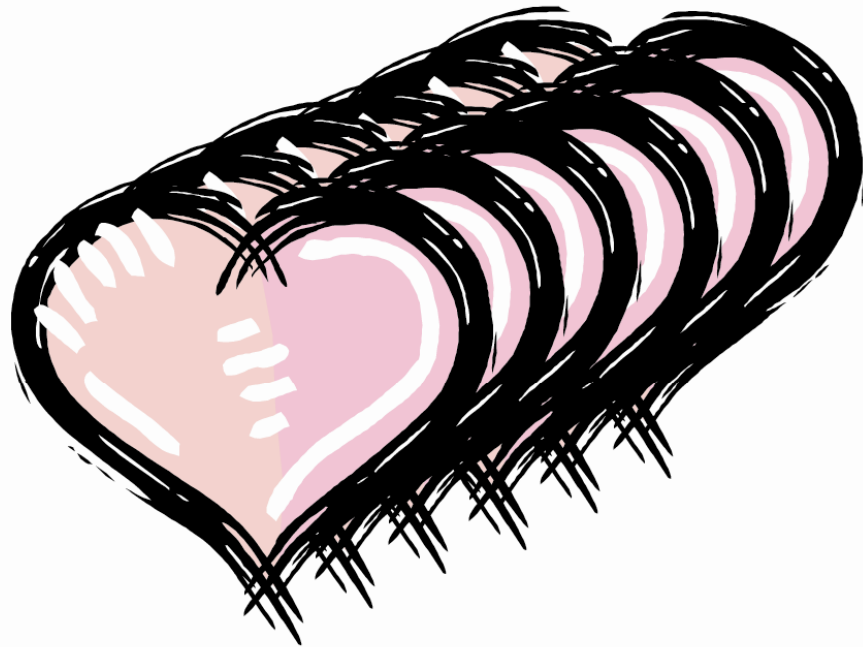


Is that the reason my relationships fail?

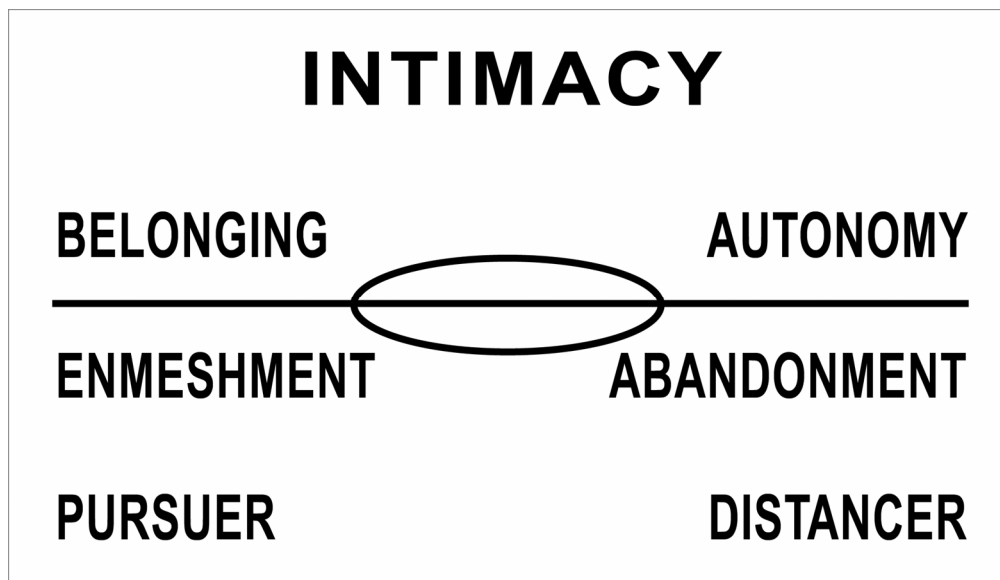


Learn how to develop a healthy relationship without becoming addicted to love

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Is that the reason my relationships fail?

Before I address the etiology of how love addiction develops, I want to speak more generally about relationships. Relationships are extremely difficult. Very few healthy relationships exist, especially healthy love relationships. I'm going to focus mainly on romantic love and marriage, although one can have love addiction in any regular relationship, even between friends. Love addiction is about starvation, and desperation. It's about self-love, rather than really seeing the other person for who they are. Martin Buber talked about an "I Thou" relationship, and that type of love is a very mature love. Very few people are able to show that type of love on a consistent basis, but that is what people are really looking for in a relationship. Unfortunately, our culture often promotes self-love or addictive love, the immature and possessive kind of love.



