

# Addicted to love

by Yee Jee Tso

To illustrate how the topic of love is so deeply woven into our creative endeavours, here is a classic story of love and loss told only with the titles of well-known love songs:

*"The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face", "I Knew I Loved You", "You Were Meant for Me". "True Love", "Burning Love", "Crazy Love", "Glory of Love", "Our Love is Here to Stay".*

*"You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling", "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me", "If You're Gone", "I Fall to Pieces", "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me".*

*"All By Myself", "Crying", "Drowning", "Come Back", "Come Back to Me", "How Am I Supposed to Live Without You", "Incomplete", "All Out of Love", "Heartbreak Hotel".*

For most people, this story is not unfamiliar. For some, it's the story of their lives.

*Nothing Compares to The Power of Love* when it comes to the highs and lows of human experience. No vice can shatter us so completely yet still inspire us to exceed ourselves; no drug commands as much attention from our literature, film, theatre and music. The rapturous glory that we feel whilst in the throes of passion can be likened to a sort of mystic "high", and when the Love fades or is taken away, the spiralling depression that ensues can be just as crippling as any withdrawal syndrome.

Why does L-O-V-E feel so good, and why does *Falling Out of Love* feel sooooo bad?

Researchers at University College in London conducted a study using 17 college students who described themselves as *"Truly Madly Deeply"* in Love. Lie detectors were used to ensure the authenticity of their devotion.

When subjects were shown photos of their lovers, functional MRI (brain-scanning) revealed four small, distinct areas of the brain that had a marked increase in activity. These same neural pathways are activated under the influence of addictive psychoactive substances, and are rich with dopamine receptors. When photos of friends were used, no visible change occurred in these areas.

Does this mean that Love is capable of producing physiological dependence? It might explain that sickly, immobilizing feeling of heartbreak. Well, the most obvious features of dependence are tolerance and withdrawal.

Tolerance is the need for greater and greater amounts of something to attain the same feeling as the original amount. Question 30 in the Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA) Self Diagnosis Questionnaire asks: "Do you find yourself needing greater and greater variety and energy in your

sexual or romantic activities just to achieve an 'acceptable' level of physical and emotional relief?"

Apparently if the answer is "yes", you're *Addicted to Love*. SLAA goes on to describe the symptoms of withdrawal from a sex or love addiction:

- cravings
- physical illness or fatigue
- aches and pains
- changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- desperation and fear
- sadness or depression
- irritability, anger or rage
- confusion or cognitive/attention deficits and
- suicidal thoughts, among others.

This list is nearly identical to that of nicotine withdrawal, and similar to that of cocaine and amphetamines! Luckily, there are groups such as SLAA, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, and Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, with international member bases, for help and support.

Now this is NOT meant as a deterrent to falling in Love. The withdrawal syndrome and tolerance are a result of serious obsessive/compulsive behaviours and do not necessarily apply to the *Part Time Lover*. And despite the heartache and delirium tremens, Love is a beautiful, natural phenomenon that opens up the human soul and gives it life, creativity, and rejuvenation.

References:  
*Love – It's All In Your Head* [http://199.97.97.16/contWriter/yhdweek/2001/02/15/medic/4576-0097-pat\\_nytimes.html](http://199.97.97.16/contWriter/yhdweek/2001/02/15/medic/4576-0097-pat_nytimes.html)  
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