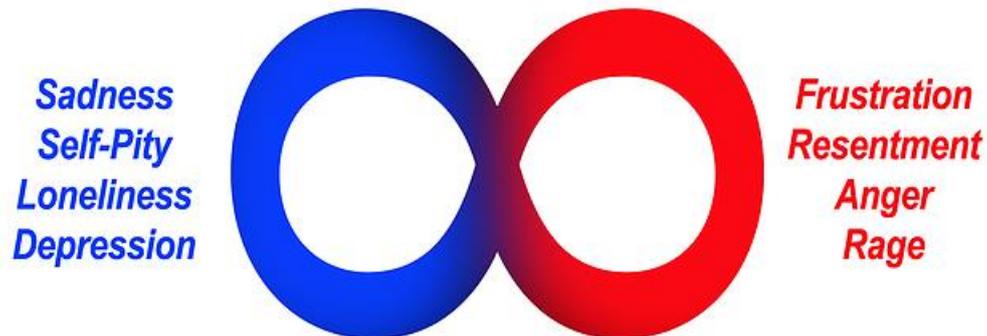


By
John Kenny
John Kenny Coaching

The Infinity Loop of Pain and How to Stop It



The Infinity Loop of Pain is a destructive emotional cycle that swings from sadness or anger to happiness and then back again, like the sign for infinity.

You allow the cycle to continue both because it is a habit and because at some level it makes you feel connected to your partner and meets an emotional, psychological and physiological need.

Once both partners can no longer keep up the constant outpouring of attention and love on the other, like in the beginning of your relationship, and once you no longer see each other as perfect the loop begins, you begin to seek other ways to get attention, connection, and love.

One method to get connection and emotional gratification is through fighting or arguing. It gives you a rush of adrenaline, that isn't quite as good as the rush of endorphins you received when you were in the chemical storm of the initial "in love" phase, but at least it gives them something.

Then, after the conflict, there is a make-up period in which you shower each other with love once again, temporarily. Over time you learn, subconsciously, that the conflict is a pathway to 'happiness', and so you tolerate or even seek the conflict.

Another method to get connection and emotional gratification is through sadness. Getting into the "poor me" mode can elicit empathy, comforting or support from the other party. Connecting in this way isn't as high an intensity as arguing, but it is gratifying to have someone hug you.

It can even be gratifying when someone doesn't empathise or show concern for your sadness because then you will get angry and cause a conflict that finally gets you the attention you want. Either way, it leads to connection and a temporary swing back to the middle of the loop where happiness lies, temporarily.

In both cases, as the euphoria wears off the tension returns and the cycle repeats.

The loop can feel addictive.

Many people allow the cycle to continue because it's meeting their need for connection with their partner (the make-up part) and emotional stimulation (brain chemicals they are 'addicted' to). Yes, emotions (and the chemicals that cause them) can feel addictive, even more so than recreational drugs because you carry the chemical factory (your brain) with you everywhere you go. Although you can't be addicted to your own hormones, your body can crave a release/a feeling/a state.

It's like having an internal pharmacy and it is important you put the pharmacist in check if you want a fulfilling, lasting relationship.

The only way to create the enlightened relationships that we want is to break these negative patterns and stop getting our needs met by the Infinity Loop. So, how do we do this?

The first step is awareness about yourself and your partner.

However, the most important person in the equation is you. This involves recognising what your patterns are along with those of the others involved (remember this loop can play out with friends and family too, but generally on a much less intense level).

The second step is to have a strategy in place to interrupt the cycle.

Interrupting the loop means doing something differently.

- First, take control of your own emotions.
- Second, when the cycle of sadness has you engaged with your partner in the loop, do **something differently** than you normally do. You can do these things together or individually.
- Thirdly, have other ways to meet your needs for connection and love that are more fulfilling and productive.

The following questions will help you determine alternative strategies for creating connection and love:

What are things that you and your partner enjoy doing together that you can do more of?

What are things that you can do as a couple to remind each other that you are both the priority and being loved and expressing love is the priority?

In what ways can you express love to your partner that you aren't currently doing enough? (See the Love Languages section for helpful clues!)

What things could you do, preventatively, to bring your best self to the relationship by finding more joy and peace in your life?

If these things do not work to break the loop then it could be that either or both of you are too stuck to be able to engage in change.

IRC helps you to explore all of these things at a much deeper level, to understand how your loop developed and why it keeps on going around and around.

