

TOXIC & ADDICTIVE LOVE: HOW TO HELP THOSE IN THE CYCLE

Janie Lacy, LMHC, NCC, CSAT

www.LifeCounselingSolutions.com

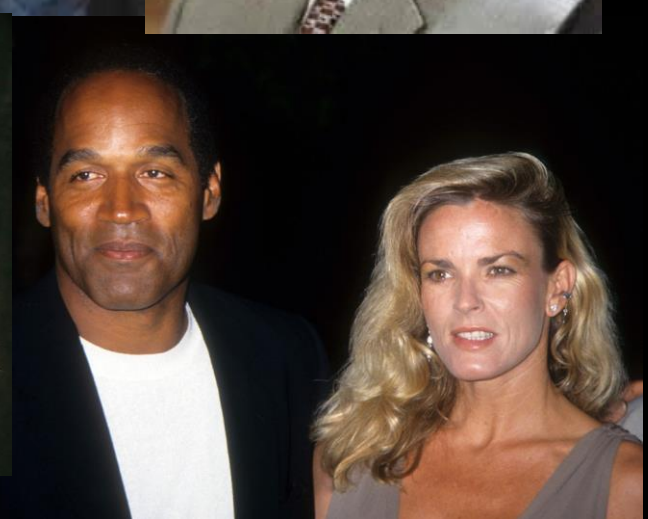


TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

- Cultural influences
- Attachment styles
- Love on the brain
- Cycle of toxic love
- Interventions to break the cycle
- Q & A



TOXIC LOVE: HEADLINE NEWS



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Celebrities Talking About It: [Interview Clip](#)

Home (/) / News (/news) / Rihanna Is "Going to Rehab for Love Addiction"

Rihanna Is "Going to Rehab for Love Addiction"

By *McCarton Ackerman* (/content/mccarton-ackerman) 06/18/13

The singer is reportedly seeking 12-step treatment to help her move on from Chris Brown.

Pop star **Rihanna** is reportedly checking into The Ranch clinic in Tennessee for a "heartbreak therapy course" to help her move on



Brown and Rihanna at the 2013 Grammys
- Photo via (<http://www.businessinsider.com/chris-brown-and-rihanna-are-sitting-next-to-each-other-at-the-grammys-2013-2>)

(http://www.tv3.ie/entertainment_article.php?locID=1.803.810&article=106200) from her





SAFE WITH ME BY SAM SMITH

If you ever need me
Just tell me and I'll be there
Cause I was built for you
Yes I was built to carry all your feelings

Cause I won't let them know
I won't let you go baby
I don't care what your past is
I don't need no answers
Just have faith in me



REHAB BY RIHANNA



Baby, baby
When we first met
I never felt something
so strong
You were like my lover
And my best friend
All wrapped into one
With a ribbon on it

And all of a sudden
you went and left
I didn't know how to follow
It's like a shock
That spun me around
And now my heart's dead
I feel so empty and hollow



"As long as we believe that someone else has the power to make us happy then we are setting ourselves up to be victims"

Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

WHAT IS.....



WHAT IS LOVE ADDICTION?

Individuals do not fall in love with someone who will return their affection. Rather, they are attracted to somebody who will neglect the relationship. – Pia Mellody (author of Facing Love Addiction)

Patrick Carnes (2001) – Four Primary Criteria (Addiction)

1. **Obsession** - love object becomes the organizing principle of life. Intense, abnormal, *preoccupying focus* on someone.
2. **Compulsion** – continuing behavior she/he has repeatedly attempted to stop.
3. **Negative consequences** – persisting in a behavior in the face of detrimental consequences. She/he does not learn from their problematic behavior.
4. **Tolerance** – neurochemistry (pleasure center of the brain – associated with acting out).

John Bowlby



- Edward John Mostyn Bowlby
 - British psychologist, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst.
 - Born on February 27, 1907 in London
 - He married Ursula Longstaff on April 1938 and had four children.
 - Died on Sept. 2, 1990 at the age of 83 on the Isle of Skye, Scotland.
 - Coined the term Attachment
 - Key idea is Attachment Theory
-

Secure Attachment

Believes and trusts that his needs will be met

MOTHER
Quick
Sensitive
Consistent

CHILD
Secure
Exploring
Happy

MOTHER

Distant
Disengaged

Avoidant Attachment

Subconsciously believes that his needs probably won't be met

CHILD
Not very explorative
Emotionally distant

Attachment Styles

Ambivalent Attachment

Cannot rely on his needs to be met

MOTHER
Inconsistent
Sometimes sensitive
Sometimes neglectful

CHILD
Anxious
Insecure
Angry

Disorganized Attachment

Severely confused with no strategy to have his needs met

MOTHER
Extreme
Frightened
Frightening
Passive

CHILD
Depressed
Passive
Angry
Non-responsive

Brain's regions reveal romance

Researchers using brain scans have found which areas are most associated with feelings of love.

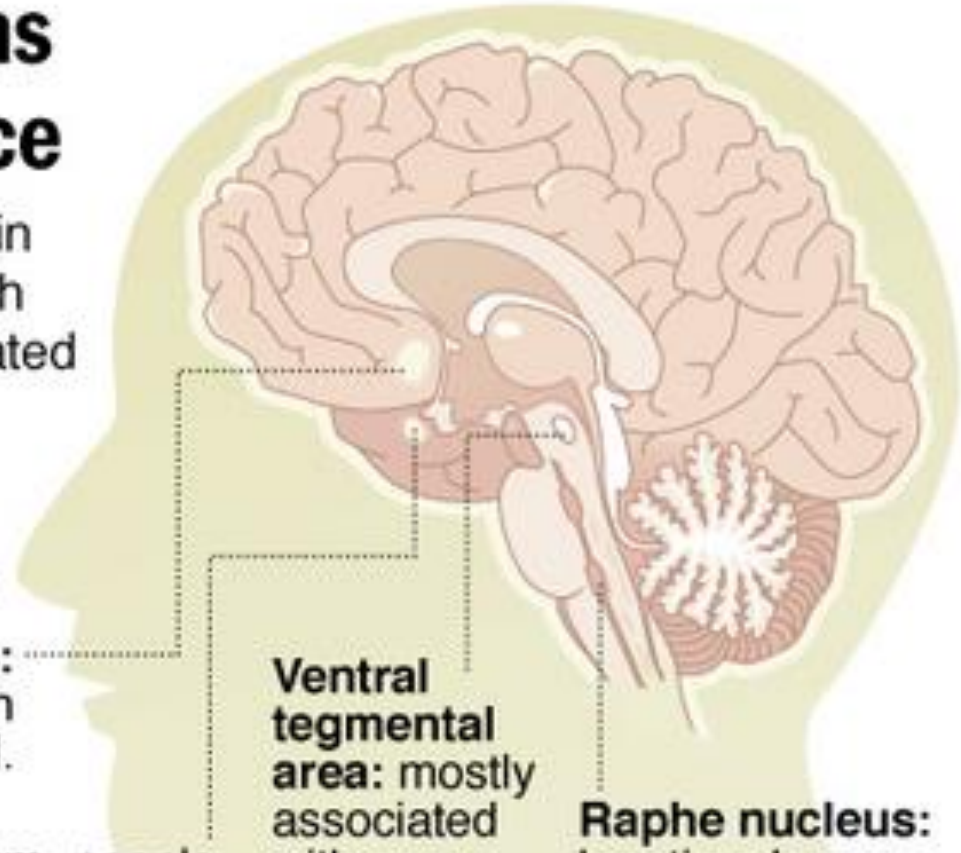
Areas highlighted on scans by type of love:

