

INFIDELITY

Few things feel as painful as your partner betraying you.

So why do people cheat?

Human survival is contingent upon connecting – this is why our infants can't make it on their own, unlike other species. As such, when a disconnect happens, there's a void that can *only* be satisfied by reconnecting – either with the original party, or someone else. That said, often what starts off as an *innocent* connection with someone other than our partner, can easily gain momentum and pull us into something we *never* expected.

Once an affair starts, what exactly gives it that power which makes one risk *everything*, lie to the most *important* person in their life, not to mention hurt them more *severely* than their worst enemy ever could?

1. Contrary to popular belief – that affairs are about better sex – more often than not they tend to be about someone making us feel special, when we'd stopped feeling that way at home. It is said, "If you wanna kill a marriage outright, have an affair; if you wanna *slowly* bludgeon it to death, start ignoring your partner's needs!" – *both* of which yield the same end result.
2. We *all* enter a relationship with a set of expectations – why else would we commit to it? It goes to reason then, when two different sets of expectations clash, or expectations clash with reality, disappointment occurs; at that point, sadly, many people try to seek out someone with similar expectations.
3. When people become disillusioned with their partner, they start to put a negative spin on everything, keeping track of *all* that's wrong, ignoring what's right. They'll even go as far as to attach major weight to minor events, by imposing inaccurate meanings – possibly based on triggers from past relationships. And once *that* happens, they start to feel justified looking for love elsewhere, even though *they're* the ones who buried the relationship in a negative vicious cycle.
4. How one views the essentials necessary for maintaining a healthy and happy relationship, can make *all* the difference to its survival. For example, "I choose not to flirt on the Internet, because it could be damaging to my relationship." is an active choice, freely made, versus "I hate being stuck in a relationship that deprives me of

doing what I want.” It’s all about how you look at the prerequisites – burdens bury you, choices free you!

So how exactly can people recover from an affair?

Despite their *brutal* similarities, no two affairs are alike. As such, no two post-affair journeys can be identical. From the nature of the betrayal, to whether or not the unfaithful party came clean on their own, to the degree of commitment from both parties to try again, every relationship has a different outlook, beyond the obvious devastation. But the following steps are crucial to all:

1. Taking Responsibility: First and foremost, the unfaithful party needs to acknowledge the magnitude of what they’ve done, and validate all the ways it’s affected and *will* affect both the relationship as well as the injured party – not knowing their place in the world, self-esteem issues, inability to trust again, and so on.
2. Offering an Explanation: The unfaithful party needs to explain *why* it happened, without putting any blame on the injured party. No matter *how* embarrassing a confession of their shortcomings feels, they owe it to their partner to help them understand what went wrong. At this point, all triggers, financial repercussions, and addictions must be revealed – particularly sex addictions. And just because something has been addressed unsatisfactorily, doesn’t mean it needn’t be addressed again. That said, if the injured party simply *can’t* let go, they need to consult a professional, to decide if their response is acceptable or over the top, and whether or not they can *ever* get past it. In general, therapy is a great idea – if not an indispensable one!
3. Devising an Action Plan: The next stage is an *action* stage. From quitting tempting precursors – Internet, booze, pornography, being in close proximity with the other party – to seeking therapy, to starting a journey for self-betterment, the unfaithful party *needs* to commit to ways that’ll help them avoid a future affair; and the injured party *needs* to help them change the context that made their marriage vulnerable in the first place.
4. Rebuilding Trust: The *only* way trust can be rebuilt is over time, with consistent proof. That means, the unfaithful party *must* stick to the promised action plan, offer transparency, etc. – irritating as interrogations can be, since they’ve given their partner reason to doubt them, they need to come clean when they have nothing to hide, *sans* the drama. How else can someone trust them again? As for the injured party, they need to realize that trust comes in various forms; such as, knowing that your partner has your back, they’ll prioritize you and take your side, and they’ll support you

through your endeavors – none of which is likely to happen if their interest is elsewhere.

5. Creating Accountability: The unfaithful party must agree to accountability and vigilance. The injured party should be able to reach them easily, within reason. In exchange, the injured party *must* commit *wholeheartedly* to rebuilding trust, when their partner commits to the above steps. Asking a question for clarification is one thing, constant doubting and berating for the sake of punishment, quite another.

If you're feeling doubtful or discouraged because of all the hard work that must be done, I wanna reassure you that when *both* parties are *seriously* committed to salvaging a relationship, it *can* be done, and *may* in fact lead the couple to a better place than ever before – the wake-up call makes them realize how precious their relationship is, so they start to *actively* work at it, perhaps for the very *first* time in their lives! It's all about giving the relationship you *have* an honest shot, versus finding a new one – a new partner has higher odds of cheating than an older partner who's already witnessed how it could tear apart a perfectly decent life. But you *must* work together, focusing on what's best for the *relationship* versus either party – isn't it time you became a team again?

As a specialized therapist, I can help you do that, along with building a deeper connection, and a more robust relationship! My job is not to judge; it's to help you heal and build a better future, since we can't change the past – but we can certainly learn from it!