



STEP 2 THE AFFAIR STORY

"I believe that everything happens for a reason. People change so that you can learn to let go, things go wrong so that you appreciate them when they're right, you believe lies so you eventually learn to trust no one but yourself, and sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together." – Marilyn Monroe

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The Affair Story Overview

Here we want the Infidel to disclose the affair to the spouse, at the level of detail the spouse needs (some people need all the details, and some only need the basics). In order to create a safe environment for the story to be shared, we teach the couple techniques in communication & conflict resolution.

Strategies such as “timed monologues”, or a written affair disclosure letter are used, to assist in the Infidel to explain what they did, so the couple can move forward. The betrayed spouse will feel that the “intrusive thoughts” over the details of the affair reduce after disclosure.

This can be a highly stressful time for the infidel, who feels they will hurt their spouse more with the details of the affair, however not knowing the details is more damaging to the relationship. ALWAYS, the infidel reports great person relief from the total disclosure.

It is a heavy weight for a person to live under such a lie. Remember that the unfaithful spouse is a person too! They often did not mean to be in the situation they are in right now. I am not asking for you to have pity on them, but your judgment and criticism will have them withdraw from treatment, and perhaps back to the lover!

After the betrayed spouse understands the affair story, the infidel writes the apology letter. This is not asking for forgiveness from the betrayed spouse.

We also help the couple look at their relationship environment – and continue to introduce new healthy rituals to facilitate communication and friendship, leading to intimacy.

Understanding what happened provides a safe foundation on which you can begin to rebuild the relationship.

To move forward, couples need to come to an understanding of their history. Regardless of the *type of affair*, the story of what has happened needs to make sense to both husband and wife. Peggy Vaughan in her e-book hypothesized: “A couple is more likely to stay married after the affair when they thoroughly discuss the whole situation.”



In Peggy's Survey of 1083 Betrayed Spouses:

- 55% of those who discussed the situation very little were still married (living together)
- 78% of those who discussed the situation a good bit were still married (and living together)
- 86% of those who discussed the situation a lot were still married (and living together)

She concluded that the amount the affair was discussed with the partner was significantly associated with present marital status.

A second hypothesis stated: *"a couple is more likely to stay married when the spouse answers their questions."*

- 59% of those refused to answer questions were still married (and living together)
- 81% of those whose partner answered some of their questions were still married (and living together)
- 86% of those whose partners answered all their questions were still married (and living together)

She concluded that the extent to which the partner answered questions was significantly associated with present marital status.

Research clearly supports the benefit of couples exploring what has happened. Understanding what occurred allows both parties to rally around solutions.



TELLING THE TRUTH - RESEARCH

THE BETRAYED partner's drive to hear about the inner life of the affair is more than just a desire to satisfy curiosity or uncover more lies. Knowing the true story behind a trauma is the only way the victim can stop obsessing and begin to heal.¹ Betrayed partners need to discuss what they had been feeling, what they suspected, and what they already know. Then they need to fill in all of the missing pieces.

Because affairs are secret, betrayed partners can't resolve their grief over their loss of innocence until they know *what really happened*. Unfaithful partners who lie about the details cause more harm than good because the only way to restore a betrayed partner's sanity is to be honest about what has, up to now, been concealed.

The burning question for betrayed partners is: "How do I know you won't betray me again?" They can answer this only by knowing what led to the infidelity and what kept it going. In the first stage of discovery, unfaithful partners either lied or were brutally honest, and betrayed partners were both fragile and attacking. But discussing the affair now that goodwill has been established will help put it to rest for both partners. The final story of the affair should be co-constructed by both partners to account for all of the secrets, unanswered questions, and contrasting interpretations and attributions.

Although involved partners might resist sharing the story of the affair, it's important to realize that anything that is good for the relationship will ultimately be good for them personally. Also, involved partners need to tell the story for their *own* recovery: to understand how and why they crossed the line into an affair. Letting the secrets out of the bag helps them detach from the affair partner and dissolve the romantic fantasy.



Telling the Truth Rebuilds Trust

To cleanse the lying that occurred during the affair and in the early stages of revelation, the involved partner needs to be totally honest. Only information offered freely can clear the air.

Fill in the Missing Pieces

Telling the story of the affair replaces a fictionalized account with the truth. It is totally shattering and disorienting to find out that intrigue and deceptiveness were going on while you were assuming everything was normal. That's why both partners need to get out their calendars, discuss the receipts, and review the cell phone calls. Things won't make sense to the betrayed partner until all the missing pieces are accounted for.

Telling Releases the Secret Ties That Bind

Forbidden fruit is exotic and exciting. As long as the affair is kept in a glass bubble and worshipped as a sacred happening, the romantic attachment to the affair partner is more apt to persist. Talking about the affair in some detail takes it out of that bubble and exposes it to the cool light of realistic scrutiny. It loses its magical power.

