

By Mandy Peterson

ARE YOU BEING TAKEN FOR A RIDE ON A RELATIONSHIP MERRY-GO-ROUND?

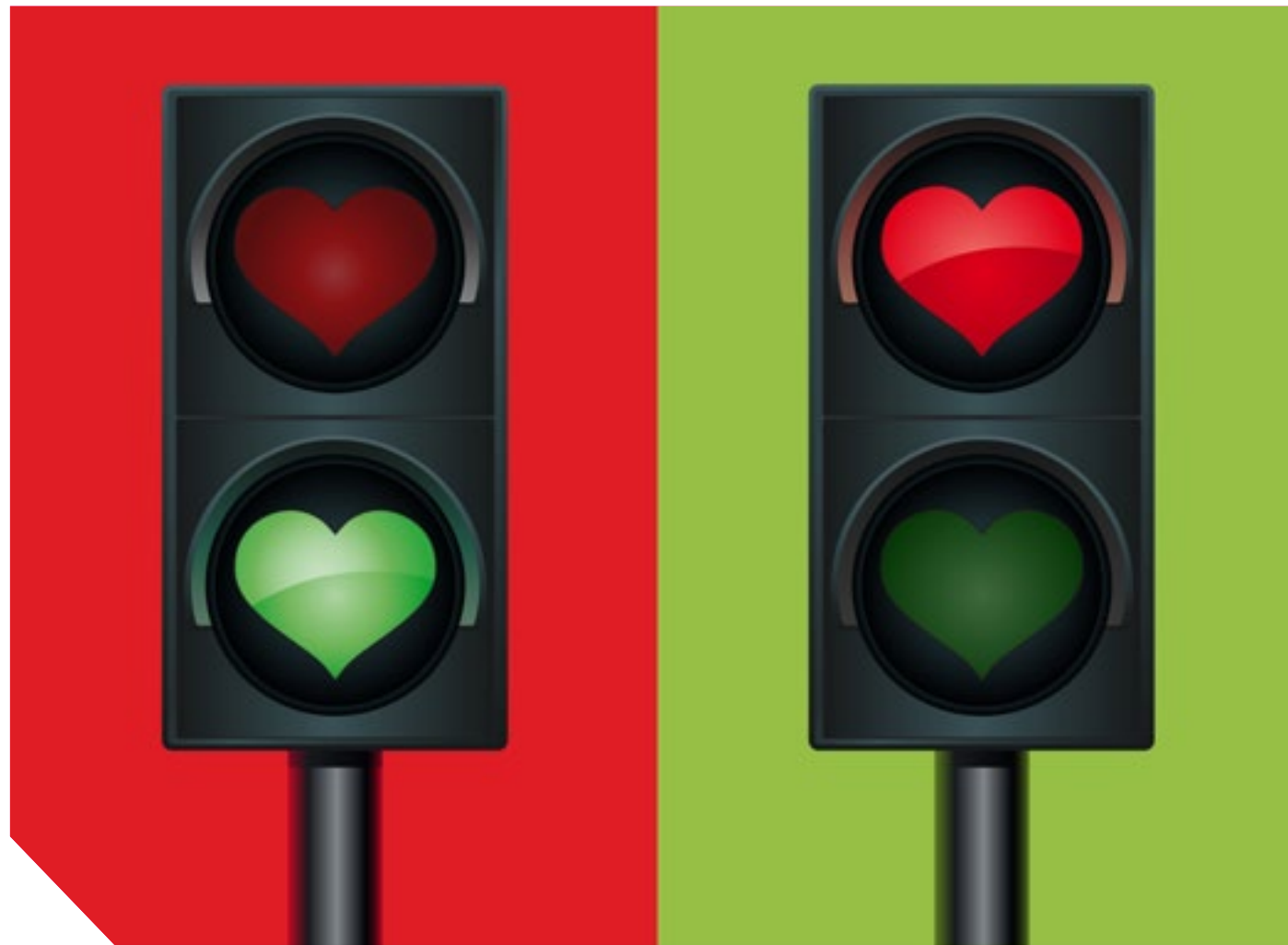
The Seductive Withholder

Like Romance Addicts, Seductive Withholders are a form of Ambivalent Love Addict. Susan Peabody was the first to create the term "Ambivalent Love Addiction"—see her book *Addiction to Unrequited Love: Overcoming Obsession and Dependency in Relationships*.

