

EmployeeCare News

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Keeping you informed from EmployeeCare, your employee assistance program, a benefit extended by your organization to all employees and their household members.



Tina Grismer

After An Affair: Steps Toward Recovery

By Tina Grismer, LPPC, Counselor

Learning your partner has been unfaithful is almost always an intensely painful experience. For some, learning about an affair comes out of nowhere and is a complete shock to the betrayed partner. For others, the knowledge may come after noticing changes in their partner's behavior,

catching them in lies or noticing unexplained increases in spending and time away from home.

Some people believe if they are cheated on they would end the relationship. But when faced with the reality, they may encounter ambivalence, especially if the relationship has been loving and happy, is long-termed and/or there are children. Financial, cultural or spiritual/religious reasons can also contribute to saving and rebuilding the relationship.

Preparing for the Healing Process

The first step is acknowledging and being honest about the infidelity. According to many experts affairs can take many forms but the common elements are secrecy, deception, emotional intimacy and sexual chemistry between two people. The unfaithful partner needs to assume responsibility for the betrayal without blaming it on problems in the relationship.

The betraying partner needs to be truthful about what they have done and validate the betrayed party's perceptions and wide range of feelings in response to the infidelity. It is important for the wayward partner to be patient, understanding and honest even though their first instinct may be defensiveness. Partners who have been betrayed need to see there is genuine remorse for the infidelity and sincere empathy for the pain they have caused. Pressing for and reviewing information can be a normal response for the person betrayed.



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The next critical step is for the unfaithful partner to make a commitment to never see or talk with the other party again and make extraordinary efforts to assure this does not happen. There may be a need to change all phone and pager numbers as well as email addresses so any attempts by the lover for contact will be blocked.

The betraying partner may experience some type of withdrawal/grief reaction to ending the affair. If contact with the lover does not stop right away, a time limit should be set for ending the relationship by the betrayed partner. Of course, no rebuilding can begin without clear boundaries of ending all contact with the lover. It is important for each to understand how their relationship became vulnerable to infidelity and to design a plan to prevent future affairs.

Recovery and Rebuilding

It is important to remember any healing process is gradual and the pace of healing depends on the severity of the wound. Overcoming the wounds of infidelity requires that both parties take a “leap of faith” based on a shared love and renewed commitment to improve the relationship.

The book *Surviving an Affair* by psychologists Dr. Willard Harley, Jr. and Dr. Jennifer Harley Chalmers offers several practical guidelines and tools for couples who choose to salvage their relationship.

The Rule of Protection: “Avoid being the cause of your partner’s unhappiness”

- Avoid angry outbursts, disrespectful judgments and selfish demands.
- Break destructive patterns and learn how to engage in “fair fighting”.
- Never do anything without an enthusiastic agreement between you and your partner which serves as a reminder that everything one partner does impacts the other.
- Learn to engage in emotionally safe negotiations and cooperative problem solving.

The Rule of Care: “Meet your partner’s most important emotional needs”

- Spend time rediscovering your partner’s most important needs.
- Become an expert at meeting your partner’s emotional needs in a way that is enjoyable and satisfying for both of you.
- Agree to focus on each partner’s five top emotional needs.

The Rule of Time: “Take time to give your partner your undivided attention”

- Schedule time to be alone together.
- Create activities that will meet emotional needs for affection, sexual fulfillment, conversation and recreational companionship that satisfy both partners.

- Schedule in advance of each week a minimum amount of time of undivided attention for the relationship which requires the couple to identify and overcome typical obstacles to spending time together.

The Rule of Honesty: “Be totally open and honest with your partner”

- Reveal both positive and negative reactions to your life events.
- Share personal history.
- Share information about your day with emphasis on what may impact your partner.
- Do not present false impressions about your thoughts, feelings, habits, likes, dislikes, daily activities or future plans and do not omit personal information.
- Create an environment that values honesty so it is safe to be honest.

- Avoid angry outbursts, disrespect and demands when being honest.
- Be persistently honest if a situation that is bothersome does not improve.
- Agree to separate if there is a threat of escalation towards verbal or physical abuse when expressing honest feelings. Resume the conversation when protection is guaranteed.

The material in this article is a compilation of information from *Surviving An Affair* as well as the author’s clinical experiences in working with couples who have experienced infidelity.

Contact EmployeeCare to meet with a counselor to discuss similar or other types of relationship problems.

The Causes of Infidelity

By Natalie Behimer, Counselor Intern

Trust is important in a relationship. Regardless of how you feel about your current or future relationships, this article may be helpful to avoid common mistakes.

There are many reasons that lead a person to initiate an affair. It is important to note that healthy and stalled relationships can be at risk for infidelity.

Cheating erodes the trust of a relationship. Not only will it injure the trust between partners; it can break down confidence in our own ability to return to faithful behavior.

Genetics

A 2008 Swedish study showed men more likely to stray because they may have a variation of a gene that controls the release of a hormone vasopressin. Vasopressin encourages bonding and protective feelings in men.

Likelihood of Getting Caught

If a person is in situations that lend themselves to infidelity, the likelihood of acting on this increases; especially if the odds of being caught are slim. People need to avoid the negative situations and reduce the likelihood of infidelity.

Need to Improve One’s Self

Each relationship needs continual positive growth to provide a sense of excitement for both partners. It is important to continually challenge one another. It is helpful to try new things and explore new experiences together.

Feelings About One’s Self

If a person feels superior to their partner they may have a sense of entitlement. This can lead a partner to feel they deserve someone “better”. On the other hand, feeling undeserving may be a self fulfilling prophecy. They create the idea they will let their partner down and start putting themselves in risky situations.

The Challenge

“Rules are meant to be broken”. For many people the thrill of cheating and trying not being caught can be the motivation behind an affair. They increase the risk to challenge themselves in ways they feel they are not being challenged in their relationship.

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Jealousy

This feeling often arises with the shift of our significant other's attention. For example, a wife's loving attention may be divided between her husband and her children, job or new friends. The partner can see this as a way to get even.

Boredom and Aging

Ever heard someone say a person cheated because they were going through a mid-life crisis? In reality the person has become bored with their life and started looking for external stimuli to excite them.

Extrication

Unfortunately sometimes a person chooses to remove themselves from an unhappy relationship by cheating.

The above are some of the most common reasons for infidelity. If they or others exist in your life, please call EmployeeCare to explore your particular situation.



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2. Select: Miami Valley Hospital
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6. Select: EmployeeCare

EmployeeCare

Located: 409 E. Monument St.
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We have satellite offices in Eaton, Springboro, Troy, Greenville and on the Good Samaritan Hospital campus

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