Nucleus accumbens: those who were madly in love, but recently dumped.

Ventral pallidum: people madly in love after 20 years; it is associated with attachment.

Ventral tegmental area: mostly associated with new love; key reward area.

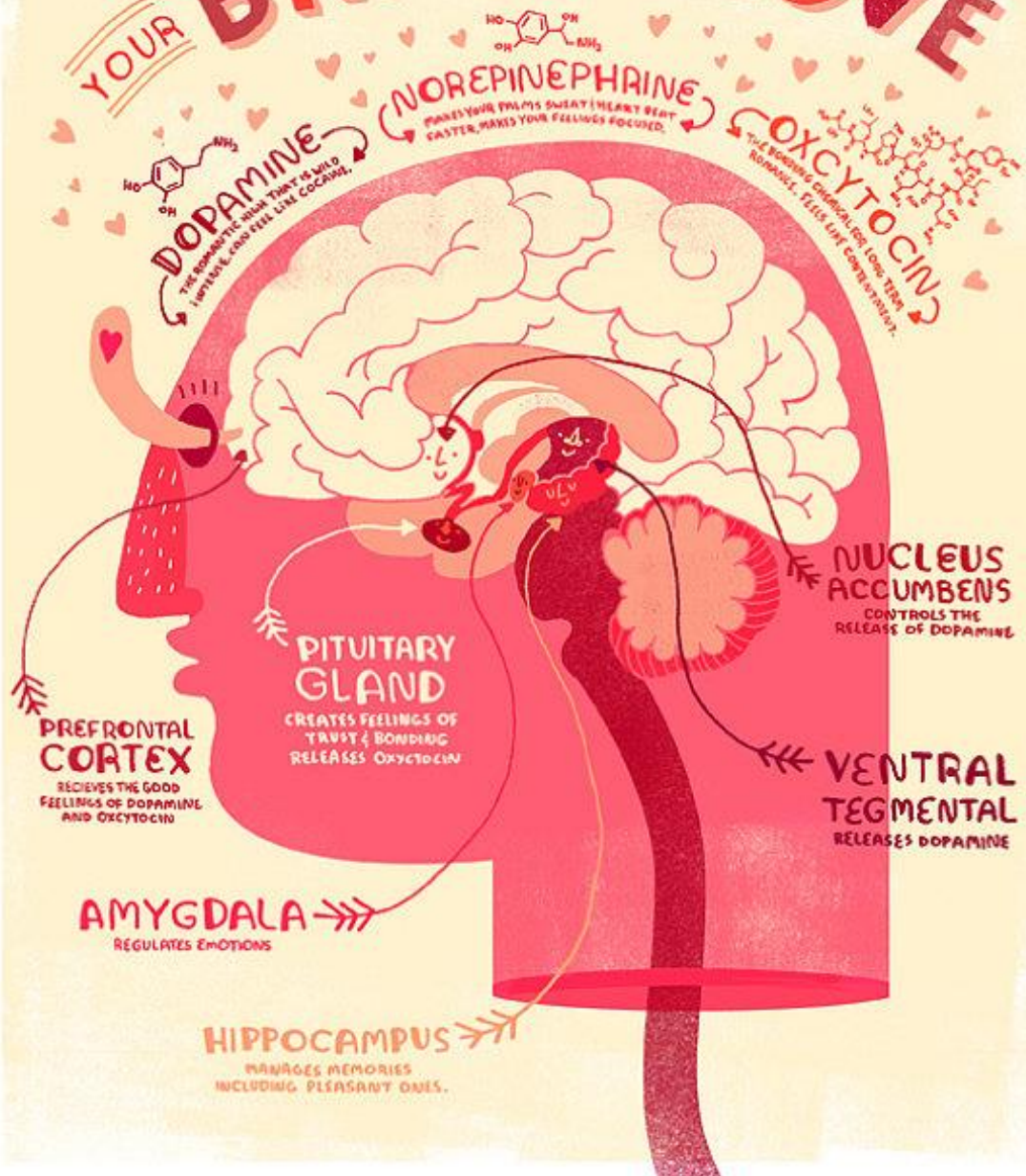
Raphe nucleus: longtime lovers; area gives a sense of calm.



SOURCE: Rutgers University researcher Helen Fisher

AP

YOUR BRAIN IN LOVE



Chemical basis of **Love**

Attachment:

- Oxytocin
- Vasopressin

Pheromones

Lust:

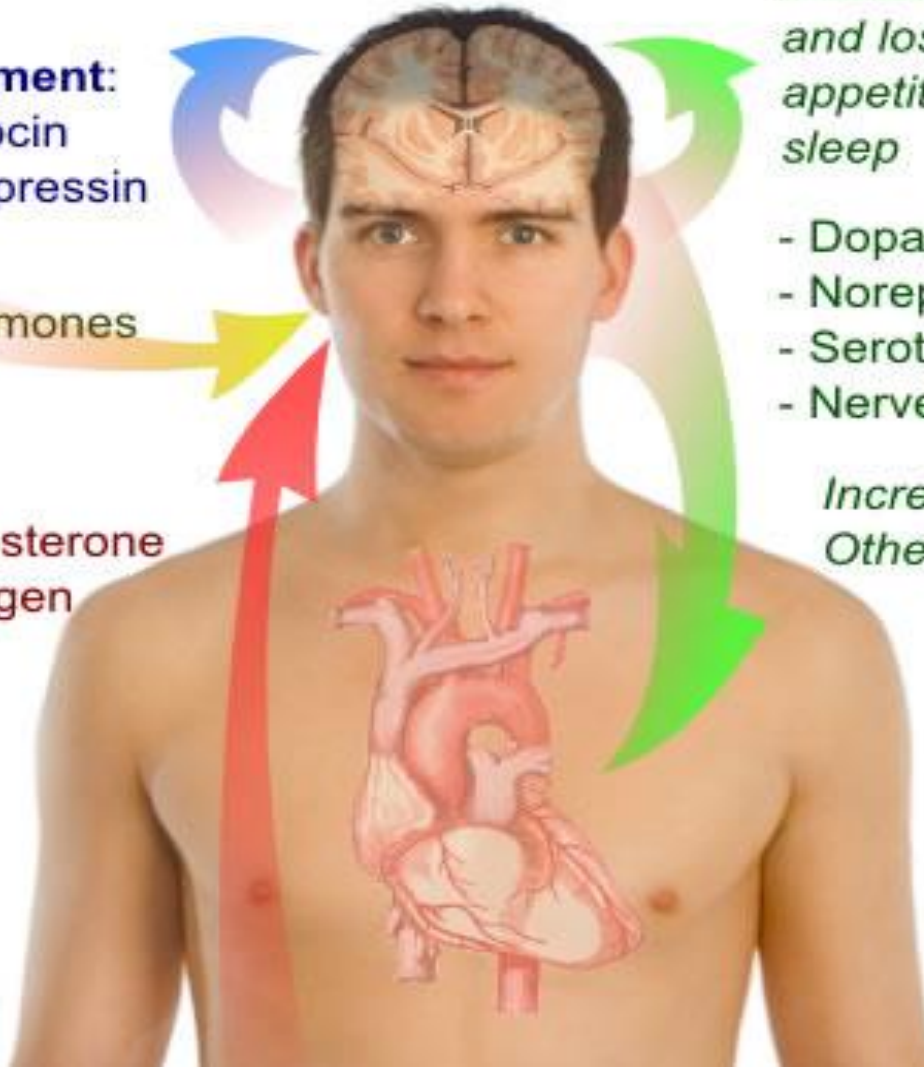
- Testosterone
- Estrogen

Attraction:

*and loss of
appetite and
sleep*

- Dopamine
- Norepinephrine
- Serotonin
- Nerve growth factor

*Increased heart rate
Other physical effects*



HEALTHY LOVE VS. TOXIC LOVE

Healthy Love

- Conversation – to understand, help, convey affection
- Ability to enjoy solitude by being alone
- Sex is free choice growing out of caring & friendship
- Self-care by both partners, emotional state not dependent on other's mood
- Loving detachment (healthy concern about partner, while letting go)

Toxic Love

- Conversation - intent to blame, defend, or manipulate
- Unable to endure separation, clinging
- Pressure around sex due to fear, insecurity & need for immediate gratification
- Expectation that one partner will fix and rescue the other
- Fusion (being obsessed with each other's problems and feelings)

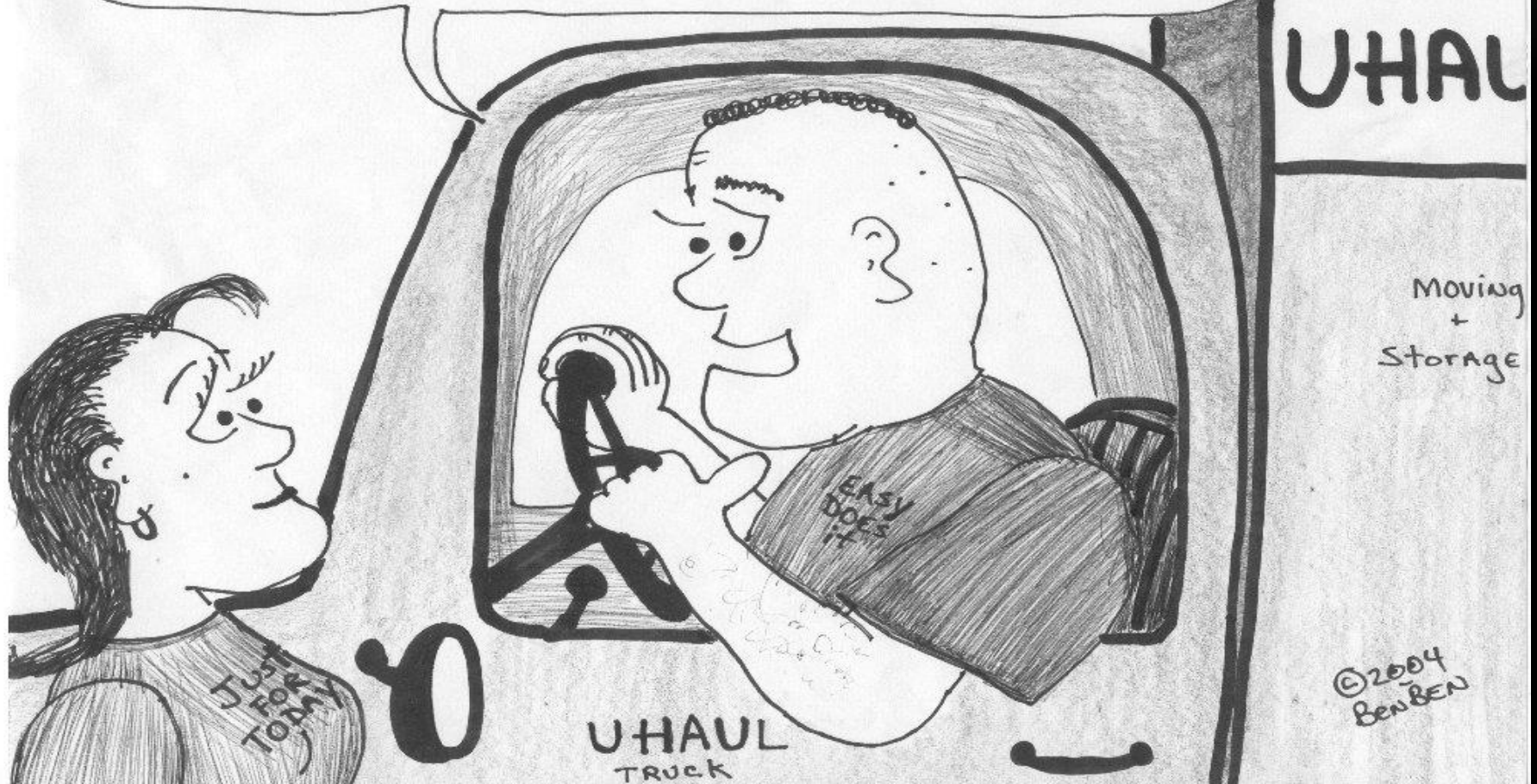
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOVE ADDICT

- 1) Assign a disproportionate amount of time, attention, & “value above themselves” to the person to whom they are addicted, & this focus often has an obsessive quality.
- 2) Have unrealistic expectations for unconditional positive regard from the other person in the relationship.
- 3) Neglect to care for or value themselves in the relationship.