Ambivalent Love Addicts tend to crave intimacy and closeness with a partner, but fear it at the same time. They tend to keep relationships at a superficial level through various means. This protects them from having to develop a closer and more intimate relationship. According to Susan, the different types of Ambivalent Love Addicts include:

- Torchbearers – those who are attracted to unrequited love relationships
- Saboteurs – those who sabotage relationships at the point they get serious and who don't look back
- Romance Addicts – those who are addicted to multiple partners; bonding with each one, but at the same time avoiding a deep involvement and commitment
- Seductive withholders – those who repeat a pattern of being available and then unavailable, or offering sex and then withholding sex.

When it comes to the Seductive Withholder, this type of love interest is sim-



Seductive Withholders may attempt to reinitiate the relationships they sabotage. They are one form of what's termed an Ambivalent Love Addict.

ilar to the Saboteur, except they don't completely walk away from the relationships they sabotage. A Saboteur will usually not look back once they have sabotaged a relationship. However, if such a person does look back, and if they re-initiate this pattern over and over with the same partner, they then become a "Seductive Withholder."

Seductive Withholders may also have Torchbearer tendencies as well, in the sense that they may attempt to re-initiate relationships they sabotage due to a subconscious desire to see if their love is still required. However, if after a reconnection the relationship grows to become deeper and more intimate, the Seductive Withholder will again feel tempted to break the connection. The reason could be distinctive for different types of Seductive Withholders. For some, it could be because a high has worn off (i.e. the thrill of the chase) and boredom has set in. For others, the cause may be an overwhelming fear

of intimacy or of rejection. Whatever the case, a pattern is set up; one which keeps the relationship hot and cold, or on and off. Seductive Withholders will often continue this on-and-off process for as long as their love interest(s) is able to endure it.

Thus, Seductive Withholders could be defined as those whose love style is to swing back and forth between withholding sex, companionship, commitment and affection, and then offering them again when it feels safe or convenient.

According to Susan Peabody, there are two main kinds of Seductive Withholders. The first behavior is narcissistic-based. The second behavior is fear-based.

For the **narcissistic Seductive Withholder**, seducing someone over and over again after abandoning/provoking a break-up becomes a kind of game.

According to Susan Peabody, through seducing and then withholding, the narcissistic Seductive Withholders can get a “high” off of playing with a partner’s feelings. They do not always fully break up with a love interest, but can begin to withdraw, not return phone calls, withhold sex or become more distant or unfaithful (which sometimes provokes their partner to initiate a break). They seem to lack empathy toward the hurt they cause. Then, when some time has passed, they reinitiate contact if their partner hasn’t attempted to reinitiate on their own. From speaking with clients I have given love readings, I have observed that this type of love addict will often reinitiate contact in a way in which they act like nothing happened. This can be very confusing to their partner. The behavior is often left unaddressed because although the partner feels hurt or confused, they may be happy to be pursued again and do not wish to rock the boat.

How can one recognize a narcissistic Seductive Withholder?

The narcissistic Seductive Withholder presents with a sense of entitlement, a pattern toward being manipulative in order to get what he/she wants, a lack of empathy towards others, a resistance to changing their ways, inability to apologize, or a pattern of projecting all the problems of the relationship onto their partner. You can often recognize these types of love addicts because they may have a collection of ex-partners or flirtations around them who they want to keep in their circle. They often have no difficulty with dishonesty or with accusing a partner of being crazy or unstable for suspecting them of infidelity, even when they are in fact guilty of it. Relationships usually revolve around their needs rather than what is best for their partner.

In contrast to this, the **fear-based Seductive Withholder** assumes that getting too close to a love interest means potentially getting hurt.

