



# **Love and Approval Addiction**

## **Do You Need Others' Approval?**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**Are you often anxious about how you perform and how you look? Are your good feelings dependent upon how others feel about you? Who is responsible for your self-worth - you or others?**

"At work, every time I have to speak at meetings, I get so stressed."

"I'm taking a class and I'm always afraid to raise my hand and ask a question."

"I'm fine one to one, but as soon as I get into a group, I'm so tense I can hardly stand it."

"I'm totally relaxed with my women friends, but as soon as I'm with a guy I like, I can't be myself."

Each of these people is anxious and stressed, because they want to get approval and avoid disapproval. What are they telling themselves that is causing their anxiety?

"Oh God, I better not forget what I want to say and make a fool of myself."

"The teacher might think the question I want to ask is a dumb one."

"If I say the wrong thing, no one will like me."

"I better not say something completely stupid."

Each of these people is telling themselves things that are causing anxiety, and underneath these self-judgmental statements is a deeper belief:

"If I say or do something wrong or stupid, they won't like me, and that means I am not okay."

The need for approval, and the fear of disapproval, comes from the belief that others are responsible for your worth. If they like you, you are okay, and if they don't like you, you are not okay.

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If you are a person who seeks others' approval, then you have made others responsible for your sense of worth.

Imagine that you have a child, and instead of loving this child, you keep giving the child away to others to define. You keep saying to this child, "You better do it right because if they don't like you, then you are not okay." The result would be that the child would feel very insecure and unlovable, because you keep giving him or her away to others for approval.

When you make others responsible for your sense of worth, you are doing the same thing on the inner level - giving away your own inner child. Instead of defining your own worth, you are making others responsible for this.

This is a very hard way to live. You have to constantly try to figure out what someone else wants of you, to get approval and avoid disapproval. Your good and bad feelings are dependent upon how you look and how you perform, so you have to be constantly on your toes.

What if you were to take on the responsibility of defining your own worth? How would you go about doing this?

One of the problems in defining your own worth is that you may have been programmed to see yourself through the eyes of your parents, teachers, siblings and peers. If, when you were growing up, you got judged, criticized, rejected or ridiculed, you may have incorporated others' images of you into your own mind. This unloving treatment contributes to the development of our wounded self - our programmed ego mind. You can't define your own worth and lovability from that place; you need to define yourself through the eyes of love, not the eyes of judgment.

Start with imagining an older, wiser part of you, or imagine a person from your childhood who really loved you. Imagine that you can see yourself as a child through the eyes of this other person, or through the older, wiser part of you. What do you see? Can you see your innocence, your lovingness, your sense of wonder, your creativity, your aliveness? Open to seeing who you are in your essence - your true Self.

If you practice seeing who you really are - not who you are in your wounded programmed self, but who you are in your essence Self - you

will start to value your own beautiful essence. As you value your essence, you will start to treat yourself in kinder, more loving ways.

The more you do this as part of your Inner Bonding practice, the better you will feel about yourself and the less you will seek approval from others. In time and with practice, you will find yourself feeling so much happier and more peaceful!

## **Healing the Need for Others' Approval**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**Discover why much of the time repeating positive affirmations doesn't work to heal your low self-esteem and need for others' approval, and what does work.**

Do you ever find yourself thinking things like:

- I'd better give her a call or she will think I don't like her.
- If I do what I want to do he will be mad.
- If I don't explain myself they will think I don't care.
- If I wear the same outfit again they will think less of me.

And so on....

Do you automatically adjust your behavior to try to have some control over what others think of you - trying to get approval and avoid disapproval? The need for approval and the fear of disapproval may be running your life, albeit unconsciously. When your sense of safety, worth and lovability are tied to what others think of you, then you constantly attempt to look "right" and perform "right" in order to attempt to control what others think.

However, since the very act of making others responsible for your sense of safety, worth and lovability is a form of self-abandonment, the more you do it, the more insecure you feel. No matter how much approval you receive, it never heals the inner insecurity that comes from abandoning yourself.

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## **How to Heal the Need for Approval**

We all need approval, but we end up depending on others for approval when we do not give ourselves the approval we need.

This concept can be confusing, because many people have learned to give themselves affirmations, such as, "I am perfect," "I am lovable," with no positive effect on their self-esteem. Why is this?

When you give yourself approval from your left-brain programmed mind - your ego wounded self - you will not believe what you are telling yourself. You will know that you are "just making it up," so your feeling self, which is your inner child, will not believe you. Your inner child will especially not believe you if you continue to treat yourself in unloving, self-abandoning ways, such as judging yourself, ignoring your feelings, turning to addictions, and making others responsible for your self-worth. If you tell an actual child that he or she is lovable and perfect, but you ignore the child, judge the child, give the child cookies and material things instead of love, and try to get others to take care of the child, the child will not believe you when you say that he or she is lovable. If you give the child approval AND treat the child in very loving ways, then the child will believe you when you say, "You are so incredible. I love you so much."

Likewise, if you are connected with your Higher Self - your wise and powerful source of love and truth - and you are taking loving action in your own behalf, then your inner child will believe you when you give yourself approval.

Approval and affirmations do not affect the core of you when they come from your ego wounded self, but they go deeply inside when they come from your Higher Self, and are followed up with loving actions toward yourself.

This is what heals the need for others' approval. Obviously, in order to give this to yourself, you have to be connected with your Higher Self - whatever that is for you. It may be the highest part of yourself, your experience of God/Goddess, your connection with the universe, and so on. The approval and affirmations need to come THROUGH you, from a higher source, rather than from your programmed mind, in order for your inner child to believe them.

