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Is It Love or Is It Addiction: The book that changed the way we think about romance and intimacy

By Brenda Schaeffer D.Min M.A.L.P. C.A.S.



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A fresh, updated, and expanded edition of the book that changed the way we think about romance and intimacy.

Many of us confuse longing and obsession with true love. Through two previous editions, *Is It Love or Is It Addiction?* has helped countless people find their way from the trials and confusion of addictive love to the fulfillment of whole and healthy relationships. As the author reveals, we can begin to work through relationship difficulties with compassion and lasting effect by increasing our awareness of the ways that we express love. In this expanded third edition, Brenda Schaeffer draws on years of feedback and new developments to foster an understanding of love addiction: what it is and what it is not, how to identify it, and, even more important, how to break free of it. Stories of real people struggling to develop sound relationships illustrate the characteristics of healthy love and help readers to free themselves to find real intimacy. Included is the most up-to-date information about the biological basis of addictive behaviors and the impact of technology on intimate relationships. The author also explores the influence of past abuse and trauma on the predisposition to love addiction.



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Brenda Schaeffer D.Min., M.A.L.P., C.A.S., is a licensed psychologist, a certified addiction specialist, and holds a doctorate in Spiritual Psychology. She has extensive training and experience in a number of psychologies, including (but not limited to) child development, sexual addiction, and trauma. She has had further training in hypnosis, trauma, developmental psychology, transactional analysis, gestalt, sexual addiction, soul-centered, existential and transpersonal psychology. Dr. Schaeffer has appeared on a variety of national television and radio shows in the U.S. and Canada. She has been featured in magazines such as Elle, Fitness, and Lotus. She is author of *Love's Way: The Union of Body, Ego, Soul and Spirit*; the bestseller, *Is It Love or Is It Addiction?*; *Loving Me Loving You*; *Signs of Healthy Love*; *Signs of Addictive Love*; *Power Plays*, and *Helping Yourself Out of Love Addiction*. She is also the former host of the talk radio show "It's All About Love." She is the founder of Healthy Relationships, her private practice in the Minneapolis area where she conducts therapy, training and workshops

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Preface

It has been ten years since the first publication of *Is It Love or Is It Addiction?*. Its phenomenal success was a gift in many ways. It provided me with the opportunity to speak to an international audience. It allowed me to hear relationship stories from many people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Mostly, it confirmed that what I had written about is a universal theme. People everywhere are struggling to have more meaningful relationships. I have met men struggling to change those cultural habits that shame them for being vulnerable, or tell them it is healthy and macho to act in sexually addictive ways. I have met women struggling to call attention to our cultural endorsement of unhealthy dependencies and romantic illusions. Everywhere, I have met women and men confused about what is healthy, mature, interdependent love and what is compulsive, dependent, addictive, immature love. I have been reminded how many people hold back their love because of being wounded by a parent, friend, partner, society, or cultural group. People both desperately want and yet fear intimate relationships. The result is loneliness, isolation, pain, violence, and more betrayal.

So, is it love, or is it addiction? The answer is that it is probably a little of both. In that regard, this book is for anyone wanting to improve important love relationships, whether they are with children, parents, friends, peers, siblings, partners, or lovers. In my frame of reference, *love addiction* is an inclusive term in that it includes men and women, both heterosexual and homosexual, who have been referred to as "addicts" and "co-addicts," "codependents," and "love avoidant." It is for the single and the coupled. Love addiction may or may not include a romantic high or sexual addiction.

Sometimes love feels good and sometimes it feels bad. Often a person does not understand why. In spite of the proliferation of self-help books on the subject, love relationships remain a profound mystery. Why do we have certain attractions? Why do we continue to want relationships even after a devastating loss? What is it about a relationship that is so powerful that we fear commitment? Am I staying in a relationship for the right or wrong reason? Why is transforming our love life so important? Am I in love or in addiction? These questions are universal and deserve answers.

As a psychotherapist, I'm asked to help others ease their emotional pain. I'm reminded over and over again how basic is the need for love. In spite of the bereavement we feel when a loved one dies or a relationship ends, we seem determined to keep loving. Why? Is it because we are compelled to fill some mysterious inner need? Are we using it to avoid the bombardment of stress that contemporary life produces? Are we responding to a deeper need to connect soul-to-soul? Or is it because we believe at some level that true, deep love is the only constant we can count on in this somewhat perilous life?

The problems in love relationships stem not from the nature of love. True love is life-giving. It is an expansive, nourishing energy that knows no limits. It does not injure, it heals. Problems arise from the fear that originates in a violation of trust. Such violations make it difficult to be vulnerable to love again. In the wake of such violations we become guarded. The result is relationships that have more drama than intimacy.

Being in a relationship that is floundering can be like having a pain in the neck or an aggravating headache. And, when we are sick, we lose ourselves. Our capacity for creative living gets sapped as we instead focus on our pain. We become driven to find relief from that pain, seeking quick fixes in the form of substances, people, and processes outside of ourselves. Obsessive illnesses and addictions often result. When the attachment is to a person, it can become a love addiction.

We live in a unique period of time, one fraught with contradictions. Many people seek a life of wellness. Many feel the soul's yearning for a deeper level of living. There is an explosion of knowledge on addiction, love relationships, and self-help. Yet we hear in the news that when a twenty-four-year-old woman ends an abusive relationship with her twenty-nine-year-old boyfriend, she is murdered, shot in the face, and her family fears for their lives. The Secretary of Defense acknowledges that 61 percent of women in the military have been sexually harassed. Incidents of domestic violence seem to be on the increase. How is it that as a culture we are simultaneously seeking wellness and descending into a well of violence?

