Dear Editor,

Pathological love (PL) is a repetitive behavior of uncontrolled excessive care for the romantic partner in a loving relationship, renouncing activities and interests once valued. Lee uncovered six love styles (Eros, Ludus, Storge,Pragma, Mania, Agape). In this model, the Mania love style corresponds to PL, which is experienced as an obsessive emotion that dominates the individual, who feels forced to continually attract the partner’s attention.

We selected through media advertisement 8 individuals that felt that their way of loving made them suffer. The intervention proposed was based on psychodramatic analysis. Psychodrama group therapy is an effective approach for the enhancement of interpersonal relationships by promoting psychological insight, helping self-esteem improvement, and consequently, contributing to the development of healthier relationships. Intervention comprised 18 consecutive weekly sessions summarized on Table 1.

Mean age of the participants was 41.5 years (SD = 9.75), the majority were women, currently divorced or single. Psychiatry comorbidity was accessed by the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) and major depression was the most frequent diagnosis (n = 5).

Participants answered a 6-point Likert-type analogue scale assessing dependency on the relationship that motivated treatment-seeking (higher scores meaning a healthier relationship). Scoring on this Love Health Scale (LHS), varying from 0 to 100, is initially defined by the patient who shares with the group her/his reasons for such self-score. Then, a final score is defined through interactions and suggestions by other group members, having the therapists as the impartial facilitators of the scoring process. The Love Attitudes Scale (LAS) provides scores on each type of love previously described on Lee’s work. The lowest of all six scores is the person’s predominant love style. The LHS and the LAS were both administered at baseline and at last session of the program.

Pre-treatment scores on the LHS varied from 0 to 60 (Mean = 18.1, SE = 7.8) and post-treatment scores form 60 to 90 (Mean = 72.5, SE = 4.5), a significant difference at ANOVA for repeated measures (F[1,7] = 65.5, p < 0.001). Regarding the LAS, at the beginning of treatment seven patients had Mania as their predominant love style. At treatment end only three kept Mania as their main love style, a difference that approached significance at Fisher’s test (p = 0.09).

Since it is a case series, the small sample size and lack of control precludes generalization. Nonetheless, it is the first communication on a structured therapeutic approach to PL. These preliminary findings suggest that psychodramatic analysis is a promising approach to PL.

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* Modest
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Note: AMITI = Ambulatório Integrado dos Transtornos do Impulso; USP = Universidade de São Paulo; ANJOTI = Associação Nacional do Jogo Patológico e Outros Transtornos do Impulso; CAPES = Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior; FAPESP = Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo.

For more information, see Instructions for authors.
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