TWO FEARS: CONSCIOUS & UNCONSCIOUS

- **Most conscious fear** - fear of being left. Will tolerate almost anything to avoid being left, the fear can come from childhood experiences.
- Avoid being left & want to be connected to someone in a secure way, but the demanding connection is ENMESHMENT rather than healthy intimacy.

Since it's our second date,
I brought the U-haul for your stuff.



TWO FEARS: CONSCIOUS & UNCONSCIOUS

- Unconsciously fear healthy intimacy.
- Consciously fear Abandonment.
 - Love Addicts potentially did not experience enough intimacy from their abandoning caregivers to know how to be intimate in a healthy way.



Mellody, P. (2003). Facing Love Addiction. New York: Harper Collins.

TWO FEARS: CONSCIOUS & UNCONSCIOUS

- Frightened by offers of healthy intimacy because they don't know what to do. When they reach a certain level of closeness, they often panic & do something to create distance between themselves & their partners again.

Distancing Strategies

SELF-DEFEATING DILEMMA (Double Bind)

- ***Consciously Want Intimacy But Can't Tolerate Healthy Closeness, So They Must Unconsciously Choose A Partner Who Cannot Be Intimate In A Healthy Way.***

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOVE ADDICT

- Inaccurate beliefs about who their partners is, they feel angry because of their repeated disappointment in the partner for not behaving according to their expectation. Love addicts begin **to retaliate with toxic fighting** against what they interpret as willful failure to love them.
- Usually have **serious doubts about their self-worth** so they are driven to seek an experience of unconditional positive regard to heal their wounded self-esteem.
- **Usually drawn to Love Avoidants**, who try to avoid commitment & healthy intimacy & can focused on addictions such as alcoholism, work, or sex.

PROGRESSION STAGES OF LOVE ADDICTION

1. Increased tolerance of Inappropriate Behavior from Others
2. Greater Dependence on the Person
 1. Decrease in Self-Care
 1. Numbness to Feelings – Experience waves of pain, anger, fear, shame & jealousy (report numbness).
 1. Feeling Trapped - Overpowering sense of being helpless to fix the relationship or wants to escape the pain by ending it.

FINAL STAGE OF LOVE ADDICTION

- Being abused by their partners & being abusive to their partners
- Inability to see the partner is there for them & times when partner's behavior is connecting rather than distancing (all bad).
 - Sees almost everything the other person does in a negative light.
 - Focus on feeling inadequate that they miss the compliment.

Demand to be loved in spite of the impact of immature, irrational, offensive behavior toward the love avoidant.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOVE AVOIDANT

Primary characteristics of the model partner for a love addict is AVOIDANCE, which seems unbelievable since love avoidants come on so strongly at first.

1. Evade intensity within the relationship by creating intensity in activities outside the relationships (can be addictions).
1. Avoid being known in the relationship in order to protect themselves from engulfment & control by the other person.
1. Avoid intimate contact with their partners, using a variety of processes such as “distancing techniques”.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOVE AVOIDANT

- They conduct life from behind protective emotional walls, & they continually try to control the choices of other people with whom they are seeking relationship.
- Consciously fear intimacy because they believe that they will be drained, engulfed, & controlled by it.

LOVE AVOIDANT CYCLE

1. Enter relationship because he will feel guilty if he says no.
1. Attempts to be relational behind a wall of seduction to avoid feeling vulnerable & to make the partner feel loved or special.
1. Feeling engulfed anyway, the Love Avoidant moves to a wall of resentment (anger) and gets critical of the partner.
4. Uses his resentment or sense of being a victim of the relationship to move to a wall of distance.
5. Seeks intensity outside the relationship in order to feel alive & have a life of his own.
6. Repeats the cycle by returning to the relationship out of the fear of being left or guilt, or by finding a new partner.

LOVE ADDICT & LOVE AVOIDANT

- Relationship marked by cycles of positive & negative intensity (which they call love, passion, or romance), until they can't stand it with that partner & then they leave that person to repeat the cycles with somebody else.
- Each partner is both attracted and repelled by each other.



Mellody, P. (2003). Facing Love Addiction. New York: Harper Collins.

LOVE ADDICTION: PHASE ONE: ATTRACTION PHASE

- Instant attraction to romantic interest, usually occurring within the first few minutes of meeting.
- An immediate urge to rush into a relationship - regardless of compatibility.
- Becoming "hooked on the look" of another, focusing on the person's physical characteristics while ignoring personality differences.
- Unrealistic fantasies about a relationship with a love interest, assigning "magical" qualities to an object of affection.
- The beginnings of obsessive, controlling behaviors begin to manifest.



Mellody, P. (2003). Facing Love Addiction. New York: Harper Collins.

PHASE TWO: THE ANXIOUS PHASE

- Unfounded thoughts of infidelity on the part of a partner & demanding accountability for normal daily activities.
- An overwhelming fear of abandonment, including baseless thoughts of a partner walking out on the relationship in favor of another person.
- The need to constantly be in contact with a love interest via phone, email or in person.
- Strong feelings of mistrust begin to emerge, causing depression, resentment and relational tension.
- The continuation & escalation of obsessive, controlling behaviors.



Mellody, P. (2003). Facing Love Addiction. New York: Harper Collins.

PHASE THREE: THE OBSESSIVE PHASE

- “Tunnel vision,” relationally dependent person cannot stop thinking about a love interest & required his or her constant attention.
- Neurotic, compulsive behaviors, including rapid telephone calls to love interest's place of residence or workplace.
- Unfounded accusations of "cheating" due to extreme anxiety.
- "Drive-bys" around a love interest's home or work, assuring that is where "he or she is supposed to be."
- Monitoring activities, following whereabouts through the day to discover daily activities.
- Extreme control tactics: questioning commitment to the relationship (guilt trips) with the goal of manipulating to get more attention.

