellbeing?
- Do you tend to put your partner's needs ahead of your own?
- Have you ever neglected your friends, family, career, interests, even your health, when entering a love affair, or at the cost of an ongoing relationship?
- Do you frequently fall in love with a person's potential as a romantic partner, rather than accepting them for who they are?
- Do you feel so completely devastated, helpless and grief-stricken when a relationship is over that you believe you won't survive?
- Do you find yourself feeling anxious, suspicious, agitated and panicky when the beloved fails to return your messages or calls, fearing that they may no longer want you or care about you, or may even be with someone else?
- Do you give your power away when you are in a relationship, allowing your partner to determine the pace and rhythm in which the relationship will develop?
- Do you make your partner in to your 'project', supporting them financially or creatively, giving them your entire recognition, validation and encouragement, yet fail to take care of yourself, and focus on your own interests?
- Do you often choose partners who are unable or unwilling to meet your emotional needs?

- Do you become so blinded by your attraction to someone and your need to be accepted and validated by them, that you don't take time to get to know them first?
- Do you experience feelings of possessiveness, jealousy, rejection or insecurity when in a relationship?
- Do you constantly seek reassurance and a connected emotional response from your partner?
- Do you find yourself constantly and compulsively thinking about your love interest rather than getting on with your day-to-day life?
- Have you ever seen somebody at a glance and immediately developed an intense desire to be with them, as if you've been catapulted into a world where only the two of you exist?
- Do you find yourself deviating from your natural behavioural patterns and act out of character in a way that seems most unfamiliar to you?
- Do you become dependent, insecure and clingy with your love interest, looking for any sign of rejection and disapproval for fear that he/she may be losing interest in you?
- Do you find yourself returning time and time again to an emotionally withholding, neglectful or toxic relationship?
- Once in a relationship, do you find that you lose your self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem to such an extent that when you're socialising you become "hyper vigilant" to anyone that your partner may speak to, as if there is a unique "radar" that alerts you to the possibility that he/she may be interested in someone else?
- Have you ever fallen in love with someone you've met online, via dating agencies or in chat rooms before ever physically meeting them?
- Are you with someone that you "know" isn't good for you, but you find it impossible to let go because you don't feel capable of living without them?
- Do you ever feel as though you simply can't be without the significant other, because you're so fearful of being alone?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then there's a very good chance that you're suffering at the hands of love addiction, and as a result, are finding it almost impossible to love without sacrificing yourself in the process.

But there is hope...

In this e-Book, we will be exploring the intricate reasons behind why so many of us lose all sense of our own individuality, independence and uniqueness the moment we enter into a romantic relationship, sacrificing ourselves and everything we are in the name of love.

This is love addiction.

But is there a cure?

Well, that's the most important question of all...

Indeed, whether it's via social media, blogs, emails, Skype, or my face-to-face consultations, "is there a cure for love addiction?" is the most common question that I get asked.

This is because most of my clients are desperate for some kind of magic pill that will end the heartbreak, feelings of rejection and all-consuming emotional pain that comes with a breakup, so they can escape the grief, love withdrawal and sadness that renders them completely helpless.

So, is there a cure to love addiction, and can you ever be free of the feelings of abandonment and anxiety that you experience in relationships?

Why is it that we become so disarmed and disorientated the moment we feel that "magnetic" pull of desire, interest and deep attraction towards another.



To answer those questions, I'd like to begin by telling you a personal story from a client of mine who I worked with several months ago, because her story perfectly encapsulates the feelings that surround these exact questions.

Here is her story in her own words...

Please Note: Throughout this e-Book, I have purposely changed the names of my clients and some of the circumstances in order to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Client: Laura

Age: 28

“Every time I fall in love I seem to be most unlike myself. It’s as if I become quite dismantled and disoriented, yet in my professional life I manage a huge business with complete order and ease. I really think I should stay away from having any kind of close relationship as I am constantly agitated and preoccupied with this one person almost straight away, and the more I want them, the more it drives them away.

They begin to close down, become far away and withdrawn, and I can feel that they’re just not with me. It starts out with them pursuing me, and I can feel that they are truly engaging and connecting entirely, but the moment it’s taken to the next stage, they seem to sense my neediness, insecurity, clinginess and overwhelming desperation to feel loved and wanted. This is when I can feel myself falling apart, pleading with him to stay as if this awful fear of being rejected takes over my entire life, breaking through any potential to hold my professional work together as the distress, terror of being left and anxiety is all consuming.”

That, right there, is the inspiration behind my decision to write this book.

You see, if you’re like Laura in ANY way, then it’s crucial that you discover as much as you possibly can about this powerful, mysterious and all-consuming emotion they call love, which can either be the most central source of joy, meaning and happiness in your life, or conversely, one of the most painful experiences of suffering, loss, grief and despair anyone can ever experience, where being in love literally means being in emotional pain, where you have zero control over yourself or the relationship.

Indeed, even the most independent, strong, confident and successful person can lose their entire sense of what’s ‘normal’ in a matter of seconds and become demented and crazed if threatened with the loss of the beloved, especially if the POA (person of attraction) flits between being there and not being there, wanting and not wanting.

Because of this, love and suffering often go hand in hand for the love addict.

But it doesn't need to be this way.

I owe the development of this research to many of the couples and individuals I have seen in private practice over 23 years.

And of course, none of this would have been possible without my own personal experiences, which have fuelled my desire to get to the bottom of the root cause of abandonment anxiety, rejection and impossible love, which after many years I now recognise as love addiction; an addiction to romantic love and all the yearning and longing for that love to be mutually reciprocated.

If you're interested in reading more about my personal story, and how I managed to conquer my own addiction to romantic love, please refer to one of my earlier e-Books, *Surviving an Addiction to Romantic Love*, which you can find under “**Resources and Free eBooks**” on my website: www.helenmiaharris.com



The fact is, I would not be able to fully understand, nor help and support others if I hadn't experienced this myself at first hand. I clearly remember the emotional trauma I suffered, as if I was looking over a precipice wondering how I would ever survive the grief and loss I felt when my own addiction to love took hold. **I truly never believed I was capable of living without him.**

It was an excruciating feeling. I firmly believed that without this “one” person, who seemed to be as vital to my health and wellbeing as oxygen, I would fade and wither away, and nothing would ever be the same again.

And if we parted, I wouldn't be able to survive the feelings of desperation, grief and loss which I now know to be love withdrawal. I lost all sense of myself, no longer knowing the person I'd become; a weak and powerless woman. It felt as if my core identity was eroding, and I was fully prepared to sacrifice anything and everything to stay with this one person who I believed to be my soul mate.

Of course, I now look back with the knowledge that it was a destructive relationship.

No person should give up all that they are, all that's alive in them, and destroy their own unique spirit for the sake of another.



Instead, we must begin to find the strength and a way through that place within us that keeps us **locked and attached in relationships** which are more painful and traumatising than joyous and good – something I will always remember after reading Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, when Catherine laments whilst thinking about Heathcliff:

“He’s more myself than I am whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same.”

For many people, this is **exactly** the problem, as the beloved feels so very familiar to us, as if we have met our soul mate – and this is what keeps us so entwined and completely unable to let go, even when we know the relationship may not be good for us.

Discovering the cure for love addiction

I knew that in order to cure myself of this affliction of the heart, I would have to understand what was happening to me, and gain as much knowledge as I possibly could about love addiction.

- What does an addiction to romantic love mean?
- What are the symptoms?
- How do we become emotionally self-reliant?
- How could meeting this one person have the power to destroy our entire sense of rationality/identity and force us to become so blinded by the dreadful profound victim-like symptoms that threaten our own individuality and humanity?
- Why is it that when our love is thwarted, we become needy and desperate for fear of abandonment – and then move towards self-abandonment?
- What causes us to be like this, fraught with anxiety and despair when everyone around us seems to be acting “normally” in their relationships?
- How could it be that a confident and successful person in their career, can suddenly become a withering, powerless victim if their love is unrequited and unreciprocated?
- Why is it that we love another more than ourselves, and are prepared to sacrifice all that we are for them?