Intimacy

Love addiction is about being out of balance. It's about needing somebody too much. It's about joining in fantasy, rather than seeing that other person and valuing them for who they are. In love addiction, a person doesn't really even have to like the other person. All they have to do is have that feeling of love that needs to be fed. It is more about self-love than the action of love, which is caring about another human person, even to the point where at inappropriate times they would actually put themselves in a secondary position to help the other person out.

Mature love is about intimacy, and in addictive love, it is about intensity. Often in our culture, there is a feeling that our partners owe us something. The fact is that no one owes us anything. Each of us is an absolutely

separate human being. To understand relationships one has to look at how people develop and begin to individuate.

A baby is absolutely helpless and needs someone to take care of them 24 hours a day if they're going to live, and certainly if they're going to thrive. Luckily, nature provides for a baby. Babies have a very tiny body and they have an extremely large head, with extra large eyes. It just so happens that their pupils are dilated. They are dilated completely and they are dilated all day long. It's interesting to note that the way people become attracted to each other sexually, is that when they see each other each person's pupils dilate ever so slightly, and that's a signal that there's a mutual attraction. Since babies eyes are dilated all the time, whenever a baby is in the room people tend to focus on them. They fawn all over them and coo and talk in baby talk. If a baby cries people feel distressed and immediately reach to pick up the baby. It is nature's way of making a baby safe and giving them a sense of instant belonging.

There is another thing that nature does that is very helpful for babies. Babies are totally egocentric, and that means there's no real separation between them and, let's say, the couch, or the fish tank, or other people. A baby has the perception that they are one with the universe. Because of this perception a baby will tend to feel secure. However, they still need their belonging needs met. They have to have, hopefully, two parents, but at least one major caretaker who has taken care of their own particular individual needs to such a degree that they're able to give a tremendous amount of love and attention to the child. This is rare.

Most parents are quite needy and they don't have a lot of spare strength and attention to give. For our discussion, imagine the ideal parent or the perfect parent, even though there really is no such thing. These two parents are absolutely focused on the child. They decided to have a child out of choice and not out of accident or a whim. They've taken care of their needs sufficiently so that financially, emotionally and physically they're pretty set, and that enables them to really focus on the child and what that child needs. So the child is conceived and brought up and nurtured in love. A child needs emotional and physical safety. They need a house or a roof over their heads, they need to be fed, they need to be picked up, and they need to be nurtured. They need to be able to feel as if they're really safe and they need to feel as if they are wanted. This means that the parents must be very, very secure.

If a person picks up a child and they're unsure, either afraid that they're not doing it right or worried about the child in some way, a child will sense that. At this stage, especially, all the infant can do is sense this on a primitive

level and they will immediately begin to scream or squirm if they don't sense security in the caregiver. A parent needs to be there on a consistent basis, and that's a very difficult thing to do in today's society. Unfortunately, both parents have to work and often the child is in daycare way too early. This is a grave problem with our society.

If a child obtains the needed belonging, gradually the child is sucking their strength from the parents. They are identifying with the parents, they begin to feel safe and they begin to feel as if they are strong. It is also important that parents are able to bring up the children in a relatively safe cultural environment. If there is a war or an economic depression, that can often lead to a sense of insecurity as well. The development of a child's individuation or separateness can be negatively or positively effected by numerous variables besides the parents.

For the sake of our example, we've got perfect parents and they are giving a tremendous amount of love, and the child is growing, thriving, and feeling safe. At about the age of one and a half, a tremendous thing occurs, but a very, very scary thing. All of a sudden the child realizes that they are a separate human being. That's the first hint of existential anxiety. It's the fear of dying, fear of death, separation anxiety, all of which leads to attachment hunger, which is a desperate feeling that they need to have somebody with them to be safe. This is a natural thing to go through but it always leaves a scar. There is no way that children can be raised without going through this feeling of existential separation. No matter what a parent does, there's going to be that sense of abandonment when a child hits one and a half. Before that time, children are unable to really understand what's called permanence of objects.

If a child is playing with a set of keys, and a person puts a cover or a blanket over those keys, what will happen is the child will simply forget that the keys are there, if they are under the age of a year and a half. But about the time a child becomes a year and a half, he'll get the idea that the keys stay there. He'll pull up the blanket, look at it, and retrieve the keys. That is the concept of permanence of objects. As glorious as that is, it's also a tremendously scary thing for a child. Almost all religion, history, and psychology is based on the idea that we are really alone and separate in the universe, and no matter what spiritual basis you have, there's also that feeling of separation. A child never completely gets over that. He can only go so far. Children think very differently from adults. A minute is perceived as an hour for a child. Therefore, during the six months that a child experiences the abandonment and depression stage those six months are perceived as about a year and a half of utter pain and desperation.