If they leave fearing being hurt, why do they return? For some, a pattern of returning to the relationship after pulling away stems from a fear of rejection and abandonment. Some will fear that if their partner doesn’t chase them back or moves on quickly, it means they were never cared about. Some reject their partner, after all, fearing to be rejected themselves. So, if they are used to the partner coming back,

it can be painful for them to think this will not happen (which this fear addicts them to needing the partner to want them back). I’ve had many clients call me in fear saying; “I’m scared. I don’t think he/she will take me back this time.” They begin to fear that this means they were the one who was rejected, even though they initiated the break up.

For others, returning to seducer mode after withdrawing can stem from a pervasive feeling of loneliness (whether in or out of the relationship). For the lonely type, they may feel lonely and unhappy within the relationship. They begin to obsess on this and on how unhappy they feel; sometimes projecting that their partner must feel the same. They, then, can then feel the overwhelming urge to leave the relationship. Yet, after backing away from such a relationship, they may still find they feel lonely, wanting what little they had back.

Is there hope for the fear-based Seductive Withholder?



Yes! Unlike the narcissistic Seductive Withholders, the fear-based type genuinely cares for and is attracted to the person(s) they seduce and then abandon. Also, because their behavior is fear-based rather than narcissistic, these types can often respond better to therapy. According to Susan Peabody, part of their healing involves learning to attract a partner who is the right type for them; usually a person who is independent and self-sufficient, but also patient. They, then, have to learn to stick with the relationship even when their fear comes up.

I also find that some of these types of Seductive Withholders are highly sensitive and empathic. They tend to feel so much that when a relationship becomes more settled, they become acutely aware that their partner is less obsessed with them. Feeling this lack of passion in their partner can make them assume all sorts of things; such as their partner doesn’t care, is unhappy or about to break up with them. They, then, begin to panic. Breaking up can sometimes be a way to bring the passion back or to test if their partner still

has feelings.

While making up brings the intense feelings back, as soon as things become settled again, they may fear it means the love is dying. Thus, their fear of rejection gets triggered again. They need, in such situations, to understand that there are phases in a relationship, and that just because an infatuation phase wears off, this doesn’t mean they will be abandoned or are not loved anymore. The most dangerous types of partners for the fear-based Seductive Withholder are narcissistic Seductive Withholders, Romance Addicts or individuals who are too emotionally distant. Their doubts and intuitions in such relationships can get the best of them and sometimes are founded.

Fixer-Upper Seductive Withholders – I Love-Hate You

In my work as a relationship psychic, there is a third type of Seductive Withholder, **often female**, that I am often presented with. This **Fixer-Upper Seductive Withholder** begins a pattern of withdrawing from their partner out of a need to fix or punish them. When it does not work, they return back to seducer mode. You can recognize these Seductive Withholders through how they often begin a dance with a love object in which there is an initial infatuation followed by a love-hate relationship.

There are two forms of Fixer-Uppers: those who are not being abused and those who are.

In the first case, the Seductive Withholder is usually hot and cold due to exasperation. Many are with partners who are emotionally unavailable or who are not seen as good enough or doing enough on some level. This may leave the Seductive Withholder always trying to “fix” them through “if you love/miss/want me enough you will change” type thinking. They can then feel frustrated if they have been expecting change but it doesn’t happen, or if the partner does not do what they want. Thus, such Seductive Withholders may withhold sex or initiate a break up as a means to punish or manipulate their partners; usually out of frustration and unhappiness. When the frustration passes, they are back to wanting affection and/or a relationship again. This pattern might repeat whenever the Seductive Withholder feels frustrated or unhappy. They would do best to focus on either accepting

their partner as they are or deciding to leave. This is because their tactics rarely get them what they want and do not resolve the inner sense of unhappiness they feel with their partner and relationship—whether their partner ends up making changes or not.