These were the questions I needed to find answers to.

And this quest turned into my Surviving the Addictive Love Cycle Program, which you can learn more about here:

lovingtoomuch.com



HELEN MIA HARRIS
Expert Marriage, Relationship
and Couples Therapist

Expert in helping people with Loss of Love, Love
Addiction, Love Withdrawal, Co-dependency,
Heartbreak, Rejection and Jealousy.

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**The Love
Addiction
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Programme**

**Your journey from heartbreak
to emotional freedom**

The Complete Online Recovery Programme
Created by the UK's leading relationship expert, Helen Mia Harris

"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 anyone 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

The truth is, **self-understanding** leads to **self-empowerment**, and unless we completely understand everything there is to know about our own symptoms in regards to abandonment, anxious attachment, rejection and emotional despair, then we will forever remain trapped by powerlessness and helplessness the moment we are moved by/or fall in love with someone.

"The life which is not examined is not worth living."

--- **Socrates**

I did exactly this all those years ago...



I read everything relating to loving too much, loss of individuality, abandonment, rejection, impossible love, and anything else that would help me understand what was happening to me.

I undertook my own personal therapy, kept a journal and wrote copious pages each and every day.

I wanted to tell the story of this sickness; this addiction that felt like it was ravaging me, and writing helped me to gain some real perspective as if I was the observer, rather than living the story myself.

I knew I had to write myself out of this awful, desolate place until my own personal growth, self-awareness and self-development gradually began to replace a desperate loss of self-confidence, self-worth and even self-respect.

In a way I had to rewrite a whole new reality for myself, and I'm here to say that your reality can be re-written too!

So let's begin at the early stage of a relationship, where the pace and rhythm is paramount.

Let me explain...

Why moving at a different pace to the beloved can threaten the early part of your relationship

As you will know, people who are addicted to romantic love can compulsively and obsessively attach themselves to the beloved. This might happen almost straight away, or it can happen after only a few meetings together and even prolong itself throughout a long-term relationship/marriage.

In the beginning of an attraction for that one significant other/love interest, the love addict will typically try to hide their vulnerability, act strong or fabricate their self-sufficiency and independence.

This keeps them safe and secure as the last thing they would ever want is for the love interest to know just **how much** they feel for the other person.

Deep down, the love addict KNOWS that they have a propensity towards becoming anxious and clingy, although they might not be consciously aware of what's happening.

At the beginning, the question they will always ask themselves is; **do they want me as much as I want them?**

Do they feel the same connection towards me as I do them?

If the answer is, "I don't know", a sense of self-assurance and security is hard to find.



What's more, the person addicted to love may have had previous relationships that have triggered insecure anxious reactions, as the very thing they fear most is abandonment.

As a result, they find themselves on shaky ground from the very start, forever concealing these feelings from their romantic partners for fear of humiliation and shame.

Because of this insecurity, emotional neediness and fear of abandonment, many find it very difficult to sink in to any kind of ease, security and continuity.

Consequently, the beginning of the relationship can feel like a slippery slope, devoid of any kind of reassuring proof that they will move towards a lifeenhancing future together.

And this is my main point; if the love interest is moving at a very different pace to you, needs more space and time and verbalises this need, i.e. **“I need more space, I need to take things slowly”**, something truly destabilising begins to threaten your entire being.

“I need to take things slowly”

Just “hearing” those few words are enough to stir something in the love addict.

Our pulse rate rises, our breathing becomes laboured, our speech becomes impaired, and an almost embarrassing agitation and panic-like feelings can begin, as we desperately try to hold onto any kind of sanity and rationality.

For some, the visible stress and complete lack of positive emotional response can be one of the most painful experiences to endure.

But during this e-Book, I am going to help you to understand why and how this one sentence; **“I need more time, I need to take things slowly”**, has the power to throw you into a state of devastation and helplessness in an instant, destabilising any sense of emotional wellbeing and rationality, and most of all, makes you emotionally unable to satisfy this request. This sense of uncertainty and unavailability



can threaten our entire sense of self and emotional equilibrium, and makes it difficult to hold on to any kind of normality. At this point, many convince themselves that this intense ‘soul mate’ like attraction is love, even though they may barely even know this person.

Quickly, the magnetic desire to be with this person entirely begins to preoccupy every thought. Many will say, **“I can’t get him/her out of my head”**, especially if the love interest fails to show immediate interest in returning your romantic attention.

In fact, when the person prone to an addiction to love “hears” this disinterest, **it seems to reinforce the drive towards longing and craving, rather than diminish it.**

And it’s here that we start to see the signs of ‘self-abandonment’ as uncertainty and unavailability begin to cause the love addict to feel diminished, undesirable and unworthy.

What happens when we surrender all that we are to another person?

Surrendering or ‘abandoning’ yourself to another is the driving force behind obsessive love, when you love someone for what you **want** and **need** them to be, to ease your ravenous hunger for love and connection, rather than WHO that person really is.

As you project your own unmet needs, desires and longing onto the beloved, and ahead of what the significant other’s needs may be, a complete breakdown of reasoning can occur, which drives the love addict’s fate towards her/his greatest fear of all – rejection.

Knowing this, I’m sure you can now clearly see exactly how a person can begin to lose themselves in a relationship, because they are driven by the desire to look for completeness/wholeness in the other, sacrificing themselves at the feet of the beloved for fear that they will never survive alone.

And here lies the problem of loving too much; of loving someone more than our own life.

It's as if searching for one's soul in the other takes precedence over everything else.



The psychoanalyst and philosopher Jacques Lacan elucidates this fact entirely, explaining why and how we lose ourselves in the other.

Lacan talks about how people often speak of the *one*.

The *one* represents the romanticized notion of the object of love.

This *one* may be another person, thought to be the other half of one's soul who is yet to be found somewhere in life's journey; an object or the fulfilment of a dream. A person who loves expects to be united with the object of his love by being loved in return. Thus, he lives his life fuelled by the desire for the other—the one.

This clearly explains why so many are prepared to sacrifice and renounce their self-respect, their time, their professional lives, friends, family etc., if it means that they're able to hold onto the beloved tightly, to reassure themselves that they are wanted, loved in return and finally complete.

In many ways, if there is a constant longing for “the other half of one's soul” then it's little wonder that this is experienced as a profoundly life-changing feeling of grief and loss when love is not mutually reciprocated, and why many people who suffer in this way seek therapy or a religious/spiritual orientation.

The desire to make sense of things in response; to find some sense of purpose and meaning in ourselves is exactly the reason why I felt so passionate about creating the Love Addiction Recovery Program. I wanted to understand what was happening, and discover exactly what was underpinning the causes of this despair.

I truly believe this is the cure, because if we understand something, we can then begin to heal ourselves from within. But if it's a mystery and a frightening traumatic occurrence that keeps repeating itself, we remain powerless; a slave to our own emotional helplessness.

When the person we love becomes ‘Hyper-significant’

One important lesson that I want you to take away from this e-Book is this...

If someone you desire is “**hyper significant**” to you... if you find yourself completely and utterly preoccupied with this one person... be very, very wary, because this is the beginning of the process. This is where you begin to be drawn in to the spell of another, and the very moment you leave yourself behind, you lose yourself in an instant.

Indeed, many love addicts live in a very small world, and if they were to venture out and include themselves in a social gathering, like a party or a club, for example, the love addict may become hyper-sensitive/hyper-vigilant to every single move of the POA.

In short, their insecurity chases the partner away.