The fields of addiction treatment and mental health care are under attack from the media and cultural critics and from within their own ranks. The addiction model has been too broadly applied, some claim, and has thereby lost its usefulness as a tool for understanding and treating human dysfunction. The idea of the inner child as a metaphor with profound therapeutic value becomes fodder for stand-up comedians and the vitriol of talk radio. Victims of abuse are told their memories are fantasies. Our society continues to expend far more money on feeding and expanding our addictions than it spends on treating them. While there is concern for treating the victims of sexual abuse, we continue to let the perpetrators go untreated. Professionals in various fields still argue whether an addiction is a sin, a crime, or a disease. Some addiction specialists question whether a process, such as sex or love relationships (as opposed to a substance, such as cocaine or nicotine), can be addicting at all.

It is time to stop arguing about our meaning and methods. The reality is that we have a problem of massive proportions that requires all of us to transcend our fears and differences. We must all help transform a world that is crying out for knowledge of a healthier way of living.

The events of the past ten years have only served to reinforce what I wrote in the first edition of this book. Almost everyone has addictive tendencies. We know that we can become addicted to alcohol and other drugs and that we have excellent programs to treat those addictions. There are other addictions that can hamper our lives as well, but they are not always recognized or addressed. This list includes food, exercise, consumerism, religious cults, spiritual highs, nicotine, sugar, caffeine, sex, gambling, work, computers, television, parenting, love objects, romance, pain, and illness. Perhaps you recognize an obsession of your own among them. If you do, be kind to yourself. We live in a world that provides hundreds more experiences than our parents had. We are constantly bombarded with more information than we can possibly take in and

process. We have more demands on our time. We hear threatening news each day. And in the midst of this we are expected to live our love relationships well, if not perfectly. I used to say that life is like a thousand-piece puzzle and we are lucky if we have 30 percent of the pieces. Now, with the barrage of information, images, and ideas we encounter daily, that percentage is going down.

The focus of this book is to foster an understanding of love addiction—what it is and is not, how to identify it, and even more important, how to get out of it. It is intended to be a hopeful book that helps you identify the characteristics of healthy love and frees you to live life more abundantly. As you will learn, real love is not addiction, nor is addiction love. Yet, because of the human condition, these two experiences can come together and result in tremendous pain and suffering. We must be wise in the ways we express love. My hope is that you will find at least one piece of wisdom here that impacts your love life in a meaningful way. This book is not intended to cure specific problems. However, with increased awareness, we can begin to solve relationship problems with more compassion and with lasting effect.

My hope is that this book gives you a few more pieces to life's puzzle.

Chapter 1

The Power of Love

Healthy Love

In *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm, the German-born American psychoanalyst, says most efforts to love fail unless a person has actively tried to develop his or her *individual* potential and personality. Fromm defines love as "the expression of productiveness [which] implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge; a striving towards growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one's own capacity to love." Concepts we often associate with healthy human loving include affection, caring, valuing, trust, acceptance, giving, joy, and vulnerability. Love is a state of being that emanates from within us and extends outward. It is energy, it is unconditional, it is expansive, and it needs no specific object.

Some have described love as the ultimate religious experience. It revels in the perpetual goodness that being in a relationship offers. Love is doing everything with a joyful heart and without trying to escape our pain. In deep love there is awe, mystery, gratitude, sorrow, rapture, ecstasy, grace, luminosity, and sacredness. The flood of emotions runs deeper than deep and more expansive than whole. Love knows no limits. The love-inspired person displays a nobility of character, and his or her virtues flourish! Witness a mother's love for her newborn, lovers in love, a person grieving the death of a beloved friend, a child reveling in the birth of kittens. When people belong, everything seems to fall in place, even in times of chaos and doubt. When intimacy is profound something inside of us says, "This is it." True love defies all words. It is indescribable. When it is there, no words are necessary.

Hints of the idea of deep-partnership love appeared at the beginning of the twelfth century, when courtly or passionate love for another, rather than being considered sinful, was viewed as love emanating from the soul. Passion...

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Relationships that continue despite pain, emotional chaos, and disruptive impulsivity are addictive, says

Brenda Schaeffer, a psychotherapist who knows her stuff and provides an excellent primer on the subject of love and love addiction. Especially if there is past loss or trauma, the resulting pain can make us uncontrollably attached to anyone who soothes that pain, even when this creates many other problems. Healthy love helps us expand ourselves and learn higher growth processes; the addictive attachment only distracts, stagnates, and frustrates personal development. The program is articulate and insightful, at times esoteric, but very comprehensible, even when the reader's dramatic inclination makes her seem disconnected from the material. T.W. © AudioFile 2001, Portland, Maine-- *Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Burnette:

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Paul Evans:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or perhaps go to the outside with them friends and family or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent that they free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity that's look different you can read a new book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book which you read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a e-book. The book *Is It Love or Is It Addiction*: The book that changed the way we think about romance and intimacy it doesn't matter what good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. If you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy often the e-book. You can m0ore very easily to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book features high quality.

Lisa Westra:

Are you kind of occupied person, only have 10 as well as 15 minute in your moment to upgrading your mind expertise or thinking skill possibly analytical thinking? Then you are experiencing problem with the book when compared with can satisfy your limited time to read it because this all time you only find guide that need more time to be learn. *Is It Love or Is It Addiction*: The book that changed the way we think about romance and intimacy can be your answer because it can be read by anyone who have those short free time problems.

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