

Questions From “No More Fighting” Real Love Report, Part 1

Questions by John Williams, LMHC

Note: This description of Real Love suggests that our deepest and most universal “addiction” is the unthinking and almost irresistible pursuit of Imitation Love, of which porn and sex addiction is only one aspect. These questions then may require quite a bit of thought. It is more useful to answer a few questions carefully over a couple weeks than to speed through them.

Real Love

“Real Love is caring about the happiness of another person without any thought for what we might get for ourselves. It’s also Real Love when other people care about our happiness unconditionally. With Real Love, they’re not disappointed or angry when we make our foolish mistakes, when we don’t do what they want, or even when we inconvenience them personally. We don’t have to EARN Real Love. We’ve deserved it from birth.”

1. *What do you think about this definition of unconditional, real love?*
2. *Do you think this kind of love is possible? Have you ever experienced it? If so, when?*

Conditional Love

“Conditional love can give us brief moments of satisfaction, but we’re still left with a huge hole in our souls, because only Real Love can make us genuinely happy.... Without sufficient Real Love, we can only feel empty and alone, which is our greatest fear.

3. *Does this seem true to you? Why or why not?*

“Without Real Love, we suffer from a severe, ongoing sunburn that we carry around everywhere. In any given negative interaction with your spouse, it is the longstanding lack of Real Love in your life— your sunburn—that determines how you feel, not the behavior of your spouse in that moment. No kidding. In any given moment, you react to the amount of love you feel from everyone, past and present, not just from the person you’re interacting with.”

4. *What do you think about this? Is this possible? Can you think of examples of this in your experience?*

Imitation Love

Praise

“The problem with praise is that it’s a LOT of work to earn—exercise, clothing, make-up, plastic surgery, long hours at work, and more. And... how long does it last? In just a moment or two, the feeling is gone, and then you have to work to earn it all over again. It’s a frustrating and hollow cycle.

Another reason praise is often unfulfilling is that when most people praise us, they’re rarely saying something about us. They’re saying that when we’re cooperative and perform according to their expectations, they like how we make them feel—but we’re quite willing to keep on doing whatever it takes to earn the sensation of praise, gratitude, and acceptance, because it’s still much better than the emptiness that accompanies a lack of Real Love.”

5. *Does this statement about praise ring true in your experience? Why or why not? How does this relate to being seen as attractive or sexy by others?*

Power

“Although it’s mostly unintentional, any time we successfully manipulate or control someone, we enjoy a sensation of power over that person. We use money, authority, sex, flattery, and personal persuasion to influence, control, and even hurt people... when you control the people around you, you feel less powerless; you feel less of the emptiness and helplessness that are always associated with a lack of Real Love.”

6. *Does this claim about power make sense? Why or why not? How does this connect to the act of paying for sex or calling up partners for cybersex?*

Pleasure

“When we don’t feel unconditionally loved, we often use pleasure—food, sex, drugs, and many forms of entertainment and excitement—to feel better temporarily. Certainly there’s nothing inherently wrong with pleasure, but when we compulsively seek it, we’re using it to fill a deep emptiness.”

7. *Can you imagine that your sexual habits would greatly reduce or disappear if you felt unconditionally loved more often? Why or why not?*

Safety

“Without sufficient Real Love, we’re already experiencing an insufferable pain, and we’ll go to great lengths to keep ourselves safe from anything that might prolong or worsen our pain. To minimize painful disapproval, we stay away from

unfamiliar situations, tasks, and relationships, and then we confuse that feeling of relative safety with real happiness.”

8. *Cybersex and other kinds of sex outside of a committed relationship can feel safer from rejection—and this seem be happier than nothing. Is this relevant to you? If so, how?*

Falling in Love

“Picture a guy looking across a crowded room and seeing a woman for the first time. He turns to his buddies and says, “I think I’m in love.” I hate to break the bad news, but he does NOT mean that he has suddenly fallen into a sudden unconditional concern for her happiness (Real Love). Not a chance. People fall in love because of the abundant and relatively equal exchange of Imitation Love, and the enormous problem with that is that the effects of Imitation Love ALWAYS wear off.”