In fact, many feel terrified when the POA ventures out into the world for fear that they will be replaced, rejected and further abandoned. As a result, the person who experiences an addiction to love often finds it unbearable to participate in any social gatherings, because if they witness the POA speaking to anyone else, or generally mixing with others, they become hyper-sensitive to each and every move they make.

More often than not, the love addict will **exclude themselves** at gatherings for this very reason. They will keep a watchful eye over the POA, which in many ways creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, as they unwittingly force the POA to reject and abandon them more.

It is important to note that **jealousy is a key component in love addiction**, which is exactly why many who suffer in this way live in a ‘bubble’, completely segregated from the rest of the world, as the risk of the POA even speaking to another person threatens their entire being.

So in many ways they will do anything to keep the love interest locked in a very small space, for fear that the POA will find someone more attractive and engaging.

So how do you stop yourself from behaving/feeling like this?

To guard against this, you need to objectively observe what you're feeling, and what may be happening. You need to stand back and be almost ultra-rational with your thoughts, rather than letting yourself become blinded by the intensity of attraction, desire and chemistry.

“The territory of the self is a vast, unexplored, and prohibited geography... our experiences, feelings, insights and understandings are often off-limits. As often as we are imprisoned inside ourselves, so often are we actually living in exile outside ourselves. One can say that one of the basic conditions of contemporary life is the unfulfilled longing of the self for itself.”

--- **Deena Metzger, Writing For Your Life**

I know people who are addicted to romantic love want to flee from themselves the moment love strikes their hearts.

Don't!



Instead, stand still and write everything about this heartfelt feeling in your journal or write them an email or a letter – but, and this is crucial, **DO NOT SEND IT!**

This will help to describe to them (but really yourself) how much longing you feel. But remember, the moment you get pulled in to it, is the very moment you could possibly lose yourself.

So wait and temper the pace the relationship, and if they come to you, then you are protecting yourself against the debilitating emotions and vulnerability that comes with unreciprocated or unrequited love.

So how do we love someone else without losing ourselves?

If we could find the answer to this question, I believe we would have an instant cure for love addiction, because an addiction to love can only occur when we lose our own sense of self in the other.

But nevertheless, I will attempt to answer this question as best I can, with a story about a client of mine who I was treating around a year ago.

The personal story I will discuss is one of many, and the reason for wanting to write this e-Book is that I felt compelled to understand in depth why so many women in particular, experience the sharp edge of abandonment, chronic rejection and anxious attachment when they're in a romantic relationship that is either unrequited or unreciprocated.

- Was it their own propensity to seek out unconsciously “unavailable men”?
- Was it that they failed to get this “natural pace” right at the very beginning of an attraction?
- Did they feel so invisible and alone in their present/previous relationships that they longed to connect fully with someone?
- Or was it all about WHO they were drawn to romantically/chemistry wise?

Please Note: Throughout this e-Book, I have purposely changed the names of my clients and some of the circumstances in order to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Client: Alicia

Age: 31

Alicia is a well-dressed young woman in a grey and black suit. She was a successful creative director for a major company who had spent several years dedicating herself entirely to her work. In her own words, she was surprised at how far she had come in only 5 years.

She speaks about herself being a person who loves to take hold of a company that is failing and turn it around and finally see it flourish.

Alicia reveals to me that every time she becomes involved in a loving/romantic relationship she loses all sense of perspective in her own personal life. Her work life suffers, her close friends and family are put on hold and she becomes completely preoccupied with the new, or potential partner.

She goes on to explain...

“I’m involved with someone now and I find it almost impossible to sustain my work life. Everything feels like it is falling apart. If he fails to return my calls, texts or is unable to see or speak to me, I become completely emotionally distraught and unable to concentrate, let alone board a plane to go overseas for a work conference. All my attention is consumed by this one person who seems most unlike what I would normally be attracted to.

It has been 13 months now since we first met, but I wish I could get out of this; I wish I could get him out of my thoughts; I wish there was some way I could stop thinking about him.”



Alicia goes on to ask me if I think hypnotherapy will work, as she feels completely obsessed with this man. She’s tried to follow the ‘no contact’ rule, constantly fighting the urge to go back to him, only for him to then reject her further.

I ask Alicia to describe to me the circumstances in which she met this man...

She seems embarrassed and clearly doesn’t want me to disapprove of what she is about to say...

“His name is Alex and he is nine years younger than me. We met through the company but I had no idea he was so young when we met 8 months ago.

He’s based in America and I met him whilst running a one day training group in New York.

The whole thing feels so wrong, because he really does seem like a young boy; wild, unkempt, torn jeans, long shoulder length hair. Yet when I look at him, it’s like a magnet drawing me in and I can’t resist it. I have worked hard to keep him in the industry, speaking highly on his behalf to the CEO. He has climbed the ladder due to me wanting to help him in so many ways, recognising his potential and his creative ability, and building his self-confidence, and therefore his capacity to demand a higher wage. I’ve constantly supported him through the entire process in order to ensure that he fulfils his full potential.”

At this point Alicia reaches down for her briefcase as she wants to show me a picture of this man.

She visibly begins to tremble as she hands it over to me.

She's right. His "look" is entirely different to hers, and exactly how Alicia had described him. He has a boyish demeanour as he sits on a Harley Davidson motorbike, with long, wild hair and a striking, handsome face.

I ask her to explain a little about how she first became attracted to Alex...

"I noticed him when I was running a group on creative artwork and brand design. It was just a small group of 20. I could see he was truly passionate about the subject matter because he was constantly asking questions, yet at the same time he seemed quite shy, nervous and inhibited.

His hair was in a ponytail and when he looked at me, right from the very beginning, it felt like he was looking straight through me. I remember even then feelings like his eyes were studying me from the inside, and it felt like he was disarming me. I found it hard to return his gaze so I avoided making any eye contact.

At the end of the group I remember wanting to make a quick exit, but members of the group came up to ask me questions. Alex quietly sat in the room and waited for everyone to leave, and then before I knew it, he was in front of me, telling me how much he enjoyed the training day. And then he just left.

That was it, out of nowhere this spark of attraction; this raw desire hit me and within a split-second I was hooked. It felt like I was in love. It was so familiar, but how could it be when we'd only just met?"

I think it's important to note here that the first moment of eye contact between two people is where it all begins – this is all to do with the concept of recognition, where you feel like this person completely "understands" you.

For the person with a propensity towards love addiction, they will immediately feel "seen", "known", "disarmed", and somehow woken up from a well of loneliness and emptiness, even if they don't knowingly feel alone.



It is as if something intangible has pierced their heart, which is directly due to the gaze of the other and the release of love hormones like Oxytocin and Serotonin that in a split second begin to saturate the body, causing her shyness/avoidance

of eye contact, heart palpitations, and a mixture of high excitement and anxiety.

Many describe it as an intense feeling of being seen, known and desired all at once.

Alicia goes on to explain:

“I was preoccupied that night thinking of him, wondering whether I’d see him the next day, wondering what I could wear that would impress him, and spending hours doing my hair, playing music really high and dancing around the hotel room. It was as if I’d been given a drug that instantly made me happy and exhilarated.

That night I remember I failed to call home, return emails or texts. Nothing seemed to matter at all, except whether I’d see him the next day. That day came and he didn’t return to the group. I looked up the records of other training groups that same day, as each day had an option to choose different modules, but he wasn’t in any of them. I felt like a stalker.”

The yearning for recognition and an immediate emotional response

As you can clearly see, just one brief meeting with this man had had a profound and instantaneous effect on Alicia’s behaviour.

She had entered into a world where she was happy to ‘lose herself’, despite nothing more than a fleeting moment of eye contact and a few brief words at the end of the training day.

This is where I believe it begins for the woman that has this propensity to ‘disappear’ as soon as an emotional response is made.

