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Addictive Relationships

Finding the psychological motivation to change is as simple as reminding ourselves daily why we want to do things differently, respond to situations differently, experience different emotions to certain situations, let go of past guilt or shame. Learn to forgive and accept past unhappiness or abuse. There are so many ways in which harmful abuse can occur. Psychological motivation is very powerful.

Intimate relationships can improve our life, or make it miserable! But falling into addictive relationships will, at some point, always make our lives miserable.

Are we honest in our relationship? Do we talk about who we are or what's really bothering us? Do we lie about what we really want? This turns communication into an addictive relationship.

Do we think our partner will solve our self-esteem, body image, family, and existential problems? Do we believe the "right relationship" will make everything better? Yet, we are in a disastrous addictive relationship!

Do we expect our partner to be there for us whenever we need them? Do we need them to make us happy immediately? We are using them to make us feel good, and are not relating to them as a partner or even a human being. They become like a drug, an addictive relationship drug.

Does our partner have to act in certain way, or we will threaten to leave? Both parties will feel pressure to stay in this addictive relationship; neither will feel like they are together voluntarily.

Do we trust our partner, does our partner trust us to be there when the chips are down? We don't believe the other really loves us, and we don't believe that genuine caring or liking exists. At some level we will know we are not in a healthy but rather in an addictive relationship. But if that is all we have known we will not know how to change.

Nobody else is invited into our relationship – not friends, family, or work acquaintances. People in addictive relationships want to be left alone!

We are trapped in a cycle of pleasure, pain, disillusionment, blaming, and reconnection. The cycle repeats itself until one partner breaks free of the addictive relationship. Addictive relationships can change, but both partners must be self-aware and willing to do what it takes.

In these cases some form of counselling and therapy will help enormously although awareness, self-control and mutual accountability are needed to turn these addictive relationships around.

I agree with many psychologists who believe that if we grew up in a dysfunctional home, our chances of being in a dysfunctional or addictive relationship are much higher. We feel as though we are not worthy of being loved so we settle for a partner who treats us badly. This could be obvious abuse or the less obvious addictive relationship.

According to Terence Gorski in his book, *'Why Do I Keep Doing That?'* an addictive relationship involves one person who is self-centered and extremely independent.

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These partners believe they are entitled to whatever they want, whenever they want it. They surround themselves with people who support their opinions of themselves. The other partner is dependent and other-centered, and willing to mirror whatever the first partner wants. They are simply a reflection of the first partner. This is how addictive relationships work.

Terence Gorski goes on to say, *"It works until the other-centered person runs out of steam one night and doesn't have enough energy to mirror back what is needed. The relationship is going to blow up."* Addictive relationships do not necessarily have to have self-centered and other-centered partners, but it is a typical pattern.

How many of us can identify with Gorski's example of a healthy and nourishing family? *"In a healthy family, parents treat each other with dignity and respect, and children learn that relationships are a source of joy, comfort, support and nourishment. The family is the refuge you go to when you are burned out from the world, have a problem and need love, caring and kindness. When the world chews us up you can come back to the family and you have a place where you can truly be yourself. The healthy family affirms the unique qualities of the individual and say it's o.k. to be you. "I am interested in your pain, I'm interested in what you think, I will tell you whether I think you are right or wrong, but I am going to love you either way. I am not going to abandon you. I am not going to kick you out, it is an unconditional relationship. I love you, you are my child, I love you for who you are."*

Whether or not we grew up learning this we all can learn it now!



"Sustainable Empowerment" is a new approach to psychotherapy and counselling developed by Richard Gosling that can help in building a stronger and more loving You.

Richard specialises in "Trauma Therapy" and "Crisis Counselling", is a member of the UK Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners and is offering his help and services in West London.

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