The second form of **abused Fixer-Upper** attempts to fix more serious issues in their partner out of a faulty belief that if their partner truly loves them enough, then certain abusive patterns in their partner will change. Such patterns may include:

- physical or emotional abuse
- infidelity
- perversion (i.e. sexual abuse, etc.)
- sex addiction
- narcissistic seductive withholder tendencies

Despite knowing the relationship is abusive, the abused Fixer-Upper believes it can be fixed through love one moment and hate the next. Like the less extreme form of Fixer-Upper, when in the hate phase, the abused Fixer-Upper believes that through withholding love and commitment it will punish the abuser or make him/her change his/her abusive or unfaithful ways. The hope, of course, is that their partner will take it as an ultimatum and offer to change, be more honest or faithful, etc. The love/seduction phase can then fix things when they fear the hate phase hurt the partner or drove them away.

These individuals are not the same as those who leave relationships out of fear and feel seduced back by their partner. These individuals feel angry over feeling used, abused, cheated on, etc. and may feel a real intention of leaving in the moment, but in their heart their real hope is an idealistic one: that their partner will change for them and validate that they were loved and appreciated. In many of the situations I have read, some abused Fixer-Uppers can become verbally abusive themselves when in the hate phase. They can also feel regrets and shame over their behavior when in the seducer phase.

Because these Fixer-Uppers have been abused, they may develop patterns of denial, idealization or other coping mechanisms to cope with the pain of why they remain in such a relationship (usually not believing they can attract or deserve someone who will treat them better). They can also have symptoms

of the fear-based Seductive Withholder if they have strong fears of rejection accompanying their strong feelings of anger.

In some cases, their partner is being dishonest about infidelities or perversions, or denies being abusive stating it is “all in the head” (also called “crazy making”). This can create a lot of confusion for the abused Fixer-Upper who doesn’t know what to trust from one moment to the next. Their off-and-on behavior may be marked by their tendencies to waver between idealization, denial and fantasy versus seeing the reality of their situation. This can create black and white thinking and shifting moods and behaviors. The longer these Seductive Withholders remain in these relationships, the more damage can occur to their psyche or to their ability to trust their intuition. The Seductive withholder in this situation would do better to understand that their partner’s issues don’t stem from anything they have done or from their being unlovable. This is easier said, however, than integrated.

Whatever the case may be, as soon as this type of Seductive Withholder breaks with their love interest (not able to tolerate the relationship and wanting change), they may afterwards (and sometimes only within a couple of hours) become terrified of losing their love object, or that this person may move on and forget about them. After all, part of the unconscious motivation toward leaving is the hope that it would incite some sort of reaction (a gesture of love, validation, caring, a promise to change, an offer to be faithful or more honest, etc.). When such a reaction does not occur, this Seductive Withholder may feel intense fear that they have been taken for granted or were never loved. They then want back into the love objects good graces again to test whether they are still loved and accepted.

All in all, on some level, the Fixer-Upper Seductive Withholder (of either type) does not feel the love object is worthy of them. However, at the same time, they can feel that they are unworthy to their love object (i.e. “if he loved me he would change”). I usually ask them to regularly visualize being with someone they would consider more worthy. For some, this is hard to even visualize. It feels much safer for them to attract partners who don’t threaten them and whom they can feel in some way superior. They, then, however, can succumb to resentments; wishing their

partner was more worthy or hoping to improve them somehow.

Why does a Seductive Withholder’s partner keep taking them back?