She will read this “look of engagement” as a promise of interest, recognition, an emotional response and sexual attraction.

Depending on the woman’s predisposition, she will feel immediately enamoured by this one glance and assume things about the man’s motivation or interest, misinterpreting innocuous signs of romantic interest and deep connection.

It is important here to note that a man can also experience this exact experience with a woman. It has everything to do with being recognised and humanly validated in a split second which I have often related **to an extreme lack of validation, empathy and mirroring in early childhood**, leading up to one's teenage life.

It's as if "that special look" instantly brought them back to life, because they had been craving that kind of emotional response and connection for such a long time.



Is it any wonder then that individuals with this passionate predisposition to fall in love "at first sight" feel they have finally, after so many years, found their soul mate, and are therefore incapable and unwilling to give them up?

After 3 days had passed, Alicia goes on to explain how she saw Alex in a cafe bar in a nearby plaza...

She felt quite nervous so turned in the opposite direction, as her sense of feeling 'unarmed' took precedence over everything.

He'd seen her and approached her instead, and this is where it all begins.

From this point on, Alicia explains that she is never truly herself.

The initial rush of happiness and excitement would be replaced with the decline of her own health, and her success at work would soon be replaced by her desire to ensure Alex succeeded instead, helping him to climb the ladder in the work place, building his self-confidence, falling in love with the 'potential' of what he could be, rather than seeing clearly what he was, and all around sacrificing her own beautiful uniqueness for someone else.

This is a core issue for those who suffer at the hands of an addiction to love and the longing for a positive emotional response to be reciprocated.

The love addict will effectively deceive themselves as they pour all that they are into the other person, turning the love interest into their '**project**', encouraging them in every way to challenge themselves, rescue them from their own misfortunes or self-esteem issues, and raise their ability to socialise and reinforce their self-belief.

When the relationship breaks down, many people say to me; **“why couldn’t I have seen this at the beginning?”**

“How could I have been so gullible and blind?”

But the fact is, where an addiction to romantic love is concerned, we become temporarily blind to reality, and convince ourselves that our emotional experience is true and right.

After some one-to-one sessions with Alicia, we began to explore the different “attachment styles” that were inherent in her previous relationships, and particularly her relationship with Alex.

She explains that she confused his apparent shyness with aloofness; he seemed so cool, casual and somehow laid back.

“He even told me right from the very beginning that he didn’t want anything too serious, that he wanted to take things slowly...”

Here was the “emotionally unavailable trigger”... the one sentence that would set the stage for love addiction.

Alicia continues...

“I found myself becoming more and more unhinged; almost crazed as if everything was a blur. The more relaxed and laid back he was the more anxious and agitated I would become. He said he would email me or text me to set a time to meet in a local music bar, and I would wait all day for the call, consumed by worry that he might not phone, or might not feel the same way.

And then suddenly, out of the blue, he’d call and explain how busy he’d been (usually with ideas regarding creative direction that I’d encouraged him with). We’d meet and he seemed really attentive. We’d dance together, and it felt so good. His natural scent and touch felt completely right and familiar. We’d have more drinks and then I’d bring him back to my apartment, as he rented a shared house in another part of NY. I made the place look lovely, with candles, flowers – all the right music that I’d collected over the years for moments like this.



Everything was so warm and the ambience was perfect. Suddenly when we got close I told him I was falling in love with him. The words just came out and immediately I felt him move away from me. I knew I wasn't safe in telling him such a thing after only a few months of going out together, and straight after that he repeated what he had told me earlier..."

"I need to think about things", Alex said. "I need to take things slowly. This has all gone too fast. Can you give me more time and space so that we can evaluate things? Besides, it's important that you get on with your own life, as you seem to be losing a lot of weight and I'm a little worried about you".

"After he said that, he made up some reason about why he had to leave, but not before he'd got what he wanted from me as far as his position in the work place. How ironic that he doesn't have a clue about what I feel, and why I have lost so much weight. In fact, he is completely oblivious to what I want and what has been happening. He just doesn't care about me at all."

After telling me this, Alicia goes further...

"In many ways I don't even "like" him, yet I can't get him out of my mind. He just seems like he has some almighty power over me, or do you think it's because I know deep down that he really doesn't want me?"

This is something that I hear a lot in my counselling practice.

Women or men can be absolutely devastated, have all the symptoms of separation anxiety, anxious attachment, loss and grief, yet they will then say exactly what Alicia has said here...

This is because many get the desperate emotional trauma and fear of abandonment completely mixed up, fused or merged with emotions that feel close to being 'in love', when in fact it is "primal fear" and separation anxiety that is keeping Alicia enmeshed with Alex.

It is the fear of loss and the overwhelming symptoms of love addiction that keeps them merged together, as if joined at the hip, and the more someone is absent and unavailable, the more acute the love withdrawal symptoms become for the other person.

Alicia goes on to explain...

“A few days would pass and I’d see him again, but more and more he would distance himself. I was losing more weight and it was really beginning to affect my performance at work. Eventually things got so bad I was called in to the head office here in the UK. I’d lost my job as they clearly told me I just wasn’t concentrating, agonising over a previous argument the evening before or constantly trying to reach Alex by phone, text or email. It was heart-breaking. Not only had I lost Alex, but I’d lost my job as a result, all for someone who in many ways didn’t deserve me. Yet I poured every ounce of effort I could into helping him get to where he is today, because on some level I thought he would want me more if I made his work life possible”



“I called him a few days later in a weak and helpless state, begging him to stay with me. I didn’t know what I’d become. I was crazy, and he’d never heard me so distraught. He wasn’t at all supportive of me; he just closed down and said I wasn’t his responsibility. And not only had I let my guard down by telling him I loved him, I’d also lost the respect he had for me in regards to my position within the company. This was perhaps the most devastating thing of all. I literally felt as if I was a shadow of my former self. Previously, my work persona had been my identity. It gave me a sense of focus, self-worth and validation. And now I’d lost everything.”

Unfortunately, what Alicia describes is quite typical, and very sad in so many ways, because Alex had no idea at all that Alicia was falling apart. His perception of her was of a powerful leader; a strong career woman and he actually didn’t know how broken and vulnerable she was.

This is so important to understand as many ‘victims’ of these types of situations can become enraged and angry, as they truly believe that the other person is rendering them powerless and helpless on purpose.

But I can assure you that they are not.

In fact, the greatest irony is that POA’s (persons of addiction) actually believe that the victim/love addict has the power, because they come across as strong and emotionally self-reliant!

Recently, I was speaking to a client who had been going through a very difficult time with her partner. She told me that she felt like her partner just “didn’t get it”, and that a lot of the problems boiled down to differing levels of emotional intelligence.

“It’s like he really has **no idea** what his rejection is doing to me, so how can he empathise?”

And that’s a crucial point.

Many love addicts/anxious attachment style personalities actually think that things are being **DONE TO THEM ON PURPOSE**, when in fact they just have a different level/kind of emotional intelligence.

Alicia’s emotional downfall

Without any dignity or self-respect at all (in her own words), Alicia pleaded with Alex to meet up, just so she could achieve some kind of closure. She even suggested they meet as “friends” rather than lovers, so that he wouldn’t feel pressured or responsible for her mental and emotional state.

He agreed and they met for one last time.



Alex was emotionally distant, withdrawn and devoid of any warmth.

Suddenly he tells Alicia that it’s finished, that it feels ‘wrong’ due to the age gap and her neediness, and that he’s unable to give her what he knows she needs.

“You have been so good to me”, Alex tells her. You are kind and generous, and you’ve helped me get to be where I am today, but I can’t give you anything. I can’t give you what you want. Please can we just say goodbye and go our separate ways?”

