



# Seductive Behavior: Can It Be Harmful?

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## Abstract

The love experience involves a certain degree of reciprocity and balance between the partners. However, many patients complain of difficulty in maintaining their interest in different partners and therefore extending the relationship beyond the seduction phase. This dynamic resembles Donjuanism, however, it differs precisely because sexual acting is not essential for the characterization of the compulsive seduction but the conquering effort itself. Considering the scarcity of studies and given the relevance of this phenomenon, research that addresses the issue is fundamental to understanding the seductive behavior and the establishment of therapeutic approaches that promote the formation of long lasting emotional bonds, so that the individuals suffering with this dynamic may, as many of them wish, establish a family.

## Keywords

Love, Dependency [Psychology], Obsessive Behavior, Compulsive Behavior, Mental Health

**Subject Areas:** Psychiatry & Psychology, Psychology

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## 1. Introduction

In this third millennium, many old issues are increasingly being discussed and reassessed dynamically by our society and their answers require urgent changes in human behavior towards some phenomena that people being used to face since their early childhood. One of the most frequent issues that arise during the clinic praxis, which the contemporary psychologists and medics are copying, is the issue of the difficulties people face in the romantic relationships they assume. Generally, people tend to put high expectations in a relationship, and many of them believe that all they need to be happy is a good romantic relationship. For several authors independently of the historical and social variables, it is within the interpersonal relationships that man experiences his strongest emotions, among them the pleasure derived from love. For many, loving relationships are a major source of our affection, attention to each other, to love and to feel being loved. Some authors put that the loving relationship can also be seen as a backdrop to personal growth. And a growing number of studies have investigated the

processes by which the people structure, develop and maintain emotional bounds throughout the life cycle (Almeida, 2014 [1]; Almeida, 2013 [2]; Almeida, Lourenço, 2012 [3]; Almeida, 2012 [4]; Silva, Almeida, Lourenço, 2012 [5]; Almeida, 2011a [6], b [7], c [8], d [9]; Almeida, Lourenço, 2011 [10]; Gomes, Ambini, Almeida, 2011 [11]; Almeida, 2010a [12], b [13]; Antunes, Mayor, Almeida, Lourenço, 2010 [14]; Sousa, Santos, Almeida, 2009 [15]; Walendorff, Almeida, 2012 [16]; Almeida, Lourenço, 2009 [17]; Almeida, 2009a [18], b [19], c [20]; Almeida, Rodrigues, 2008 [21]; Almeida, Rodrigues, Silva, 2008 [22]; Almeida, Lourenço, 2008 [23]; Almeida, 2008a [24], b [25], c [26]; Almeida, Lourenço, 2007 [27]; Almeida, 2007 [28]; Centeville, Almeida, 2007 [29]; Silva *et al.*, 2007 [30]; Almeida, 2004 [31]; Sophia *et al.*, 2009 [32]).

The love experience involves a certain degree of reciprocity and balance between the partners. However, many patients complain of difficulty in maintaining their interest in different partners and therefore extending the relationship beyond the seduction phase. For some people, the relentless pursuit of conquest takes the place of stability in the relationship. The great object of desire is the conquest and not the desired person conquered. These patients report:

- 1) A history of successive and intermittent relationships leading to suffering (That in most cases, they take the initiative for breaking-up or taking distance);
- 2) Obsessive and intrusive thoughts of seducing partners;
- 3) Compulsive flirting, even contrary to their conscious will;
- 4) That the main object of desire is the behavior of conquest and not the person specifically;
- 5) That they can hardly have a loving relationship with a single partner in the medium and long term, having difficulty in maintaining fidelity and commitment;
- 6) Feeding expectations, hopes and fantasies of a potential partnership even if not approving this behavior;
- 7) Investing much of their time and efforts in flirting with other people. When they feel the partner has fallen in love their interest cools down;
- 8) That the repetitive seductive behavior is usually established with people who offer some challenge condition (priests and nuns, people already committed to others, celebrities, homosexuals, among other possibilities);
- 9) That the interest in the other may drastically reduce even before sex occurs;
- 10) In general, there have been failed attempts to reduce or stop the seductive behavior and intrusive thoughts related to flirting.

## 2. Seductive Behavior: Theoretical Considerations

The dynamics above described resembles Donjuanism (Lubbe, 2003 [33]; Sapetti, 2008 [34]), also known as satyriasis, nymphomania or excessive sexual drive, understood as a behavior related to excessive and compulsive sexuality as manifested by their need to have many encounters or sexual conquests. However, it differs precisely because sexual acting is not essential for the characterization of the compulsive seduction but the conquering effort itself.