9. *What do you think? Is falling in love really about unconditional love, or interest in continuing to get a supply of Imitation Love—praise, power, pleasure and safety?*

Getting & Protecting Behaviors

“Without Real Love, we do whatever it takes—Getting Behaviors—to fill our sense of emptiness with Imitation Love.”

10. *That sounds like a drug addict talking about their craving for a fix. Could it be that the craving for Imitation Love—including porn, masturbation and sex—comes from a lack of Real Love? Why or why not?*

Lying

“We use lying as a Protecting Behavior when we make excuses, shade the truth, or do anything else to avoid the disapproval of others. We don’t lie because we’re bad; we lie because we’ve learned from countless experiences that it works. People really do disapprove of us less when we hide the truth about our flaws, and we’ll do almost anything to keep from feeling that withdrawal of acceptance.... Your partner, for example, does not lie to hurt YOU, but to protect HIMSELF.”

11. *Does that sound like why you may have lied to your partner, as well as why you hid your habit from others?*

“We use lying as a Getting Behavior when we do anything to get other people to like us—when we tell people about our accomplishments but not our flaws, communicate positive feelings that are not true, change our physical appearance to attract people to us, or tell people what they want to hear so they’ll like us.

[This is] lying, but they are, because we don't tell other people we're manipulating them. We lie so often that we don't even realize we're doing it most of the time."

12. What do you think of this statement?

Attacking

"Attacking is any behavior that motivates another person through fear to behave in a way we want. We attack people when we criticize them, physically intimidate them, withdraw our approval, make them feel guilty, and use our positions of authority at work, at home, and elsewhere."

13. Does this apply to your treatment of your partner, if you have one, or with anyone else? If so, how?

14. Do you see how attacking in this way helps you gain feelings of power and safety and feel less helpless, empty, alone?

"[This is] all to get Imitation Love—usually in the form of power—and to protect ourselves from fear... With your anger, you can get [your wife] to give you attention, respect, power, flattery, approval, even sex. But of course, if she's giving you these things not because she's genuinely concerned for your happiness, but simply to avoid your anger, all you're receiving is Imitation Love."

15. Does this strike a chord? If so, how?

Acting Like a Victim

"If we can convince people that we've been injured and treated unfairly, they'll often stop hurting us and may even give us their sympathy, attention, and support. That's why we act like victims. Victims communicate—verbally and with their behavior—with variations on the following three themes: (1) Look what you did to me; (2) Look what you should have done for me (and didn't); and (3) It's not my fault."

16. How do you do this? With whom?

"Have you ever acted like a victim and felt unconditionally loved by anyone?... Never. Acting like a victim is an attempt at manipulation, and what we get as a result cannot feel like Real Love."

17. Do you see how this works to get Imitation Love?

Running

“If we simply move away from a source of pain, we’re less likely to be hurt. Withdrawing from conversations (verbally and physically), avoiding people, and leaving relationships in a state of fear or anger are all forms of running.”

18. How does this apply to your life?

“All running is injurious to relationships, because when we withdraw, the other person feels the withdrawal of our attention and affection.”

19. Who in your life might agree with this?

Clinging

“As adults we also cling emotionally to the people who give us attention, hoping we can sometimes squeeze even more out of them. We may do this by flattering the people who do things for us, or by being excessively grateful. Sometimes we’re clinging to people when we tell them how much we love them and need them—we hope our words will encourage them to stay with us and return our expressions of love. Effectively, we’re begging for more Imitation Love.”

20. Do you recognize this in yourself? If so, how?

Impact of these Behaviors

“You use those behaviors— mostly unconsciously—because you want to protect yourself, or get something for yourself, or both... On these occasions, the people around us can’t possibly feel like we unconditionally care about them, and they’re quite right—we don’t.”

21. Does this make sense?

“All these behaviors can succeed only in manipulating people for Imitation Love, so when we use them, we cannot find the Real Love that will make us genuinely happy. We cut our own throats.”

22. Do you see this in your own life, that these behaviors don’t satisfy?