Upon parting, Alicia went back to her apartment in New York, feeling completely and utterly shattered. The sense of abandonment and panic took hold of her and the next morning she flew back to the UK. In her own words, she had to get back home. This is vital, because experiencing a complete loss of selfidentity away from anything that feels like a secure base can be devastating.

“If we imagine... the individual as a larger or smaller room, it is obvious that most people come to know only one corner of their room, one spot near the window, one narrow strip on which they keep walking back and forth. In this way they have a certain security.”

--- Rainer Maria Rilke

During my treatment sessions with her – which I will speak about later – it became evident that Alicia’s old abandonment wounds had been accumulating through two previous relationships, eroding her sense of self and individuality whenever she entered a romantic and intense relationship.

Unresolved abandonment issues meant that Alicia would sacrifice herself completely and utterly without question, in order to make Alex’s life successful, because she truly believed that if she recreated/rescued him, he would want her more.

In fact, the complete opposite happened, with her behaviour instead sabotaging her own happiness.

We can see here that Alicia surrendered herself in every way and handed it over to Alex, which in therapeutic terms, can be described as **‘giving her power away’**.

But the key to a successful and healthy relationship is retaining your own power, your own identity, and crucially, both people moving at the same pace.

And that’s what I’d like to return to now...

The ‘natural pace’ of a healthy relationship

For those who do not suffer from this predisposition in love, both will experience an attraction, both will experience an intense chemistry, and the “natural pace” at the beginning of the relationship will flow in sync and in tune with each other’s rhythm.

In other words, **the love equilibrium is completely balanced** and neither person is pulling in the opposite direction.

There is a sense that these two individuals are experiencing something quite special, joyful and euphoric together, which crucially, allows both to be more independent from one another, whilst being interdependent at the same time.

This way, neither feels any particular demand or expectation from the other.

I often liken this to a ballroom dance.



When one person's right hand embraces the other's lower back, the partner will move in sync, and vice versa. There is a certain instinct that knows exactly where the other is going and their movement together is perfectly attuned.

So yes, it *is* possible to enjoy this perfect dance with one another in the early part of a relationship.

Yet for the person who is “driven” by a compulsive addiction to love and demands 100% reassurance, recognition and security from another, they seem to find it virtually impossible to strike the right rhythm with someone whom they hold an intense and passionate desire towards.

I say ‘driven’, because it truly feels like a volcanic force that leaves the person completely helpless and unable to calm the speed and strength of their longing; especially if they are with someone who has no idea of their voracious hunger for complete and utter reassurance (as often the love addict tries so hard to keep it hidden, until it finally becomes too much and bursts through like a tyrannical plea for security; an emotional response and a declaration that the love they share is completely mutual).

So why can't the other person give you what you need and want?

After all, it seems such an easy thing to do from the love addict's point of view.

They'll say, “Just show me more attention” ... “just assure me that you feel the same way”, etc., etc.”

But – and here lies the problem – the more this neediness, insecurity, clinginess, possessiveness and emotional trauma inhibits that natural flow, the more the other person will feel overwhelmed, smothered, pressured, hijacked, engulfed, and will find it very difficult to reciprocate the love you want.

And if this natural pace and rhythm is interrupted, it immediately sets up a push/pull dynamic, otherwise known as the pursuer versus the pursued.

Pursuer Vs Pursued



I want you to imagine that you are both on a seesaw and as your love interest rises up, you go down, and as you go down your love interest rises up, and so forth.

Now, imagine that when you go down, you are in the “Pursuer” position and the beloved is the “Pursued”...

My point is, the moment the power balance moves even ever so slightly, the one in the “pursued” position will naturally move away as he or she feels “too much expectation” or pressure.

And as they move away from you, you become fraught with anxiety and fear that the beloved is no longer interested in you.

At this moment you are not receiving the love you want, rejection and panic immediately grips you, and you lose all sense of your own individuality, self-respect, inner strength and self-worth.

As you begin to fragment or become “dismantled”, the love interest will move further away, and all of the effort you have put in to “keeping yourself together” and acting strong and confident is eroded.

Suddenly, the beloved has all the power.

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” --- Alice Walker

Often, what happens next is that the love interest becomes like a god or a goddess to the love addict.

They look up to them and view them as perfect. And this projection shifts the power balance even further, as even without words they instinctively know that you want them; you need them, and the 'love hunger' you experience begins to tilt the balance too much, which is always damaging to the growth and natural flow of a relationship.



The love addict will then give all that they are to the significant other and flood them with gifts and attention but in response, the beloved will often move away, as they feel engulfed and pressured, and thus lose the motivation to reciprocate love.

But there is a very real reason why we lose all sense of ourselves in a relationship, and it's this...

Love produces mind-altering chemicals such as oxytocin, serotonin, dopamine and adrenalin which influence our behaviour profoundly.

Helen Fisher, a biological anthropologist at Rutgers University and author of a breakthrough study into love addiction, describes this perfectly below...

Love & Other Drugs

"Romantic love is an addiction. My guess is that our modern addictions -nicotine, drugs, sex, gambling -- are simply hijacking this ancient brain pathway that evolved millions of years ago, that evolved for romantic love. ... The brain system evolved to focus your energy on an individual and start the mating process."

"You turn into a menace or a pest when you've been rejected", Fisher said.

That's when people stalk or commit suicide... There's a very powerful brain system that has a dramatic effect on your entire life." [1]

To test her 'love-as-an-addiction' hypothesis, Fisher recruited 15 college-age, heterosexual men and women still raw and reeling from a recent break-up.



On average, the participants had been rejected about two months prior to the study and said they were still in love.

As the participants looked at images of their ex-lovers, the researchers looked at images of the participants' brains.

The parts of the brain that lit up were the same ones associated with cocaine and nicotine addiction, physical pain and distress and attachment, Fisher said.

"You just crave this person. You're willing to do crazy things, stupid things," she said. Just as a person would while fighting a drug addiction, a lovelorn person obsesses, craves and distorts reality."

Another article on the subject suggests that anyone 'addicted' to another person is "literally chasing after the oxytocin produced when engaged in intimacy of any kind with the love object—be it cuddling or sex, to simple acts of proximity and emotional closeness felt between friends or relatives.

When the relationship becomes threatened, when distance is placed between the addicted and the object of addiction, or when the relationship is ended entirely, very real withdrawal symptoms can occur.

His or her body begins to produce cortisol, the very opposite of oxytocin. High levels of cortisol tell the body to react as though there is a mountain lion bearing down ready to attack—preparing it to fight, flee or freeze. This is why we often see people suffering heartbreak react so wildly and irrationally, as though their life is on fire and rather than put it out, they scramble in reaction to the burning.”
[2]

“True love is not a feeling by which we are overwhelmed. It is a committed, thoughtful decision.” --- M. Scott Peck

The importance of attachment styles

Next, I want to focus on attachment styles, because this loss of self and powerlessness has a lot to do with people who suffer from anxious attachment (love addicts) choosing partners that have an “avoidant” attachment style.

There are primarily 3 main attachment styles; **secure attachment, anxious attachment and avoidant attachment.**

This is the crux of the problem; a person with an anxious attachment style (love addict) falling for a love avoidant. In short, none of these devastating symptoms would occur if both people exhibited secure attachment styles.

But crucially, many psychologists believe that someone with an anxious attachment style is often attracted to an avoidant attachment style.

For example, Alicia's attachment style was clearly anxious, while Alex's attachment style was avoidant. This is evidenced by his aloof and often narcissistic nature, whereby everything he required revolved around Alicia's commitment to bringing out his full creative potential, whilst minimising any form of closeness.

Being as Alicia and Alex's relationship was anxious vs. avoidant, it comes as no surprise that Alicia's sense of uncertainty and preoccupation with Alex began to disrupt any sense of ongoing security and emotional safety.