If you practice Inner Bonding, you will discover that your connection with your spiritual Guidance gradually becomes more tangible to you. With this strengthened connection, you will be able to heal your need for others' approval.

## **Are You Love or Approval Addicted?**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**Are you love or approval addicted? Most people are. The following checklist will help you to determine your level of love or approval addiction.**

In my experience as a counselor for many years, I have found that love addiction and approval addiction are far more prevalent than any other substance or process addictions. We live in a love-addicted, approval-addicted society.

What does it mean to be love/approval addicted? Below is a checklist for you to see if you are addicted to love and/or approval. Believing any of these may indicate love or approval addiction.

I believe that:

- My happiness and wellbeing are dependent upon getting love from another person.
- My adequacy, lovability, and feelings of self-worth and self-esteem come from others liking me and approving of me.
- Others' disapproval or rejection mean that I'm not good enough.
- I can't make myself happy.
- I can't make myself as happy as someone else can.
- My best feelings come from outside myself, from how other people or a particular other person sees me and treats me.
- Others are responsible for my feelings. Therefore, if someone cares about me, he or she will never do anything that hurts or

upsets me.

- I can't be alone. I feel like I'll die if I'm alone.
- When I'm upset, it's someone else's fault.
- It's up to other people to make me feel good about myself by approving of me.
- I'm not responsible for my feelings. Other people make me feel happy, sad, angry, frustrated, shut down, guilty, shamed or depressed - and they are responsible for fixing my feelings.
- I'm not responsible for my behavior. Other people make me yell, act crazy, get sick, laugh, cry, get violent, leave or fail.
- Others are selfish if they do what they want instead of what I want or need.
- If I'm not connected to someone, I will die.
- I can't handle the pain of disapproval, rejection, abandonment, or being shut out - the pain of loneliness and heartbreak.

Living as a love or approval addict is a very hard way to live. You have to constantly make sure you say the right thing, do the right, and look right, in order to get the needed love and approval. Your feelings are on a roller coaster - from feeling the wonderful feelings that come from getting your love or approval "fix," to feeling the despair that comes when your "supply" - the source of your love and approval - shuts down, gets angry or judgmental, or goes away.

### **The Underlying Cause of Love and Approval Addiction**

Love and approval addiction is rooted in self-abandonment. Imagine the feeling part of you as a child - your inner child. When you are love or approval addicted, you have given your inner child away for adoption. Instead of learning to take responsibility for your own sense of worth and wellbeing by loving and approving of yourself, you have handed your inner child away to others for love and approval - making others responsible for your feelings. This inner self-abandonment will always cause the deep pain of low self-worth, making you dependent upon others for your self-worth.

The sad thing about all of this is that love is the most abundant thing in the universe. We live in a sea of love - it is always within us and all around us. It is our Source. When you learn and practice the Inner Bonding process that we teach, and learn to open to Spirit/God/Source, you become filled with love, with peace, with joy. The empty place within that yearns to be filled becomes so filled with love that it overflows to others. You find yourself desiring to give love rather than always trying to get it.

As long as you make others your Source, you will not find the love, peace and joy that you seek. By learning and practicing Inner Bonding, you can learn to fill yourself with love and heal your love and approval addictions.

### **What Will They Think? - Love and Approval Addiction**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**Are you love and approval addicted? Are you constantly worried about what others think of your looks and/or performance?**

When you were growing up, how often did you hear, "What will they think?"

Who are "they?" Unfortunately, "they" are everyone. Many of our parents and caregivers were love and approval addicted and geared their behavior to try to have control over getting love and approval and avoiding disapproval.

This was the role modeling for many of us. Our worth was determined by what "they" would think. Most of us did not see our parents or other role models defining their own worth and validating themselves.

What about now? Is your sense of worth determined by what others think of you, or have you learned how to define your own worth? Do you get your sense of inner fullness from others' love, or do you know how to fill yourself with love?

Being love and approval addicted is a hard and tiring way to live. Being dependent upon others love, attention, and approval for your sense of safety, security, worth and lovability means that you have to constantly work to look right and perform right. You can never let up, because even if you get the love or approval that you are seeking from a person, he or she can always take it away. Or maybe they are not available and then you have to try to get it from someone else, anyone else - "they."

We all need love. We do not thrive without it, and many do not survive without it. However, problems occur when we are dependent on others as our primary source of love and attention.

As long as you are making others responsible for defining your worth and making you feel safe and loved, you will likely continue to feel alone and empty inside. There really is another way to live!

What if you were to decide to give yourself the love and approval that you keep seeking from others? What if you were to decide to stop focusing externally, and instead start to focus internally?

We all have the power to define our own worth and bring love into ourselves. While you might think that the only love that feels really great is love from another person, this is a huge false belief. If you have ever experienced a moment of Grace, where you feel full and joyous for no external reason, you know that it is possible to feel incredibly wonderful without another's love and approval.

The only way this happens is when your heart is open to the Love that is Spirit.

We live in a sea of Love and wisdom. It is everywhere - within us and all around us. It is who we are - created in the image of God-that-is-love. When you shift your intention from trying to have control over getting love and approval, and instead move into an intent to learn about loving yourself, your heart opens to the incredible love and wisdom of your spiritual Guidance.

Try it right now. Move your focus out of your head and into your heart. Breathe into your heart. Make a decision that, for right now, you want responsibility for your own feelings of fullness and worth. Now ask one of these questions: "What is loving to me right now?" or "What is in my highest good right now?" Relax, let go, and listen for the answer. It

might come in words, or images, or feelings. When you get a sense of what is loving to you right now, then do it. Take the loving action.

Now notice how you feel.

If you practice this all day, you will stop worrying about "What will they think?"