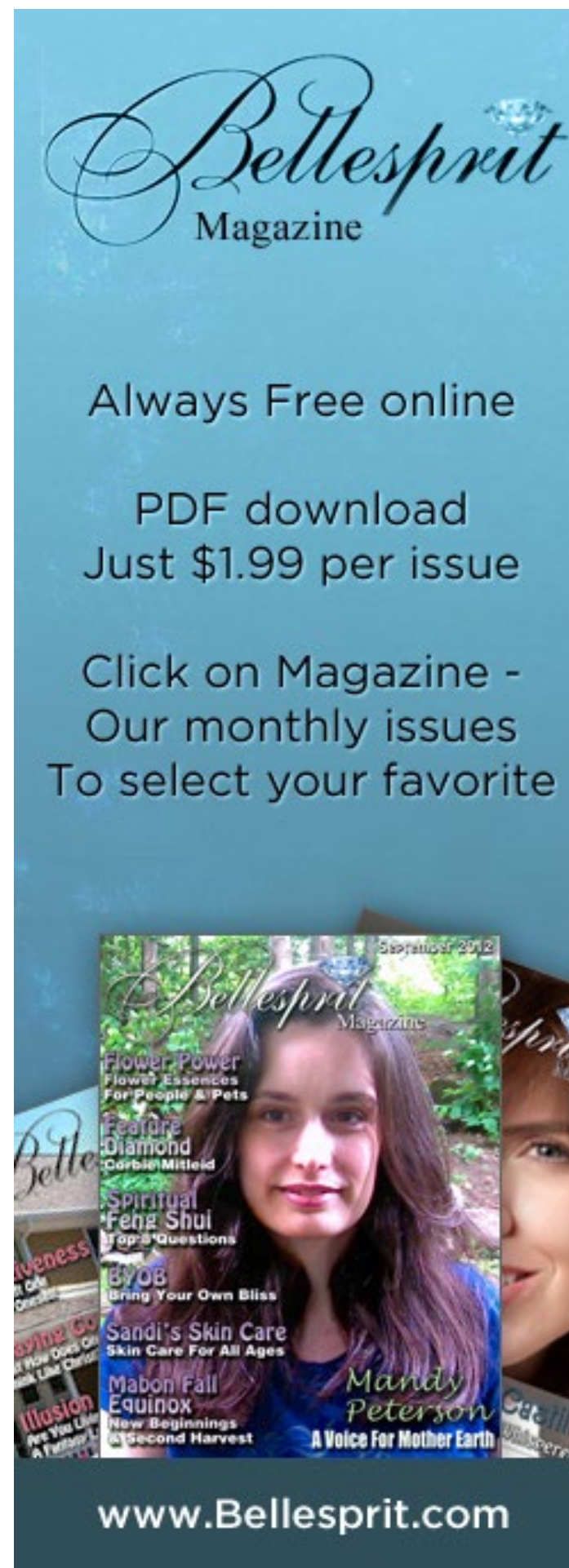
This is an important question, because the danger is the Seductive Withholder who is in an abusive relationship misinterprets being taken back as a sign of true love or that the relationship will improve. I have heard women say “He must really love me to take me back all the time.”

In the case where a Seductive Withholder is with another who is a narcissist or a Casanova, such a narcissist may accept the comings and goings of their on-again-off-again partner because they are not overly invested and thus do not feel too much distress over the behavior. For example, while a Fixer-Upper may be obsessed with a Casanova, they may forget that a Casanova may have a string of backup options to keep them occupied and is used to this type of behavior from his many of his on-again-off-again liaisons.

Other types of partners may get a similar high off the comings and goings. If the pattern has occurred for a while, the Seductive Withholder’s break ups might not be taken seriously anymore and the partner may become smug or callous about it or simply waits for them to come back around again.

Those who are unfaithful may use the on-and-off behavior as an excuse to carry out infidelities without feeling guilty. Some even know how to trigger the seductive withholder in order to set them into “flee” mode for this purpose.

In the case that a Seductive Withholder (a form of Ambivalent Love Addict) is dating another Ambivalent Love Addict, sometimes, the only relationship that will work or last for either is to be with someone who is as frightened of intimacy as they are. I often tell those who are blaming themselves because their ambivalent partner is expressing frustration at being dumped all the time, to try not breaking up for a while and see if their love interest doesn’t on his own begin to distance himself, call less, etc. Sure enough, this is usually what will happen. Another danger is that once the Seductive Withholder catches on to the fact that the only way to keep another Ambivalent’s



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LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

interest is to break up repeatedly, this can become another reason for them to initiate break ups (out of a fear of being rejected if the relationship goes stale). This behavior is one of the most damaging to the self-esteem that I have ever witnessed within clients. This is because it often subjects this kind of Seductive Withholder to even more mistreatment as a way to get their love object back. The love object, if abusive, takes their return as a sign they will tolerate more and more abuse, infidelity or callousness. Many who return may be treated casually, called "crazy," "paranoid" or "untrustworthy" (for suspecting affairs or deceptions), or may be made out to be the unstable partner. It is part truth, because the Seductive Withholder's own instability keeps them going back to an unstable, unfaithful or abusive partner.