Many who possess an anxious attachment system with a partner who has an avoidant system have a particular ability to "sense" when their relationship is threatened, as this 'hyper sensitivity' to the significant other involves constant "scanning" and "monitoring" for availability and an attentive emotional response from the attachment figure.

If this is not readily available, and the love addict is deprived of the nurturing and emotional attention needed, the outcome is devastating, and can lead to a total loss of self, which can lead to unhappiness, sadness, grief and depression.

Without a secure emotional response from the love interest, this emotional deprivation can cause debilitating consequences, **leaving the once intact love addict like a flower withering without water.**



So it makes complete sense that if we go into a relationship 'blindly' and without any sense of our "own" attachment style, then we are leaving ourselves open to heartbreak, pain and emotional torment.

And this is the cure to love addiction!

Yes, I'm talking about procuring knowledge of who we are, and understanding ourselves and what WE need in a relationship; our integrity, truth, authenticity, self-worth and self-respect, so that we are consciously able to see what is good for us and what could be emotionally harmful.

A healthy, balanced love equilibrium is based on autonomy, connection and intimacy, whilst being attuned to the needs of both people for closeness and solitude.

This sense of emotional balance lies dormant in many people who lose themselves in a relationship, as they may constantly seek approval of themselves in the significant other, becoming dependent and insecure, searching for any indication or sign that the person of addiction is becoming distant, emotionally unavailable and losing interest.

Unfortunately, when the love interest senses this, they will often **pull away**, causing a devastating outcome for the relationship.

Love addiction occurs when we let our hearts rule our heads, and because this feeling of love is so powerful and all-consuming, it becomes hard to argue with!

And when a love addict's attentions are not mutually reciprocated, it will never ever end in a happy way.

There can never be any closure, because if another is incapable of loving you back, it will only reinforce the internal shattering symptoms that goes with chronic rejection and abandonment.

Pia Melody, an expert on love addiction, states that it is often the case that a person addicted to love will become attracted to 'Love Avoidants'.

Consequently, when the relationship ends, it is one of the fiercest and most destructive experiences one can ever have.

In fact, the love withdrawal symptoms are likened to a recovering heroin addict.

Knowing this, it begins to make more and more sense why so many people feel as though they cannot survive this all-consuming wave of emotions that completely erode one's sense of identity and orientation.

Separation anxiety, anxious attachment and abandonment

In the case study I've revealed, we can clearly see how Alicia's anxious attachment style was entirely triggered by Alex's avoidant attachment style, which in many cases is the underlying cause of abandonment anxiety.

To take this a step further, the moment Alex withdraws his attention and becomes emotionally unavailable to Alicia, the love withdrawal phase is triggered, sending her into a blind panic, agitation and separation anxiety, as the impulse to bond and feel safe and secure has been entirely severed.



This is exactly why it is so important to create a safe and secure sense of self and to build emotional self-reliance as the wound of abandonment lies at the core of why we lose ourselves in relationships.

Once the abandonment wound is healed and we fully understand these attachment styles, you could say this is the closest we could get to the 'cure' for love addiction. However, because love addiction is an attachment disorder, it doesn't mean that the need to bond and experience a deep and loving connection goes away.

Instead, it simply means that you will begin to understand WHY the withdrawal symptoms are so overpowering – **and it's because your love is being thwarted.** When we gain emotional control and awareness over the "kinds" of people we are drawn to, we soon realise that if someone's attachment style is avoidant, we need to stay clear of them, because otherwise the same cycle will continue to repeat itself throughout our lives.

In fact, every relationship Alicia had entered into prior to Alex was with an "Avoidant Attachment Style". Ironically, she had found secure attachment individuals 'boring', so it's clear that love addicts really are 'drawn' to unavailable and distant love avoidants.

A person with an anxious attachment style needs certainty and availability.

They can't live with uncertainty, because it activates the stress hormones that create anxiety, agitation, panic, and the fight or flight response.



This is exactly why women, and in some cases men, feel as though they are falling apart when they don't receive a mutual emotional response from the beloved – whether it be in the form of a text, email, phone call or physical contact.

The anxiously attached will feel that they are “out of control” as the object of attachment seems to be ‘missing’, and often the panic doesn't calm down until contact is made.

It seems clear to me that if an anxious attachment style individual becomes emotionally involved with an avoidant attachment style love interest, **this is the actual “cause” of love addiction**, abandonment anxiety, and narcissistic abuse, as anxious types will stay in relationships far longer than they should, because the fear of not being safe; of being alone, unloved and unwanted far outweighs the fear or threat they feel if the attachment figure is out of reach.

Indeed, John Bowlby, the founder of the attachment style theory, proposed the following:

”This mechanism, called the attachment system, consists of emotions and behaviour that ensure that we remain safe and protected by staying close to loved ones. The mechanism explains why a child parted from his or her mother becomes frantic, searches wildly, or cries uncontrollably until he or she re-establishes contact with her. These reactions are coined “protest” behaviour.”



Rachel Heller and Amir Levine, in their book [“Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How it Can Help You Find – and Keep – Love”](#), state that *“people with a secure attachment style know how to communicate their own expectations and respond to their partner's needs effectively without having to resort to protest behaviour. For the rest of us, understanding is only the beginning.”*

My clients who suffer from abandonment anxiety, rejection, heartbreak, love withdrawal, insecurity, possessiveness and more, **will always present an insecure or anxious attachment style.**

As a result, they completely fragment and become traumatised because they're drawn to love avoidant personalities; people who will often equate closeness and intimacy with a loss of independence and emotional freedom.

These love avoidants will consciously or sub-consciously forge a distance between the pair as a defence against responsibility, or because they feel trapped and overwhelmed by their partner's need for their love and affection to be reciprocated.

This is what ultimately destroys relationships.

Of course, an anxious attachment individual with an avoidant individual *can* work, but only if both become conscious of how these two prospective positions can “dance” together, and that somehow both are prepared to fully understand that it is these attachment positions that are affecting the natural flow of the relationship going forward.

“Love is a process, not a destination... a holy interpersonal environment for the evolution of two souls.”

--- Daphne Rose Kingma

As you've clearly seen, an addiction to love can render the most professional, intelligent and successful person so entirely derailed from their usual passionate self. It makes them feel worthless, powerless, helpless, needy, and clinging to the other as if they were their source of oxygen.

It's a sad, debilitating and awful emotional state for any human being to be in, especially when the love avoidant, for whatever reason, desires to be free of such responsibility.

As I've mentioned earlier, the cure to love addiction lies in gaining the required knowledge and understanding of who we are and what we need in a partner.

To give you an example of how this might work, during Alicia's therapy sessions, her treatment and recovery involved the following:

- **Exploring her past relationships with men.** How they exhibited a love avoidant attachment style, and how she sacrificed her own identity/individuality for the significant other.
- **Utilising N.L.P (neuro linguistic programming) Time Line Therapy which explored Alicia's own internal time line of past events.** NLP works with the sub-conscious mind in various ways; including healing emotional distress and helps to remove unwanted emotions, thoughts and behaviours. One of the neuro linguistic programming methods I used with Alicia was to ask her to visualise different characters which would stand in for different parts of herself that were strong and containing. This would help her divide the child's fear of abandonment out from her adult self, so that she was able to self-soothe and feel more security in her internal self as a woman. It is essential here to know that the most valuable thing of all is to help a person to be able to talk themselves down from an anxious state by repeating positive thoughts and behaviours, rather than self-defeating, sabotaging ones.
- **Using creative writing as a therapeutic art to help with emotional trauma.** Exercises included: How to take care of her own needs – How to care for someone, yet not be responsible for every man she meets – How to stop seeking approval in her relationships – How to stop looking for her father's love – How to rewrite the past and recreate the present, differentiating the past from the present in her early attractions – Making a list of the parts of herself that she was willing to change for Alex, then doing the same with her previous partners – Understanding that men have a tendency to need more distance than women (she wrote a list in her journal of the times when Alex was distant, which then triggered Alicia's panic) – Encouraging daily journal writing and self-reflection to build self-validation and emotional independence – Plus more creative writing exercises to help build self-worth, self-esteem and identity.
- **Distinguishing between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.** Here, we took a scenario and used this exercise to clearly locate when and how Alicia could have taken a different point of view in relation to her communication with Alex, which would have greatly reduced her anxiety and distress.
- **Ensuring that Alicia made a promise that she would never abandon herself for the sake of another again.** This was a huge step for Alicia as she was rebuilding an authentic sense of self, and came to the realisation that she was encouraging completeness and productivity in Alex that in

many ways she should have given to herself; her own work life and her own personal growth

