

# Frequent Relationship Types in Sex Addiction and Love Addiction

## Addict/Codependent Pattern

Person	Desires	Attracted to	Behaviors	Process of person's relationships
Sex addict	<p>Validation                      Erotic highs/                      distraction                      One magical sexual attachment that will heal all wounds</p> <p><u>Fears:</u>                      Boredom/ emptiness                      Shame/intimacy                      Going out of control</p>	<p>“Hot” people                      Fantasy: others for validation                      Stable others who will care for them</p>	<p>Impersonal sex                      Seeking instant validation with “perfect” others who are then found to be imperfect, resulting in serial, non-intimate relationships                      Involvement in relationships with codependents, resulting in acting out beyond the relationship</p>	<p>Hits bottom with sex and starts recovery amidst great pain                      Turns to romantic validation from others or renews codependent relationship--in either case without adequately addressing intimacy or self-esteem issues. (More avoidant individual joins group but stays on fringes.)                      Strategy fails, relapse occurs, hitting more intense bottom.                      Recovery renews--more slowly this time--with more attention to self validation, non-sexual intimacy, and tolerating feelings of aloneness and emptiness.</p>
Codependent	<p>Validation through being needed, rescuing                      Secure relationship</p> <p><u>Fears:</u>                      Abandonment                      Vulnerability</p>	<p>Individuals who need parenting (addicted or dysfunctional and in need of rescuing, like codependents parents were)</p>	<p>Rescuing people in crisis                      Remaining in relationship even when clearly unsatisfactory                      Trying to control addict's behavior--yet sometimes enabling the addict to stay addicted</p>	<p>May want to “possess” addict                      Become frustrated when addict's behavior is more extreme than they want, but stay because afraid to leave                      If addict recovers, codependent may move on to new addict where their rescuing skills are needed and appreciated.</p>

Much of the pattern of relating in this table and the one below has been described by Pia Mellody in her 1992 book "Facing Love Addiction."

## "Love Addict"/Avoidant Pattern

Person	Desires	Attracted to	Behaviors	Process of person's relationships
Love addict	<p>Security, safety acceptance, "oneness" (merger)</p> <p><u>Fears:</u> Greatest fear is abandonment. Underlying fear is healthy intimacy (in enmeshment the core of the person is actually sealed off.)</p>	<p>Self-contained individuals who appear strong, stable (often avoidant or obsessive compulsive, like their families of origin)</p>	<p>Line up next relationship before leaving current one--forming love triangles</p> <p>Instant closeness, looking for "magic" feeling</p> <p>Idealizing partner</p> <p>Obsessing about partner</p> <p>Talking obsessively to others about him or her</p> <p>Acting out anger and revenge for being abandoned</p>	<p>Enters relationship in haze of fantasy--found this stable, strong, accepting individual.</p> <p>Gets high from fantasy.</p> <p>Denies how walled in avoidant really is</p> <p>Avoidant gradually becomes distant and shuts down, abandons relationship in some way.</p> <p>Love addict acts out anger &amp; revenge, turns to affairs and addictive sex.</p> <p>Partner capitulates and renews relationship, or love addict moves on to new relationship.</p> <p>Sense of self and self esteem does not develop--love addict remains in dependent position. Ability to tolerate fear and discomfort must develop for growth to occur.</p>
Avoidant person	<p>Wants to be connected, but not closely.</p> <p><u>Fears:</u> Greatest fear is intimacy/ engulfment. Can have a hard time rejecting others or saying no.</p>	<p>Individuals who provide much of the enthusiasm and intimacy for both of them</p>	<p>Ambivalence all the way through. May be in relationship because can't say no.</p>	<p>May show initial traditional romantic pursuing, but ultimately enters relationship because love addict provides most of the "intimate energy"; may fear would never make into a relationship otherwise.</p> <p>As love addict wants more and more attention avoidant attempts to please by giving it to them--at least initially.</p> <p>Eventually avoidant becomes overwhelmed by enmeshment and/or neediness of love addict, becomes critical, and eventually backs off from relationship or abandons it.</p>

Feels relationship has failed, sometimes gets involved with addictive behavior or affairs to distance, distract, or numb out.

May return to relationship out of guilt or fear of being totally alone, or moves on to connect with another partner.

Cycle of abandoning and returning can go on and on, especially if love addict starts to move on.