Keeping the relationship secret intensifies arousal and makes the partner appear more attractive and exciting than he or she would otherwise have been. Secret relationships are overvalued because thought suppression creates an irrational perspective.



Telling Increases Marital Intimacy

Keeping secrets erects barriers. Whenever you're trying not to spill the beans, you are inhibiting your own natural impulses with internal warnings: Be careful! Don't tell! Don't show! Instead of being free and authentic, you become artful, subtly crafting your verbal responses to influence your partner's impressions and reactions. It's hard to be truly close to someone when you're hiding something of significance from him or her.

If the involved spouse protects the identity of the lover or the nature of the relationship, then the betrayed spouse is the outsider in an extramarital triangle. Sharing the details is an act of positive demolition. The involved spouse dismantles the structure that kept the injured spouse outside in the cold and replaces deceit with hope.



WHAT DOES THE BETRAYED PARTNER WANT TO KNOW?

Betrayed partners usually ask the following things:

- Is this the first time that you were unfaithful? Was this time similar or different?
- How did you meet?
- Why did you feel the need to have an affair?
- Where did it happen?
- How did it happen?
- Did you feel guilty?
- How could it go on so long if you knew that it was wrong?
- Did you buy him/her gifts?
- Did you think about me at all?
- What does she / he know that I don't? *
- What does she / he give you that I don't? *
- Why is she/he more attractive than I am? *
- What did you like about yourself in the affair? Were you different?
- Did you have unprotected sex?
- Did you do this or that with him / her? *
- How much did you tell him / her about us?
- Did you talk about a future together?

Please note that comparison questions serve little or no benefit. They create intrusive thoughts and complicate the healing process. However, they pop up all the time. As a coach, try not to insist on them!



PREPARING FOR DISCLOSURE

ADVICE FOR THE UNFAITHFUL SPOUSE

Step two is the moment when the betraying partner has to tell the story of the affair.

The detail level should be exactly the level that the betrayed partner needs and accepts. Not less, not more. Understanding and knowing is necessary for forgiveness!

Too much detail creates additional problems with intrusive thoughts. The hurt spouse might want to know what happened, where it happened, how often it happened, if there are potential health risks, and when it began and ended, but questions comparing themselves to the affair partner serve little or no benefit. It is these comparison questions that ultimately create intrusive thoughts and complicate the healing process and getting through an affair.

ADVICE TO YOUR CLIENT:

VERBAL DISCLOSURE

- I find that carefully telling the story from beginning to end is the best way to relay the information. Far too often the story is told piecemeal, as the hurt spouse ask questions and the unfaithful spouse tries to answer. This leaves gaps in the timeline causing problems later.
- When you finish telling the story, please don't say..... "that's everything". You're far better off realizing that you've told everything you remember at that moment, but there's always the possibility that other memories will come to mind and/or your mate may not have heard everything and will later be devastated if more information comes to light.
- Tell them you're committed to honestly answering their questions and exploring not only what happened, but also why it happened.

LETTER WRITING DISCLOSURE

- You will need to put the story of the affair onto paper. The affair story should be written in as much detail as you feel there spouse can handle.



- You should tell your spouse that you are doing this task and will have it done within 24 to 72 hours.
- When complete, consider “the letter” as a first draft
- The letter is given to the betrayal spouse with respect, and without resentment or negative comment.
- The betrayed spouse will need time to process the letter and feel grieve the contents. The infidel should expect many questions to arise from this letter, and for a rewrite or edit of the letter.
- Monologues help greatly during this time, to express the feelings and pain arising from the submission, and for the couple to bond through “being there” during periods of great stress. **Trust is being rebuilt during these moments.**

The graph below is from “Torn Asunder”, where the benefits of disclosure v non-discloser are shown. What is important to note, is that if the affair story is not processed, the betrayed spouse is facing issues around unresolved anger, and may act out, often having retaliation affairs.

GENERAL

1. The non-affair spouse is in charge of both the timing and the amount of information flow.

2. If not disclosed, these secrets can be recalled by the infidel at will later on for personal enjoyment. However, once they are disclosed, the experiences appear to lose much of their attractiveness.

3. The most common justification for not providing full disclosure is if there is a history of violence or rage within or between the spouses. This concern usually surfaces when the wife has an affair and the marriage has a history of severe conflict and abuse.

4. The infidel needs forgiveness and the spouse can only forgive what he/she knows. You can't forgive what you don't know.

5. The faithful spouse always pays twice in this healing process: First, at disclosure of the affair. Second, when called on to forgive the specific details. It neither feels nor appears to be fair, but there is no other way for healing to take place.

YES AFFAIR DISCLOSED NO		
NO AFFAIR PROCESSED	YES	NO
	Resolution Protection from future affairs Beneficial changes in both mates	Distortion Distorted marital intimacy Ongoing disappointment with marriage
	Foreclosure No benefits of disclosure Unresolved individual anger	Stagnation High potential for future affairs



What if the client is unable to tell the Affair Story?

