



HOPELESS ROMANTIC REVOLVING DOOR SYNDROME

by Arlen Keith Leight, Ph.D.

The short-lived relationship was rocky at best. You initially thought this man was really for you. Thinking about him made you feel whole, happy and hopeful. He showed great interest in being with you. He had some great qualities, but right from the start you knew there were some “issues”. Being the eternal optimist you figured you’d work at it in hopes of true love, romance and relationship. You almost immediately felt a total emotional commitment. You found yourself thinking about him often--maybe obsessively--and projecting a life together way into the future. When the problems became greater than the “relationship” satisfaction it ended with a feeling of relief mixed with disappointment. But now it is time to move on, and before you can blink an eye someone appears with great qualities and, well, some “issues”. Despite those “issues” why not see if this new man is “the one”? So you whole heartedly invest again only to find weeks or months later you are ready to jump ship again. Within days of its ending another “true love” comes along.

This pattern of obsessive-compulsive behavior is complex and multi-dimensional. The likelihood is that you feel empty and lonely without feeling the attention and “love” of a potential partner. The pain of each break-up is avoided by the emersion into the next “relationship”. There was likely childhood emotional neglect and/or abuse. By ignoring red flags or lacking filters to make wise choices, you are essentially “asking for” a repetition of childhood abuse, neglect and/or emotional pain. Unconsciously you are repeating the family-of-origin pattern which is actually familiar and comfortable compared with the prospect of true intimacy. The repetitive compulsion is an unconscious attempt to heal the wounds of childhood thinking that the new person will fully love you because of the interest shown upon meeting. It is this initial apparent interest that is so alluring and by-passes your rational mind that might otherwise realize the prospective partner is not a good match. The limerance (initial excitement phase of a relationship) provides a dopamine (brain chemical) response that creates a high which has the potential to be very addictive and covers up any feelings of loss or grief associated with the last “relationship” or childhood pain. Despite the near desperation to be in a relationship the pattern actually sets you up for future loneliness—the very feeling you are trying to avoid.

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To remedy the behavior pattern you need to take some major, often painful, steps. These include but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Find a therapist who is not invested in your desire to be in a relationship.
2. Take time off from dating to be by yourself. Feel the pain of loneliness if that comes up. Be with the anxiety. Time and your therapist will help you process these feelings and understand them and yourself better.
3. Work on feeling good about yourself. Fulfillment does not require partnership, and, indeed, to be a good partner you need to feel and be complete by yourself. Self love and acceptance are critical ingredients to bring into intimate relationships.
4. After a sufficient period of time enter the dating world slowly. Don't jump at the first potential partner who shows you some interest. Have in mind what is important to you in a partner, and do not sacrifice Self at the altar of relationship.
5. Experience dating without "relationship" in mind. Don't limit yourself to one person. Allow yourself to experience all different kinds of people. Have fun and take your time. Don't confuse interest from others with love.
6. If you are going to date someone more than a couple of times, be sure they are emotionally, intellectually and sexually available and compatible. Learn to say "NO" if there are red flags, if they are not right for you or if you find you are giving up parts of you for the sake of a potential partner.

The revolving door of hopeless romanticism keeps you going in circles never realizing your desire for true intimacy. Get some help and start moving in the direction of your dreams.

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