Mellody, P. (2003). Facing Love Addiction. New York: Harper Collins.

PHASE FOUR: THE DESTRUCTIVE PHASE

- Overwhelming feelings of depression (feeling "empty" inside).
- Loss of self-esteem, due to the collapse of the relationship.
- Extreme feelings of self-blame and at times, self-hatred.
- Anger, rage & a desire to seek revenge against a love interest for breaking off the relationship.
- Denial that the relationship has ended & attempting to "win a loved one back" by making promises to "change".
- Use of drugs, alcohol, food or sex to "medicate" the emotional pain.

THE DESTRUCTIVE PHASE: WITHDRAWAL

- Movie Clip – [Shame](#) (22:14)



THE DESTRUCTIVE PHASE: WITHDRAWAL



COUNSELING CHALLENGE IN TREATMENT

- Untreated codependence, neither partner is mature enough
- Self-esteem problems
- Difficulty setting boundaries make it very difficult for each partner to cope with negative feedback or doing insight work with a counselor in the presence of the partner.



THE PHASES OF RECOVERY

- 1) Address any apparent addictive processes outside of the co-addicted relationship (alcoholism, eating disorders, shopping, gambling, etc).

- 1) Disengage from the addictive part of the relationship.

- 1) Deal and release old stored up feelings from childhood abuse experiences such as abandonment and engulfment.
 - their internal residue of unresolved & harmful feelings from childhood.

- 1) Underlying symptoms of codependency.

PUTTING THE RELATIONSHIP ON HOLD

Relationship is so toxic that the partner can't say things like "when you do so and so, I feel angry" without a lot of explosion or chaos.

- Detachment within the bonds of the relationship.
 - Separate codependence recovery, that partners can then work on issues together.
- Partners eliminate any contact that leads to fighting intensity, & painful feelings, or trying to deal with issues of the co-addicted relationship with each other.

DETACHMENT

- *...from the addictive parts of the relationship means not trying to do any kind of intense relating with your partner. Treat each other in a very pleasant way & go on about your own business.*



DETACHMENT “RULES”

- 1) Practice “the three gets” from Al-Anon: Get off your partner’s back, get out of your partner’s way and get on with your life.
- 1) Do not bomb your partner with anger or seduction.
- 1) Notice what is happening to your partner so you can see who your partner is.
- 1) Notice what is going on with you.
- 1) Do not respond to any bombs of anger or seduction from your partner (avoid manipulative, seductive, controlling sex or fighting and anger).

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH



**THOSE ON THE SAME
MISSION AS YOU**

READY TO HEAL

*Breaking Free of
Addictive Relationships*

THIRD EDITION



KELLY McDANIEL
WITH SARAH BOGGS

THE GIFTS OF Imperfection

#1
New York
Times
Best Seller!

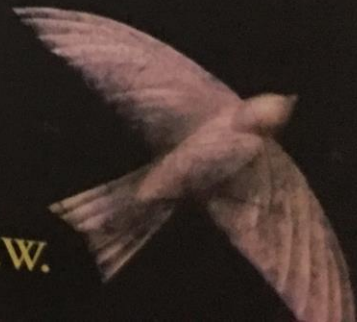


As Featured On
**SUPER
SOUL
sunday**
OWN
OPRAH WINFREY NETWORK
OPRAH.COM

Let Go of Who You Think
You're Supposed to Be
and Embrace Who You Are

YOUR GUIDE TO A WHOLEHEARTED LIFE

Brené Brown, Ph.D., L.M.S.W.



WOMEN REDEEMED THERAPY GROUP

- **30 Minutes**: share experience with the previous week's assignments.
- **30 Minutes**: Psycho-educational: includes: understanding destructive relationships, addictions, the process of recovery, social & interpersonal issues, healthy support systems, managing feelings, relapse prevention, long term maintenance.
- **45 - 60 Minutes**: Group Experiential Exercise

THERAPY GROUP RESOURCES

Group Participate

- Recovery Workbook by Susan Peabody
- The Gifts of Imperfection by Brené Brown
- Ready to Heal By Kelly McDaniel

Clinician/Leader Resource

- Facing Love Addiction by Pia Mellody
- Making Advances – a comprehensive guide for treating female sex and love addicts

AM I A LOVE ADDICT? ASSESSMENT

1. Have you ever tried to control how much sex to have or how often you would see someone?
2. Do you find yourself unable to stop seeing a specific person even though you know that seeing this person is destructive to you?
3. Do you feel that you don't want anyone to know about your sexual or romantic activities? Do you feel you need to hide these activities from others – friends, family, co-workers, counselors, etc.?
4. Do you get “high” from sex and/or romance? Do you crash?
5. Have you had sex at inappropriate times, in inappropriate places, and/or with inappropriate people?

AM I A LOVE AVOIDANT? ASSESSMENT

- You think taking care of your partner is sufficient proof that you love him or her.
- You find yourself often critical of your partner.
- You believe it is your duty to take care of your partner.
- You have a secret life away from your partner.
- You keep important information about your thoughts or feelings from your partner.
- You withhold information about yourself (at work or play) so that your partner will not get upset.
- You find yourself needing to manage and be in control of the relationship.

WOMEN REDEEMED: HEALING: TOXIC LOVE

Concepts

- Trauma Repair
- Building Self-Esteem
- Learning To Love Yourself
- Self-Care
- Being An Adult



Resources & Tools

- Relational Timeline
- Survival behaviors
- Unrealistic Expectation – Need For Positive Regard
- Attachment Style
- Trauma wounds – trauma egg
- Magical Thinking
- Art therapy – feeling identification
- Legacy Chart

SESSION ONE: WHAT IS THE STORY OF YOUR INNER WORLD?