Any Other Advice?

For those Seductive Withholder's who are not narcissistic, many who I read need to work on grounding issues and making decisions, rather than being led by their emotions, empathy or whatever they feel needs to happen or is going on with their partner. They tend to be very scattered types who avoid/are too proud to ask for what they want or to set boundaries. Sometimes because they break up so much, they feel they have no right to ask for anything. Some can only express their feelings to a partner while in the process of breaking up. I think the real fear is of rejection if they state their feelings or put forward a boundary that isn't agreed upon.

Healing past traumas may help as well, since some of these on-again-off-again types may have repeated the same pattern in childhood (pulling away from a parent if feeling rejected or abused but then returning affection again). Others may have a history of being in an abusive relationship which took time to get strength to fully leave. Sometimes a betrayal may set the pattern off or a Seductive Withholder may have suffered a harsh divorce where they were slandered or taken for almost everything they had. Relationships become perceived as a source of fire where one is frightened to get burned or too close to the flame. So, to keep safe, there is adapted a touch-and-go type of maneuvering; fearing to get too close, but deeply wanting intimacy and love.

In an abusive situation, I always suggest not taking

the partner back unless the partner first agrees to go to counseling or to change their behavior. Many are afraid to ask this however, or are told "no." Missing their partner and in seducer mode, they can feel they must resign and return to an abusive relationship. They accept the abuse while hoping for the miracle that their partner will change. However, it needs to be understood, that if a person is abusive and refuses to change or get help, it is likely they do not even see a need for change. If narcissistic, they may prefer that their partner change to accommodate and accept their abusive natures.

Lastly, some Seductive Withholders may start to doubt they can have a normal relationship or be in one without the temptation to withdraw. The danger arises that the Seductive Withholder can become addicted to the drama of the ups and downs, or to the sense of competition (to see if they can win love or approval from someone they perceive as unloving, distant or cruel) etc. This can make it difficult to return to feeling comfortable within a normal uncomplicated relationship. So, practicing being able to visualize being in a relationship that is loving and healthy, while not running away, may help to some degree by giving the Seductive Withholder another way to see themselves in a relationship..

For my other Bellesprit articles on Love Addiction, see:

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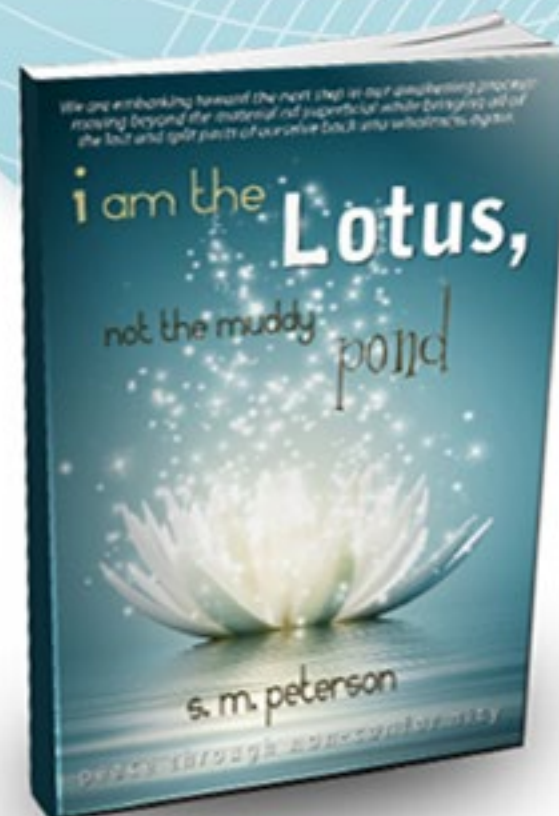
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