One of the great exponents of loving manipulation was Don Juan, had literary character as a symbol of debauchery. The first novel in reference to the character was the book “El Burlador de Sevilla”, in 1630, of the Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina. Later, “Don Juan” of Jose Zorrilla appears with the story of “Don Juan Tenorio”. The figure of Don Juan was also worshiped in music, in works such as those of Strauss and Mozart, the latter with the opera Don Giovanni, composed in 1787. Another paradigm is the eternal seducer Casanova figure, known autobiography by the Venetian Giovanni Jacopo Casanova. However, the figure of the eternal seducer Don Juan remains tied to that still appears in the works of Molière, like as “Le Festin de Pierre”, the satirical poem by Byron simply called Don Juan, drama of Bernard Shaw called “Man and Superman”. But, the compulsive seduction is a particular prototype of human behavior, this classification particularly seated in cultural and moral values. There are not yet any reference to this psychological dynamic in psychodiagnostic manuals as CID.10 or DSM V, however, compulsive seducers are gone. The “Don Juans” of today in much resemble the character Don Juan: are people that need to seduce all the time. Then gives the name of seductive compulsion need to seduce the people who constantly seem to be enamored of tough person, but once conquered, this relationship break. People with this trait can not be attached to a particular person, just starting in search of new conquests. People with these characteristics are considered by the authors Sapetti & Rosenszvaig (1987) [35] as “anarchists of love”, making valid any means to win, however, the other person’s feelings are not taken into account. Indeed, Foucault (1993) [36] emphasizes this point by saying that Don Juan bursts with two great

rules of Western civilization, the law of the covenant and the law of the faithful desire.

Lee (1988) [37] suggested a taxonomy of Love Styles, namely: Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania and Agape. The dynamics of compulsive seduction resembles the Ludus style characterized by the establishment of varied and often simultaneous partnerships. Ludus is associated with emotion seeking more than with the search for emotional bonds. Relationships are superficial and do not prioritize the involvement with others, seen as restrictive of freedom.

The ludic lovers with strategies seductive avoid even seeing their partners frequently, as if this should prevent the partners from engaging too. They also avoid jealous partners, taking into account that for this jealousy spoils the enjoyment of love. Unlike others who do not share such references, they are not contradictory to love many partners equally or at the same time. Sex for them is for fun, not to express commitment, and love is not the most important activity in your life. Hence, probably, the truly ludic lovers will make use of sayings in long-term relationships, such as: “I love my wife, what I do outside of the house does not harm my relationship”, among other speaks and variations. These people believe they are being loyal, but loyalty is not a prioritized value in your relationship. Thus, practices of casual sex, casual romantic relationships, or even be permissive to some behaviors of infidelity become relativized. Although, the ludic love of Lee is a style of love as legitimate like as the others, this style enlists not much sympathy for people. Many of the patients on their way to my office, for example, reported disastrous experiences with this style, either by not being able to recognize it either by not knowing how to interact with it. Maybe then more correct to say that would be faithful and be loyal are complementary attributes that are associated with rules that each couple takes for himself and for consistency in following them for both parties.

Another complementary view of the seductive behavior is provided by the Attachment Theory, formulated by Bowlby (1969/1984) [38]. According to this theory, we are born with the ability to attach to others. This capability is extremely useful for our species. It is hard to imagine how we would survive and socialized as if we were born without the ability to cling tightly to our parents and vice versa. According to this theory, the basis of different types of attachment (motherly love, brotherly love, friendship, romantic love, etc.) is the same: the innate ability to create bonds with another person. Each type of attachment, however, has its peculiarities, which can be easily noticed when comparing, for example, the attachment of the child by the mother with the romantic attachment between a man and a woman, just in case of romantic love exists mutual sexual desire and right power balance. This is a theoretical concept of social-emotional development that considers the existence of an innate human need to form close emotional ties with early caretakers (that corresponds, in general, to the mother or father). The attachment type that will develop later in adulthood depends largely on style of the person who takes care of the child and may be: secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidance. So, Bowlby describes three basic patterns of attachment models. First, the model of a secure attachment base, which is characterized by an extreme sense of confidence in the availability of baby caregiver to meet their needs, while receiving loving, protective and supportive responses to their requests. This context of intimacy with the caregiver eventually develop in the child safety to explore the world around her and is related to the development of confident and more favorable to the other answers.