SESSION THREE: PLEASE HEAR WHAT I'M NOT SAYING

Poem by Charles C. Finn

*Describes many of our struggles with
our false self*

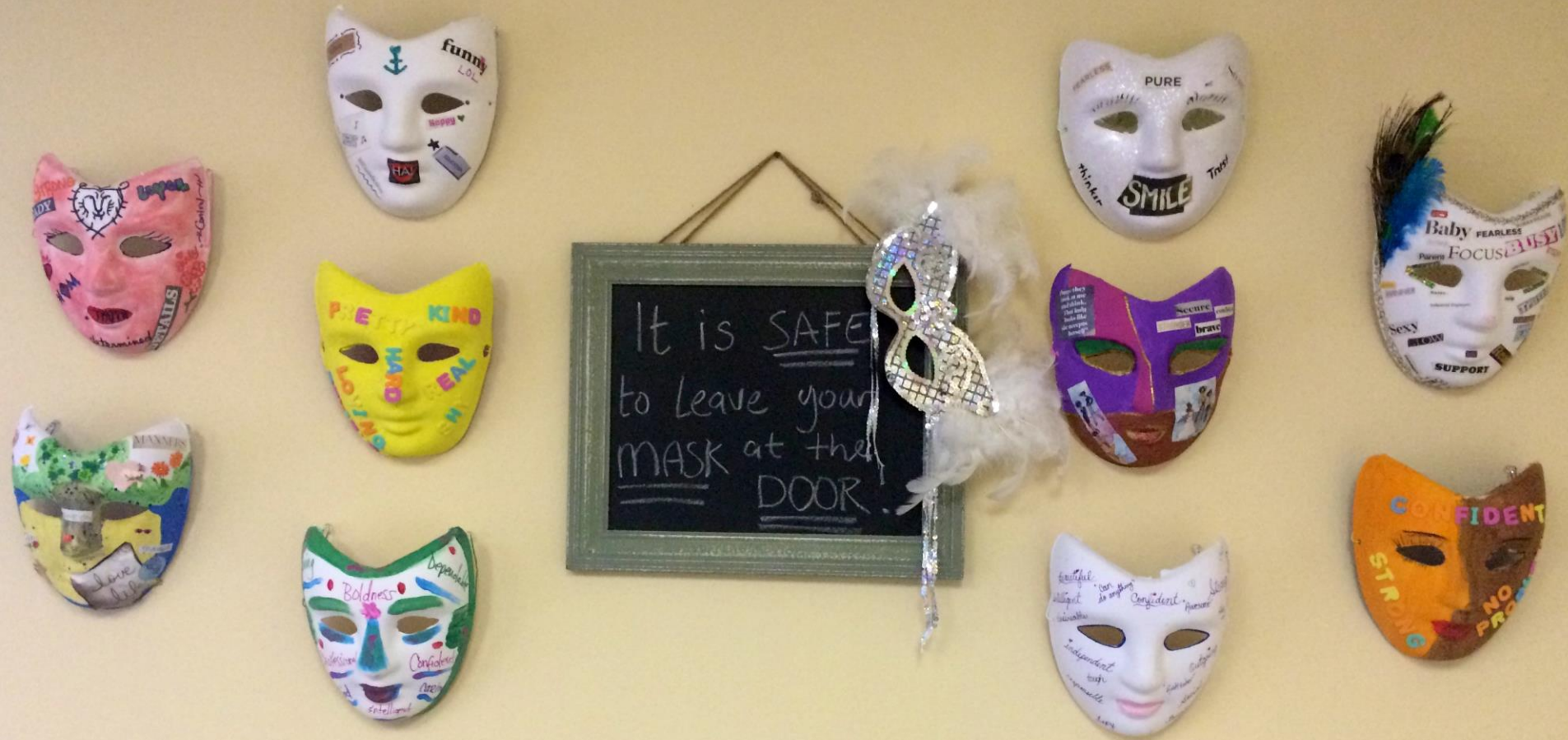


Session Three: Mask Making

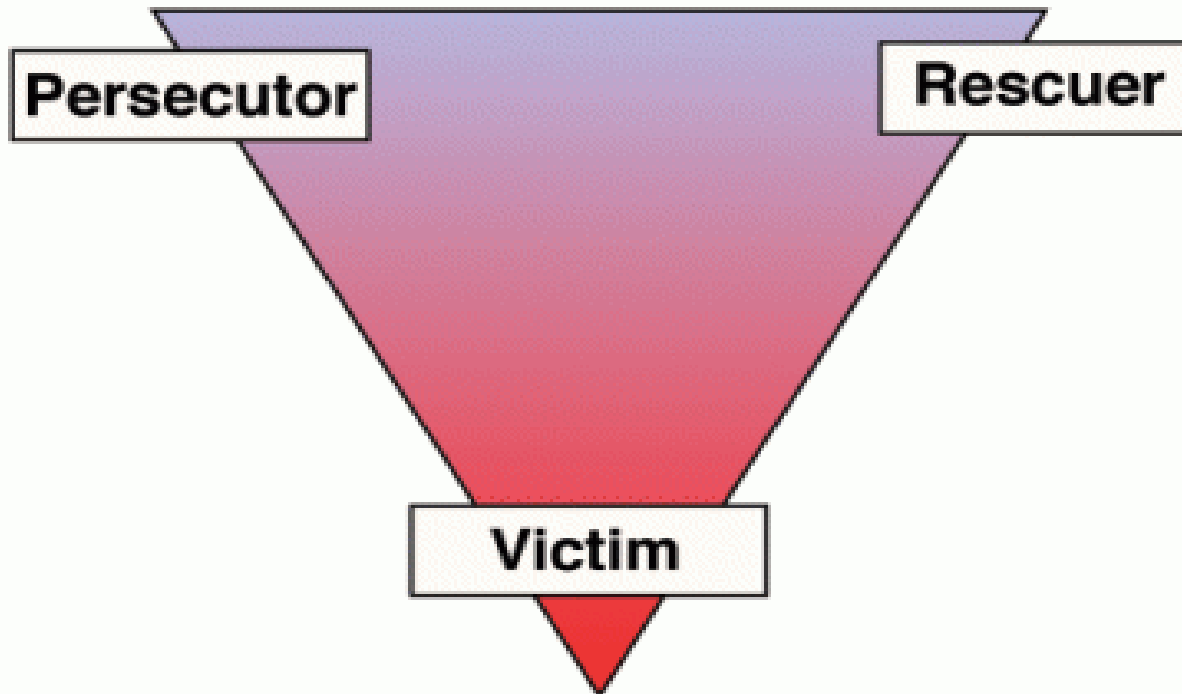
- Purpose:
*To Explore One's
Persona*
- Instructions:
*Consider portraying
"how others see
you" on the outside
of the mask and
"how you really feel
inside" on the
reverse side of the
mask.*



What Do Others See And What Do You See?




