

**SEVEN DAYS
TO**

intense

**INTERNAL
CONFLICT**



DAY FOUR: CONFLICT WITH THE LOVE
INTEREST

WHY DO WE NEED INNER CONFLICT WITH OUR LOVE INTEREST?

Let's take the example of our needy man-child. What kind of woman is he going to be attracted to? Someone like dear old dad...someone who wants to be in control...someone who will probably do anything they can to avoid being in a relationship because being in a relationship means relinquishing control. Ha! Now you have a push/pull dynamic. Needy/avoidant.

Or what about someone whose husband left her with three kids. She'll definitely have trust issues. That might make her guarded and defensive. Pair her up with someone who is carefree/laid-back.

Can you think of some other polar opposites that can be your starting point for inner conflict?

For example:

Commitment phobe/clingy

Flaky/control freak

Hyperactive/calm

Can they make it work? That's why we read the book! Needy will learn how to stand up for himself and be less needy. Avoidant will learn how to let go and let herself be needed. The result? Instead of two polar opposites, we have a nice balance between them.

There's a whole school of theory on attachment. Or, how our experiences in childhood, and subsequent events lead to our subconscious "styles" in relationships. Bowlby proposed four attachment styles:

- **Secure Attachment:** More likely to see others as supportive and helpful and themselves as competent and worthy of respect. They relate positively and have more trust in others;
- **Anxious-Avoidant Attachment:** Generally less effective in managing stressful situations and are more likely to withdraw and resist seeking help. They tend to distance themselves from others to reduce emotional stress;
- **Anxious-Resistant Attachment:** Tends to be the opposite of anxious-avoidant, and cling to caregivers.
- **Disorganized Attachment:** Don't have the skills for coping with distress, and may lean towards disruptive behaviour, and social isolation. They see others as threats.

This is why in a romance, we often use the "forced proximity" trope. If a couple is say, snowed in together, if one of the couple's avoidant, they CAN'T withdraw, because there's nowhere for them to withdraw to. So they're forced to learn a new belief about relationships.

EXERCISES

Activity 1: These are the same as the exercises you did for your main character, this time though, I want you to write about your **love interest**.

Hint: Think opposites. If one is needy, the other is clinging; if one is ambitious, the other is laid back.

- Honest Tinder

Write up your **love interest's** primary caregiver's* Tinder/dating profile. Don't leave anything out!

Now, write up a psychologist's profile of your **love interest's** primary caregiver.

Read the two profiles. How do they differ?

*By primary caregiver, I mean parent, step-parent, grandparent, guardian, whoever was responsible for your character's childhood care

- Opening up old wounds

How did your **love interest's** primary caregivers rip a hole in your character? (Sure, they didn't mean to, but they did, to misquote a Philip Larkin poem.)

Write that scene.

- The day that changed everything

You **love interest** suffered a horrific event that changed them forever. Write the scene of the aftermath of that event.

Activity 2: Putting it all together

Your **character** will feel like they never have before with their **love interest**. But, they'll also feel a little familiar.

Which primary caregiver do they remind him/her of?

How is the **love interest** different? i.e. How did they find the chink in that armour?

What will your **character** learn from your **love interest** by the end of the novel?
How will they have changed?

What will your **love interest** have learned from your **character** by the end of the novel? How will they have changed?

Activity 3: One day, Cherry walks into a bar and meets Bo...

(told you we'd come back to Cherry's story)

A little bit about Bo...

When he was thirteen, he met the love of his life, Arabella. They dated throughout high school and college, got married, had a child and went to live in the country. One hideous day in June, Arabella and baby Bo died in a car crash. It's been ten years since he's really even looked at a woman.

- What type of woman is Bo attracted to?

- What are his beliefs about romance?

- How does Bo act around potential love interests?