- **Understanding why Alicia was not attracted to secure attachment types.** Alicia had a propensity, as many women do, to attract an avoidant attachment style partner. This brought to the surface a very familiar pattern of withholding, unavailable and neglectful love, which was all very familiar to Alicia in her early childhood. Ironically, women who are anxious are rarely attracted to secure men as it doesn't bring to the surface all those highly familiar emotions such as rejection and abandonment. Often we have relationships with partners who will trigger the original wound of abandonment anxiety. In contrast, when good, kind, reliable and secure partners become too secure and too reliable, they become less attractive. Women will often say this kind of man is kind and nice, but essentially "boring".

- **Addressing insecure anxious attachment vs. avoidant attachment styles.** The love hormone oxytocin fuels human bonding and the desire to merge with the other. With babies, the scent and touch of the mother's skin and the sound of her voice merge and bond baby and mother together. This bonding is what causes an addiction to love and explains why it's so hard to let go.

Something very similar happens when two people fall in love. In Alicia's case, she fell completely for Alex who needed nurturing love and attention. In many women, this love for the other is really experienced as an intense maternal type of love and this is why they are so terribly broken and devastated at the loss of this love. They want their man/child to save them from being alone and self-supporting, and this is why it is so incredibly sad as an addiction to unrequited love is all about grief and loss, and women so easily lose themselves in love for this reason.

- **Analysing the reasons behind when, how and why Alicia was so willing and ready to give herself over to Alex.** Alicia became an invisible, disappearing woman, as all her energy, enthusiasm and inspiration was poured in to making Alex's life productive and possible at the expense of her own. She spent hours rescuing him from his own wounded childhood. She convinced him to stop procrastinating when it came to his work life, and sacrificed all of her creative ambitions to Alex without receiving anything in return, rather like a mother might do for her son. Indeed,

sacrificing all of her own needs and wants for the men in her life felt easier than facing her own challenges and insecurities.

In fact, it soon became apparent that Alicia had a natural propensity to give herself up for the significant other and had spent her entire life helping boys or men who she would make in to her project. Never for one moment did she connect her own insecurities and lack of a secure emotional response with the divorce of her mother and father when she was just 11. She remembers sitting on the staircase with her hands over her ears to block out their loud screaming, often crying herself to sleep as there would be nothing she could do to stop the arguing.

For many who have abandonment anxiety, it is often because as a small child the parents have left their children wailing themselves to sleep. As a result, the child grows up with a sense of anxiousness. They think to themselves; “If I cry no one will come and sooth me, pick me up and be tender with me”. In later years, there is an almost natural instinct to give to others what they weren’t given themselves; to be hyper-sensitive to the needs of the other person. It’s a search for validation and approval at the expense of one’s own life.

The result of this is that the anxiously attached man or women caught in the addictive love cycle spend their entire lives scanning their relationships/partners desperately searching for signs and proof of impending rejection. They live in fear that their partner may become unavailable or uninterested, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Their neediness and desperate longing for closeness and intimacy pushes the beloved away, and their ultimate fear of abandonment is realised.

- **Addressing how Alicia was addicted to male approval and how from an early age felt it was her duty to attract, please and reinforce a man’s position in life.** Unfortunately, the result of this is that Alicia changed her entire physical wellbeing for Alex; the way she looked, her body shape, her personality, in case he became undermined by her charismatic, popular personality or strength.

In treatment...

Next, I will list some of the different therapies that I used throughout my face to-face sessions with Alicia and others. This looks at how our thoughts create our

behavior so that it relates back to how it can help people who suffer from love withdrawal and emotional trauma.



With Alicia, I used Attachment Therapy, Lacanian, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) as part of the healing process.

CBT helped Alicia to change how her thoughts (Cognitive) created her behavior, and how she reacted to any situation that triggered her anxiety. These changes alone helped her to become more mindful and self-regulated, freeing her from the anxiety and unhelpful beliefs that underpin depression and an anxious state of mind.

Unlike some of the other ‘talking’ treatments, it focuses on the ‘here and now’ problems and difficulties, instead of focusing on the causes of Alicia’s distress and helplessness in relation to Alex, who was emotionally distant and unavailable.

It looks for ways to improve a person’s “way” of thinking; to help identify, understand and make positive changes to thoughts, beliefs and behaviours that may be contributing to Alicia’s current situation – one that is keeping her stuck and unable to experience her own core sense of self. These core beliefs may include “I am not lovable”, “I am not good enough”, “attractive enough”, “acceptable enough”, “worthy of love”, etc.

EMDR has become well known in the field of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

It can be very useful for those who experience a reoccurring memory or trauma. This “picture” of the memory feels like it is ‘frozen in time’. EMDR helps to address this memory with rapid eye movements that help process the fear and panic around the reoccurring picture that Alicia imagined, i.e. “he is with someone else, a much younger and more attractive woman”.

She read his lack of contact as a rejection of herself saying; “if he cared about me enough he would make contact much more often”. This would keep her feeling safe and secure knowing he held her close to mind. These constant insecure and suspicious thoughts entered her mind throughout the day causing her to become unable to sleep and feel completely disorientated, agitated and emotionally powerless.

NLP: I work as a Specialist Life Coach and NLP Practitioner encouraging clients with emotional issues, such as anxiety, distress and trauma to focus on the here and now, examining memories and understanding limiting decisions in the past and how they might influence the present.

This allowed Alicia to change the structure of these negative thoughts, reviving her aspirations to live the life she aspired to, and to follow her projects, goals and interests. This is crucial because a person addicted to love, who is losing themselves in a relationship, is essentially “giving up” on their own life and instead projecting themselves on to the significant other.

This helped to identify Alicia’s truths, wants and needs, and draw on her own sense of independent emotional self-reliance; a sense of her own authenticity separate to her relationship to Alex.

NLP helped to “manage” her emotional states, building rapport and mirroring techniques so that Alicia could achieve personal and professional fulfilment without losing herself in the other, and then utilize ways she could grow from her past experiences.

The main benefit here was learning how to manage her negative repetitive habits and behaviors which would help her to build self-confidence and emotional self-reliance.

3 tips for conquering love withdrawal

When a relationship ends, the love addict is plunged into love withdrawal, a state not dissimilar from coming off a drug, because in essence, that’s exactly what it is.

Here are 3 ways to defeat love withdrawal and come out the other side stronger, and more emotionally independent.

1. Forgive yourself if you are stuck in self-blame cycle

It is not your fault. You are good enough as you are, and just because he or she didn’t return your love, it doesn’t mean that you are not a lovable and worthy person. You are. (Remember, when we fear losing someone or something, it is usually to do with our own lack of self-worth and a false belief that we are not lovable, not validated and not worthy, and therefore why would anyone want to have a relationship with us?)

2. Focus on self-care and self-generosity

Many of my clients ask me; “but what do I do about the pain I'm in? How do I survive it, because I can't live like this?”

