

Affair Forgiveness Letter

For the unfaithful spouse to complete.

Recommended reading: The Five Languages of Apology by Chapman and Thomas prior to going through this exercise.

To prepare:

1. Ask yourself, "Is my spouse a generalist or a detailed person?" If your spouse is a detailed individual, then you will need to be detailed when you identify your behaviors and activities that you are asking to forgive. To do otherwise will sound like you are discounting what you did wrong and there won't be much relief for either of you
2. Second, list all the behaviors and activities for which you want forgiveness. Take a couple of days for this part of the exercise. Remember, the more you bring out into the open, the less influence this history is going to have on you in the future. As you construct this list, it is not uncommon for you to recall some activity that your spouse is unaware of, but for which you desire forgiveness. If that happens to you, tell your spouse about the experience prior to including it in the affair letter. It is not fair to the spouse to hear the behavior for the first time and then immediately be asked to forgive.
3. After you think your list is complete, rank the items from "least offensive" to "most offensive." Obviously, you want to facilitate forgiveness, so put the "least offensive" items first in the affair forgiveness letter.

Below are some common items found in most every affair. This will help you get started, but please don't restrict yourself to just these behaviors. Make sure your content fits your experience.

- Listening to and fantasizing about another individual
- Cultivating a platonic friendship with the partner
- Extending the friendship time you can have with the partner
- Lying to cover the time spent with the partner
- Robbing the marriage of emotional energy, e.g., through loss of time together, saving up conversational topics for the partner, emotionally withdrawing when physically present with the spouse, and refusing to be sexual with the spouse
- Spending money on the partner
- Developing special codes, songs, rituals with the partner
- Taking the partner to places the marriage had experienced or that the spouse wanted to visit
- Criticizing the spouse and the marriage
- Contaminating the "sacred" (having sex with a partner in "our" car, bed, at our special places, and/or in our special ways)
- Being sexual with the partner (this includes all sensual/erotic behavior, not just intercourse)
- Making plans with the partner about the future
- Embarrassment the affair has caused the spouse with friends and family
- Injuries to the children that have occurred as a result of the affair

You might have other items that need to be included in your list.

In the blanks below, you (the infidel) should write a second affair forgiveness letter. The letter will be in precisely the same fashion as you wrote the previous letter: your contributions, three feeling words, and a request for forgiveness. This second letter is unique in its point of view; it's from the viewpoint of the one who strayed.

Here's a sample of the content:

"I was wrong when I listened to and began to fantasize about the partner. I know this makes you feel sad, abandoned, and unwanted. Will you forgive me?"

When you're ready and before the end of the week, read the letter to your spouse in the same way you read your "Contribution Forgiveness Letter." Your spouse has the same three response choices, and the same reread pattern applies.

When finished, hand it to the spouse as you say:

"With this letter I hand you all my secrets and pray/hope that one day your forgiveness will be so complete that neither of us will remain wounded for life."

CAUTION: Most spouses cannot forgive all the details of the affair this quickly in the recovery process. So expect some "no" and "not now" responses. It will be up to your spouse, though, to tell you when he/she is able to forgive you after the next reread. Do not ask for forgiveness again.

Now complete the letter, using the form on the next two pages.

Your Affair Forgiveness Letter:

1. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

2. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

3. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

4. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

5. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

6. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

7. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

8. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

9. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

10. I was wrong when I _____. I know this must have made you feel _____, _____, and _____. Will you forgive me?

Follow-Up Exercises for the Spouse after the Affair Forgiveness Letter Is Read

After the infidel has read his/her letter, write out your feelings to the following questions: How do I feel having gone through this exercise?

What other areas of confession would I have liked to have heard from my spouse?

What feeling words (identified in my spouse's letter) do I need to clarify for him/her to have a more accurate understanding of how this behavior affected me?

<i>Area</i>	<i>Why</i>
1. <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2. <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
3. <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

<i>Item</i>	<i>My Response</i>
1. <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2. <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
3. <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Forgiveness

What will have to happen before I feel I can forgive the items I responded to with a "no" or "not yet"?

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Need</i>
1.	<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2.	<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
3.	<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Forgiveness