SESSION 5 OR 6: DRAMA TRIANGLE



EMPOWERMENT DYNAMIC

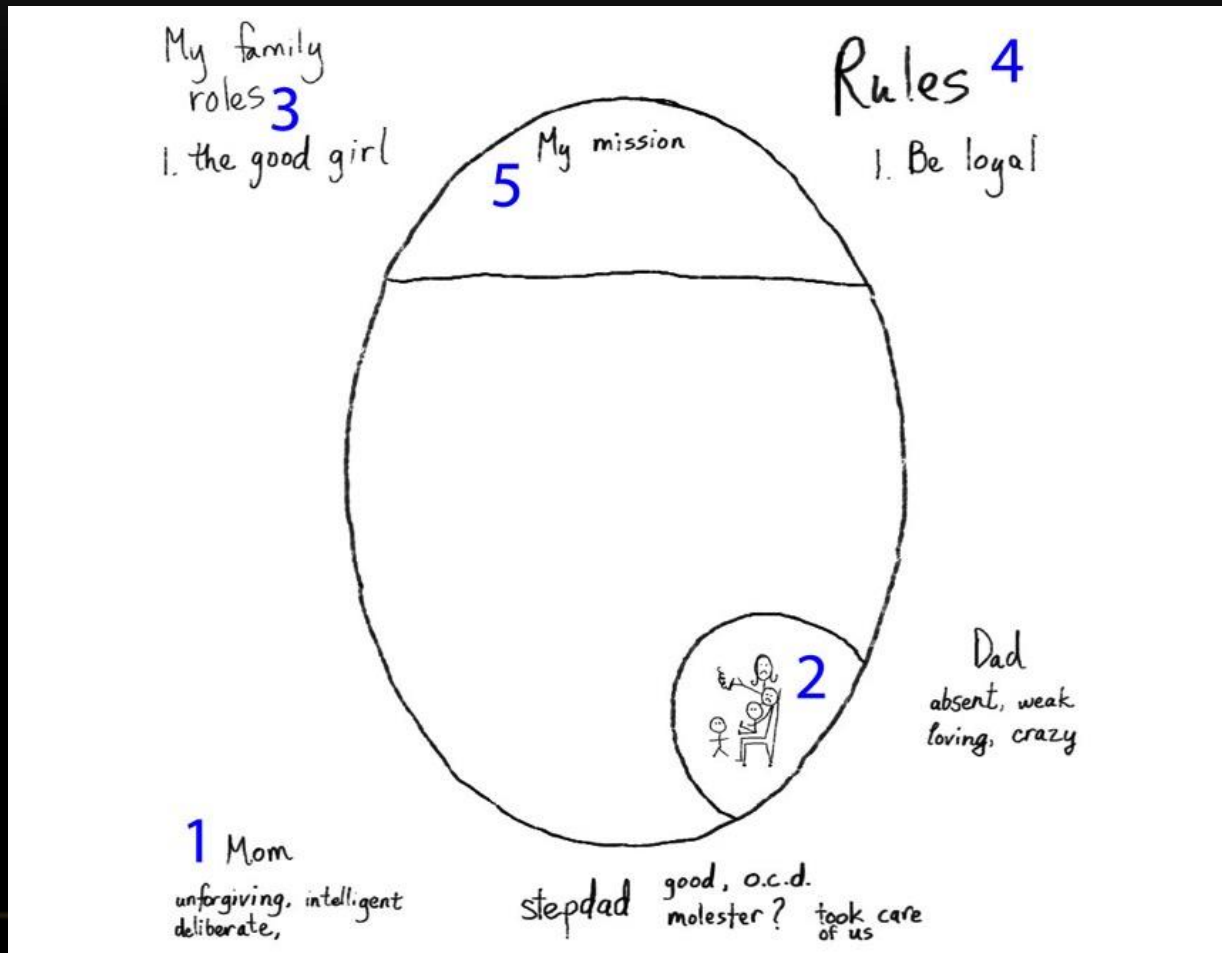




**don't be
ashamed
of your
story. it
just might
inspire
someone.**

TOBYNAZ #SPEAKLIFE

SESSION FIVE – EIGHT : TRAUMA EGG

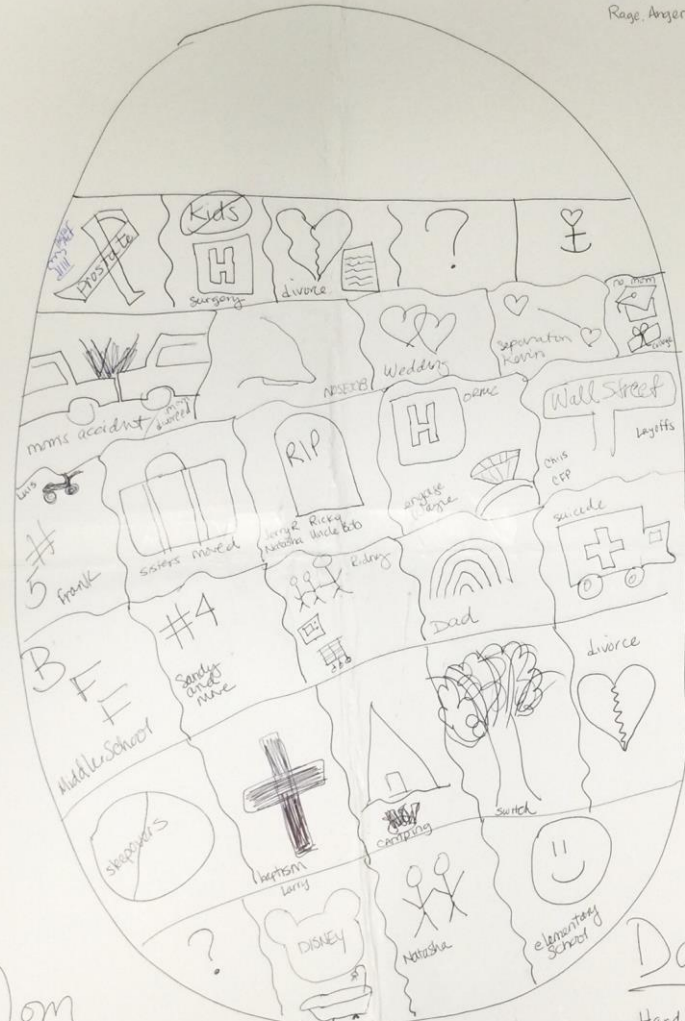


Roles

peace maker
put in the middle
care taker
scape goat

Messages

Do as I say, not
as I do
Pretend that everything
is okay
Because I said So
Rage, Anger is normal