Many of these people are going “cold turkey”, so to speak. They are in the midst of dealing with intense withdrawal symptoms, and literally can't get out of bed. They may stop eating, stop exercising, and even stop going to work. The grief, loss and overwhelming sadness that consumes them is akin to a light being switched off in their life.

And the answer I always give is that they absolutely **MUST** focus on self-care and self-generosity. You need to concentrate on becoming **YOU** once again, as this is the only way you will ever break the chains that are keeping you locked to the beloved. People who lose themselves in their relationship find it difficult to recognise their own needs and honour their own authenticity.



Activities and hobbies like Yoga, Pilates, walking, running, swimming, and general forms of exercise are crucial.

Eating good healthy food that's nutritious for your body and soul is vital too; as are things like meditation, massage, homeopathy, alternative therapies, and of course, reading everything you can about your addiction in order to find a sense of

purpose and meaning in yourself (many lose themselves in the love relationship to fill the emptiness they feel within).

3. Give yourself solitude

Last but not least, the most important and valuable thing to do for yourself is to embrace solitude and quietness. Try to do four things a day which are specifically geared towards boosting your emotional, physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing. This may include the following:

Physical: a walk in the park, exercise, pilates or some yoga. Make a dedicated list of things you can do to self-heal and remember to be as mindful as possible. Make your home your place of solitude; your sanctuary whereby you can be yourself. And most of all, remember to buy a journal and write down your heartfelt feelings. This will bring things to the service so that you can better

understand what's happening, and what you need to do take back control. Writing heals, without a doubt!

Spiritual: mindfulness practice, meditation or reading something that brings you a sense of meaning and purpose. Read something that gives you a sense of self experience; something you totally identify with, and rings true for your own soul.

Emotional: Write in your journal anything that is churning over about the love interest; write an unsent letter expressing things that have been left unsaid, **but don't send it!**

Mental: take a subject that has been preoccupying your recovery and brainstorm it until you begin to make sense of what has happened. If you are experiencing feelings of distress and loss, book a calming massage that will bring you some peace of mind.

So is there a cure for love addiction?

The answer is yes, but as you've probably worked out by now, the cure lies within yourself.

If we are to find a cure for an addiction to romantic love, separation anxiety, rejection and abandonment distress, it's vital that we no longer lose ourselves in love, let alone give all of our power away in an instant because we want to save, rescue and adore the significant other more than our own life and dignity.

In Alicia's case, she must never again sacrifice all that she is, surrender her personal power, abdicate her entire self for the love interest, and give away all her personal responsibility in the vague belief that Alex would return her affections entirely and completely.

In fact, the saying "**treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen**" derives from the desperation that many women feel and want from a romantic partner; to be emotionally responded to, to be validated and appreciated in every given way; to be seen, understood and appreciated.

But if this need isn't being reciprocated, we have to find the self-respect to let go, with the knowledge that we *can* survive without the other person.

Losing yourself in love is all about **relinquishing your personal power** and uniqueness to the beloved. If your love is unrequited or feels impossible, try to

look objectively at your partner's attachment style. You will more than likely find that they're exhibiting avoidant attachment style behaviours.



Gain as much knowledge about who it is you are falling for, and guard your anxious self entirely against what you know as all too familiar; rejection and the devastating wound of abandonment.

Learn and be mindful about this fear of abandonment, and trace it back to its origin: **yourself as a small child**. And remember, this is the “exact” emotion that you re-experience when love is either rejected or unrequited.

I truly believe that if you can love without losing yourself, you will never again experience the sharp edge of abandonment anxiety.

Remember, a balanced and equal love equilibrium can only occur if two people are willing to be open and vulnerable. If this is so, neediness, clinginess, and ultra-sensitivity to insecurity and rejection will dissolve, as neither individual is overly ‘giving’ at the expense of their own lives and completeness.

Instead, they mutually share a wholehearted and passionate life equally, one without fabrication or fear.

Most importantly, it is vital that you are truly honest with yourself when you are attracted to another person, as this is where it all begins. You need to remind yourself that no one is going to rescue you from this devastating fear of rejection or abandonment.

It sounds harsh, but no one person can ever fill that internal void or emptiness, no matter how ‘right’ it feels at the time.

If we are not fulfilled with our own sense of happiness and purpose, it is near to impossible to find peace, harmony and wholeness within our relationships.

And secondly, you must also know that you CAN survive this, and that you never have to be at the mercy of someone else ever again.

This very experience of feeling like you are fading without the other can lead to the most life-changing transformation of who you are, and most importantly, you

will know to **never** give all of your own authentic uniqueness to another person ever again.

It's about 'disengaging' in the fantasy of what you believe this person could be, and instead turning your inner eye on what is good, healthy, positive and life affirming for **YOU**, rather than living in a state of anxiety and emotional torment where you continually feel diminished, powerless and weak.

Are you ready to conquer your love addiction?

If you are, the best action you can take is to embark on my [Surviving the Addictive Love Cycle Program](#), where you will discover how to take ownership of these painful emotions, emerge emotionally free of the debilitating sense of powerlessness and move towards self-empowerment, peace and clarity, and a more vital connection to yourself.

I can honestly assure you that if I hadn't read, researched, written, and scribbled on pieces of paper whenever I had a thought, a longing, and an angry, upsetting feeling every single time my thoughts became obsessive and all-consuming in regards to why this had happened to me, I wouldn't be the person I am today.

I told myself, "this man is destroying me", and I knew this utterly and completely, but I just couldn't get him out of my head, until finally, 6 years ago, I sat at my computer and researched everything I could on abandonment, love addiction and what it means to love too much.

What were the symptoms to an addiction to romantic love?

How does it impact on our daily life, and if this was a real addiction to love, how could I heal myself?

And this is **exactly** the reason for me wanting to answer the most important question of all: is there a cure for love addiction?

There is only an understanding on the most profound level of being that helped me to free myself from this addiction to love. I had to hold on tight to anything that represented 'me-ness', because when we lose the beloved, we feel like we no longer exist.

Prior to meeting him, I was a really spontaneous, alive and passionate woman, yet the question throughout this e-book is; "why or how did I turn into a

wormlike, pathetic, pleading, powerless woman; a shell of who I was before we met?”

I now know that I loved him too much, and the addiction had such a tight grip on me that I just wasn't “seeing” clearly.

Yet I **KNEW** I wanted him a lot more than he wanted me, so why couldn't I leave him?

My program speaks entirely about these “causes”, because understanding love addiction, as I did, and reading everything you can about the subject, will give you the strength and insight to move forward and never ever look back.

Eventually, I realised that it's okay to have a **passionate heart**; its okay to love entirely and just ‘give’, but when it comes at the expense of your own body, soul, mind, spirit and emotional wellbeing, you must face yourself in the mirror and say very quietly to the other; “you have triggered my emotional pain”.

This is IT.

The cure for love addiction lies in recognising when it's time to leave, and when someone is NOT good for your emotional wellbeing, because staying with someone who is not able to reciprocate your love is the very CAUSE of love addiction.

When we become entirely conscious of this, we have finally found the CURE for an addiction to romantic love.

And when you do, you'll be free to find **healthy, mutual love**, and true unbridled happiness.

“Freedom is what you do with what's being done to you.”

--- **Jean-Paul Sartre**

If you're looking for a proven, step-by-step program to help you bypass painful emotions and emerge emotionally free and self-empowered, then take a look at my [Surviving the Addictive Love Cycle Program](#) here:



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With Warmest Wishes,



Helen Mia Harris x
www.helenmiaharris.com

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2. <http://www.loveaddictiontreatment.com/loveaddictionnews/your-brainon-love-or-drugs>

Please Note: If you begin to experience panic attacks, separation anxiety, heart palpitations, profuse clamminess, sweating, fear, dizziness or acute love withdrawal symptoms while attempting to implement any of the strategies outlined in this e-Book, it would be wise to consult your GP.