

## **Love Junkie**

### **By Rachel Resnick**

These discussion questions are designed to enhance your group's conversation about *Love Junkie*, a provocative memoir that traces the author's journey through a dangerous addiction to sex and love.

#### **About this book**

Rachel Resnick is a “love junkie”—she is addicted to destructive romantic relationships. In 2006, Resnick came home to find her computer sabotaged; the work of a vengeful ex-fiancé. From this rock-bottom moment, Resnick was able to take an unflinching look back to where her history of failed relationships began: her childhood.

Resnick's parents divorced when she was young, and her mother lost custody of Resnick and her younger brother, Michael, after struggling with alcoholism, depression and other mental illness, and abusive relationships. Instead of being welcomed into her father's new family, though, Resnick was shuttled between foster parents, never feeling truly accepted or loved.

Her adult relationships repeated and amplified those patterns. One ex-boyfriend, a brooding artist, seduced her into a destructive threesome while he hid a drug addiction and a string of affairs. Resnick spent her thirties bouncing from romance to romance, wallowing in denial while chasing the thrill of true love and spiritually fulfilling sex. Skidding into her forties and determined to become a mother, Resnick gambled on another cruel man, Spencer, and realized only after a tragic miscarriage that she was truly a love junkie. After a period of celibacy, support group meetings, and a new, unconventional relationship, Resnick is on the road to recovery—and finally able to come to terms with her mother's suicide, her own fractured childhood, and her father's tragic pattern of repeated rejections.

#### **For discussion**

1. *Love Junkie* begins in 2006, when Resnick comes home to find her computer ruined. Why is this a good starting point for the memoir that follows? Where else might you personally have chosen to start this memoir?
2. “My mother was the original love junkie. She taught me well.” (22) Consider Resnick's mother, Jane, and her relationships with men. How did Jane set the pattern of love and loss that Resnick will follow in her own life? Do you believe that we often follow destructive patterns created by, or examples set by, our parents decades earlier?
3. Resnick writes, “My humor has always saved me, or at least softened the blows.” (7) What are some of the humorous moments in *Love Junkie*? How does humor help Resnick get through some tough times?
4. What role do Resnick's friends play in her life and relationships? What kind of advice does Resnick get from “the women who never let you down,” (5) like her best friend Stasia?

5. Resnick writes of Winchester Grandview Harrington, “He’s not the first, but our painful relationship is exemplary of the bad choices I made. Also, I think he will be easier to confront than some of the others.” (34) How does Resnick’s relationship with Winchester fit her pattern of obsession and destruction? How does he differ from some of the other boyfriends discussed in the book, like Eddie and Spencer? Why are memories of Winchester easier for Resnick to confront, compared with those of her other ex-boyfriends?
6. Resnick sums up her relationship with her father in two words: “Blurred boundaries.” (68) What boundaries are blurred between father and daughter? When does their pattern of repeated rejections begin? How is Resnick finally able to reconcile with her father? What disappointments and unfilled expectations still remain in their relationship?
7. Early in her relationship with Eddie, Resnick makes a list: “Pros and cons, evidence, perhaps, of a willful delusion.” (79) What’s missing from this list? Why do you think Resnick ignores these failings of Eddie’s? Can you share a time in your own life when you have been in “willful delusion,” and if so, how did you (or how might you) break out of it?
8. Resnick narrates her personal history in the present tense, as if the events unfold as we read them. Why might Resnick have chosen to tell her story in this way? How does Resnick’s narrative decision affect the flow of time between past and present? What does it say about the nature of memory?
9. Resnick writes, “I divide men into two rough categories: those who remind me of my father, and those who remind me of my brother.” (167) Which men in *Love Junkie* belong to each of these two categories?
10. Spencer was, according to Resnick, “The perfect victim to make my dreams come true.” (179) What dreams does Resnick hope to fulfill through Spencer? Why do none of these dreams become reality? How is Spencer a “victim,” and how is he a perpetrator in Resnick’s life?
11. Consider Resnick’s slow road to recovery from addiction. How do support group meetings help her? What pitfalls does she encounter in these meetings?
12. “One way I get through withdrawal is to reclaim my creativity.” (211) How does writing help her get through difficult periods of her life? How might writing this memoir have helped Resnick work through her addiction? Is there a story from your own life that you have considered setting down to paper? If you haven’t yet tried writing it, what has held you back?
13. Describe Resnick’s relationship with Catherine. How does this romance with a woman differ from Resnick’s past with men? What “love junkie” patterns still persist?

14. *Love Junkie* ends with the story of Resnick's last time seeing her mother, and her mother's suicide soon after. Why does the memoir end with the mother-daughter story? What hope does the "secret admirer" who visits Jane's grave add to the end of the book?
15. Resnick dedicated *Love Junkie* to her brother, Michael. In what ways was Michael's childhood even more difficult than Resnick's? What is their sibling relationship like now? What did it take for this brother and sister to reconnect in adulthood?
16. Readers who don't share Resnick's addiction might still be able to relate to some of her problems. Which moments in *Love Junkie* were you able to relate to, whether you identify with Resnick's issues or not?

### **Suggested reading**

*Ready to Heal: Women Facing Love, Sex, and Relationship Addiction* by Kelly McDaniel  
*Facing Love Addiction: Giving Yourself Power to Change the Way You Love* by Pia Mellody  
*Addiction as an Attachment Disorder* by Philip J. Flores  
*Labyrinth of Desire: Women, Passion, and Romantic Obsession* by Rosemary Sullivan  
*Motherless Daughters* by Hope Edelman  
*Drinking: A Love Story* by Caroline Knapp

**Rachel Resnick** is the author of the *Los Angeles Times* bestseller *Go West Young F\*cked-Up Chick*. She has published articles, essays, and celebrity profile cover stories nationally in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Marie Claire*, *Women's Health*, and *BlackBook*. She is a contributing editor at *Tin House* magazine. Her essays and stories have appeared in *What Was I Thinking?*, *Stricken*, *The Time of My Life*, *Damage Control*, *The Dictionary of Failed Relationships*, *The Best American Erotica 2004*, *Women on the Edge*, *L.A. Shorts*, and *Absolute Disaster*. She is also the founder and CEO of Writers On Fire, provider of luxury writing retreats both in the U.S. and abroad. Visit her at [www.rachelresnick.com](http://www.rachelresnick.com).