Mom

pretty
comforting
depressed
angry
proud
strict
selfish
dependent
supportive

Larry
stranger
religious
mean parents
made me uncomfortable
absent
Disney
Cards
school pictures

Dad

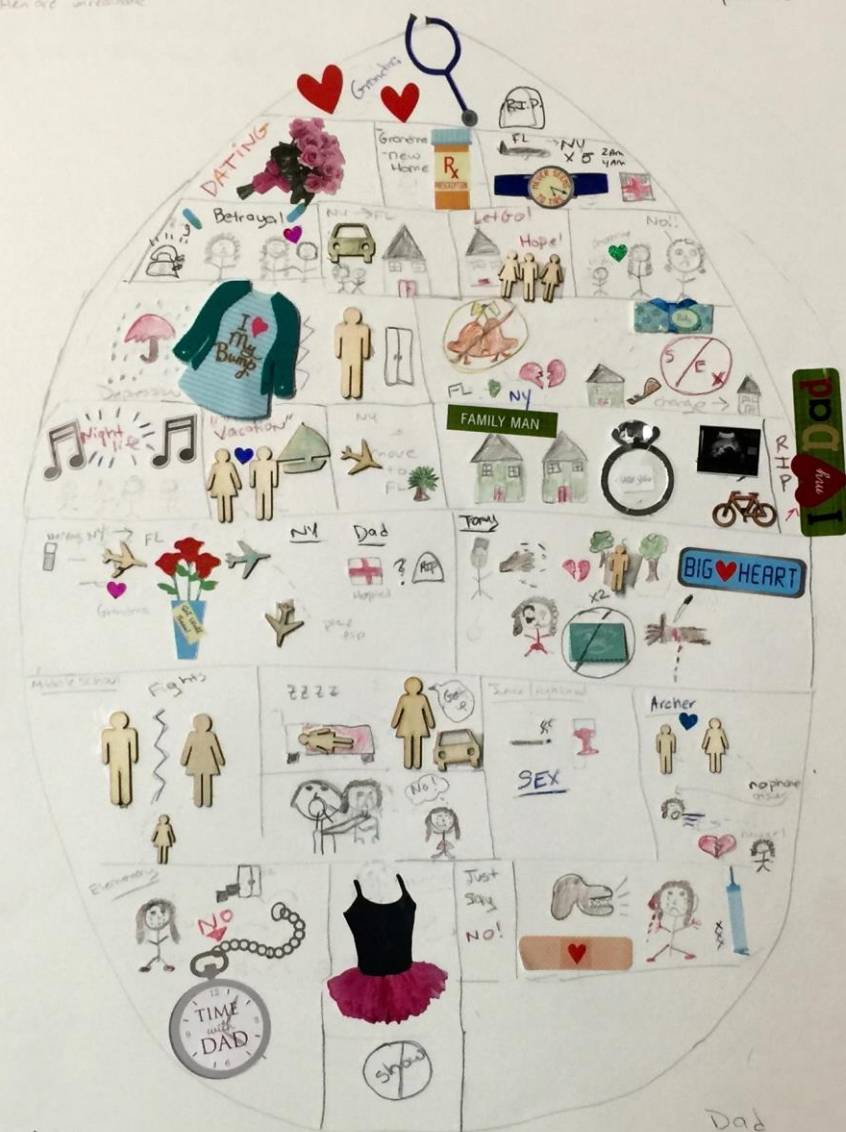
Hard worker
loving
judgemental
fun
dependable
opinionated
tidy

Messages

- better beyond an action
- get a job - that was always needed
- men are unrealistic

My Role

- competitive
- funny
- protective



MOM

- protective
- anxious
- competitive
- caring
- independent
- encouraging
- outgoing
- hard
- realistic

Dad

- Drug addict
- unreliable
- envious
- competitive
- Driven
- arrogant
- non-existent
- self
- abusive
- no morals
- charming

SESSION 8-9: EMPTY CHAIR EXERCISE



SESSION 9: EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

Inner Child Work Begins...Show and Tell



What Items Did You Bring?

What did it represent for you?

What do you see now?

What part of you got froze? trauma
message

“It's your road, and yours alone.
others may walk it with you,
but no one can walk it for you.”

- Rumi



SESSION TEN:
EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE



LETTER TO YOUR INNER CHILD



NOTHING
TAKES THE
PAST AWAY
LIKE THE FUTURE

www.mindlab

a letter to my future self

SESSION 12: CELEBRATE!

- Have fun together!

Ladies Night Out



- Females learning how to bond with other females.



"We weren't ourselves when we fell in love,
and when we became ourselves - surprise!
We were poison. We complete each other in
the nastiest, ugliest possible way."

— Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl*

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Hot passion & mutual admiration to seething resentment & revenge obsession that occurs between Nick and Amy.



- It was fueled by her fantasy of his perfect love & by his seduction, both defenses against feeling vulnerable
- **Amy's profoundly raw pain and her rageful, obsessive plotting** is consistent with the withdrawal phase of Love Addiction. Many love addicts not only obsess about their partner, but, like Amy, also compulsively act out revenge fantasies.
- **Nick's intense resentment of Amy & his victim thinking** are classic Love Avoidant characteristics used to justify treating his wife without respect and consideration from the inside.



AMY'S UNTREATED LOVE ADDICTION

- Swept off her feet with Nick's seductive pursuit of her in their early days.
- She idealized him to preserve the fantasy of him being the perfect man.
- Relationship matured & the distance between them grew, she denied her reality that she was not getting enough of him to sustain feeling connected.
- Her denial shattered when she saw him kiss another woman & thus began her vindictive plot to destroy him.



NICK IS A CLASSIC LOVE AVOIDANT

- Comes on hot & heavy, presenting as exciting & Prince Charming.
- Amy becomes his drug (more specifically, the pursuit of her & her intense idealization of him), until he knows he has her.
- Then his fear of intimacy results in his charms wearing off, his walls going up & then seeking fresh intensity in the form of an affair.



GONE GIRL: TOXIC & ADDICTIVE LOVE

- Even after proving that they are poison to each other, they still decide to stay together.
- Love Addicts & Avoidants have a notoriously hard time separating because re-engaging their relationship brings so much intensity.
- Together, they are a perfectly dysfunctional match.

TOXIC & ADDICTIVE LOVE: HOW TO HELP THOSE IN THE CYCLE

Thank You For Your Participation!

Janie Lacy, LMHC, NCC, CSAT

www.LifeCounselingSolutions.com

407-622-1770