The second pattern described by Bowlby is the anxious-ambivalent attachment, characterized by insecurity and difficulties regarding the availability of the caregiver in establishing secure connections. This form of attachment, therefore, is characterized by feelings of anxiety about the relationship with attachment figures and ambivalent behavior, often marked by anger and guilt. This uncertainty tends to trigger the child frequent feelings of abandonment anxiety and develop a strong front to the ambiguity of affection manifested by the caregiver.

The third model is the avoidance attachment. In this way the child would present a total lack of trust in relation to the presence and protection of the family caregiver, and be rejected by this often, develop extreme avoidant patterns of attachment in relationships, which are paradoxically experienced as extremely aversive, but at the same time desired. This style tends to contribute to the development of socially isolated children, who often feel inadequate in relation to their family and social environment.

Several studies have confirmed the existence of deep and lasting effects of attachment style who takes care of the child in the style of attachment that develop in adulthood. These studies show, for example, that the influence of attachment style account of the borrower influence the style of cultivating a friendship that a child will develop further with their peers. Other studies (e.g. Shaver, Hazan e Bradshaw, 1988) [39] demonstrate the influence of attachment style borrower’s account in the style of romantic love from someone who was in their care. The avoidant style is characterized by low levels of intimacy, commitment and care for the other, which resem-

bles the compulsive seductive behavior.

Usually these people ignore the moral values in his private life, though, to play their social role trying to show otherwise. The appearance of defiance mobilizes compulsive seducer, causing the amorous conquest has an aspect of sport and competition, for example, often inviting friends to bet on their skills to win this or that women. It is rare that these conquerors bring lists and relationships of women conquered, such as a hunting trophy. Not uncommonly, seductive and compulsive lovers (men or women) are smart people, professionally stabilized, but somehow can not surrender to the love of one person, unconsciously fearing abandonment. Thus, the behavior is always in the plan of conquest, because they fear the true emotional involvement, and suffering that may furnished by this committed relationship. In this case, the dynamics of conquest becomes an exciting goal, but achieving the conquest becomes frustrating and boring, to signify the need to bond, responsible living, new “obligations”, which refer to the perceived malaise or often report that in their psychotherapy. So leave what has been achieved, to start new achievement, meaning, freedom and detachment.

Despite this compulsion to seduction, it does not mean that compulsive seducer is, necessarily, manlier, or even more sexually active. Continuous compulsive seduction does not always at the expense of any outstanding sexual performance, but because of the ability to always offer its partners everything they are looking for live or listen to the seductive partner.

The false impression you have about the alluring figure of a contemporary seductive and compulsive lover is that just as successful in amorous conquests, must also be so in relation to other aspects of your life. However, despite these people very well mastered the art of conquering the opposite sex, they often do not have the same ability in other areas of human activity; occupational, business, student or family. It should also demonstrate that the trajectory of his life does not always result in a satisfactory end. Usually people with this personality profile ultimately not settle with any company more seriously, there are family and end up annoying when you find that are not easy to win people over age far below her. Also, often end up ridiculed by these attempts completely out of context. Moreover, they can cross periods of great distress at maturity when they realize that all their friends are married and have families they can no longer enjoy many female companions as before. In this sense, there remains a question to be asked: Is seductive and compulsive lover a happy and fulfilled person?

Not exist for them the enduring love that motivates towards others, exalting; love from kids who know what it can deliver to loved ones, a fleeting love that quickly dissolves (Sapetti, 1996 [40]). However, internally, are not predisposed to love. Available to engage psychologically and mistakenly think they are willing to share the love.

### 3. Final Considerations

The seduction is a relatively new topic, but very much present in the clinical context. The seduction is characterized by compulsive flirtatious behavior that the individual has constantly and can not contain. The compulsive seducer feels the need to be involved in situations that refer to amorous conquest. It is possible that the prevalence is higher in men. In compulsive seduction, often there is no pleasure in consolidating the act, having sex or approaching in a more intimate way with each other. But the pleasure is circumscribed to the act of flirting, and feeling desire for this other person. Considering the scarcity of studies and given the relevance of this phenomenon, research that addresses the issue is fundamental to understanding the seductive behavior and the establishment of therapeutic approaches that promote the formation of long lasting emotional bonds, so that the individuals suffering with this dynamic may, as many of them wish, establish a family criteria that follow.

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