NOTE:

- This is most probably be your 2nd or 3rd session, and should be within a few days of the first session, at latest 1 week from 1st session.
- Individual sessions are usually required at this time for both people. Both people need specific advice on their next steps.

Sometimes the affair story has not always been told to the betray spouse. Quite often the betrayed spouse has found an email or seen a text message from a 3rd party. Seeing this is devastating enough.

This may even be the reason why the couple first presents for therapy. The betrayed threatens to leave and the infidel reacts by seeking counseling. Neither one truly knows what they are doing. Everybody is just reacting.

So as an infidelity recovery coach our first role is to assess the “affair type”. And unless it is an exit affair we are quite confident we can overcome the challenge.

By this time it is this second session. You will probably understand there is a little more to the story by the time you hit individual sessions.

Both people have personal pieces they would like to add onto the story in private. They would like to share with you some of their own personal goals for coaching.

For example, some women who have put on a massive amount of weight over the years may feel uncomfortable talking about weight issues in front of a husband, but would like to privately confide in its effect in her not wanting sex with her husband. I note this down, so when we get into the exercises in sex and intimacy, I am sensitive around her body image issues. I endure I look at their lifestyle and recreational activities, and factor this into my treatment plan.

But the main reason for an individual session with the infidel, is to help them disclose the truth.

Everybody has a problem with honesty that is sitting in front of you! So don't believe for one minute a couple that says we have the problems with our communication. We have had no problems without communication before the affair



Hmmm ...Another lie

But we are here to help so we stay positive and supportive.

As an infidelity recovery specialist, we only recommend full disclosure of the entire affair.

And here is the reason why.

In many cases by the time the affair is discovered they have been multiple short-term affairs. The couple typically presents for one affair. If you do all that fantastic coaching and help the couple Over come that one affair, it is playing Russian roulette to think they will not find out about only other a affairs. And when they do the betrayal and broken trust is beyond repair.

There are some personality types that cannot cope with highly stressful situations. Or people who you feel are at risk for domestic violence. In these situations you should outsource to a therapist intervention.

Client Story

An affair can turn the average person into an obsessed PI. So one of the greatest benefits for the betrayed spouse is that it stops the spouse from becoming a private investigator.

One of my clients, Chris, had a 15-month affair with a woman in Michigan.

He met her in a bar here in Las Vegas. He was out with mutual family friends after the Las Vegas family fun run day. The women went home with the children and the man stepped out for a drink. Chris found the woman not to be overly attractive but she was pleasant to talk to. She gave him the attention and compliments he had not heard from his wife in some time. (NOTE: The wife had found out that she had breast cancer, and was going through medical treatments, while also raising the 3 children – one child has special needs)

The affair between Chris and Laurie lasted 15 months. They had meet for sex on several occasions, and had daily phone calls, send letters to each other, including emails and texts.

Laurie had a husband called Mike. Mike found the emails that Chris and Laurie had been sending to each other. By this stage Chris and Laurie had caught up once and had a sexual affair. Mike was devastated. He flew to Las Vegas and presented the emails to Chris's wife



-Susan. Susan and Mike became obsessed with uncovering the details of the affair. With each new discovery, letter, email, and story, they would call and email each other. It was toxic and draining for both of them.

It was Chris that came into my office to ask me to save his marriage. One of my first questions Chris was, "Is this your first affair?"

At first Chris looked surprise that I had even such a question! You may have already guessed that this is a split self-affair. Chris is a dedicated family man who prides himself on his image and his role as the perfect father and husband. In his community, he is seen as a role model father and citizen.

As I held the silence he knew I was not going to move on until the question was answered.

"Well," he said, "I have had a few. And Suzanne forgave me for the first affair eight years ago. She does not know about the rest. She does not know about the person I have become."

"So what has all this secrecy done to your relationship with Suzanne?" I asked, knowing that their relationship would be an emotionally and sexually void wasteland.

"We are empty."

Chris did not want to try the affair story activity initially, as he was petrified of upsetting Suzanne even further. However, he had seen the benefit of writing the "Affair Letter" and both he and Suzanne emailing it to Laurie.

Chris took two days to write the Affair Story. He also wrote about the other affairs he had previously. Suzanne wanted the story written in as much detail as possible.

Once complete he handed them to Suzanne. Suzanne came back with questions, but was able to align the story with the information she had already gathered. She did not need to have further contact with Mike, as she could now see that this was not helping her own mental state. She could now focus on Personal Healing. Chris felt a sense of relief, "Now there is no secrecy and I do not have to live a double life. I do not have to lie. I know it sounds selfish but I do not have to worry about getting caught."



Summary: Why TELL the Story of the Affair?

- Letting the affair go is not the right thing to do! People who do not talk it out usually find themselves feeling angry about it years after the affair!
- The betrayed partner will not forget it, so he or she should deal with it. The sooner the better.
- The betraying partner should tell the story of the affair exactly the way the betrayed partner wants to hear it.
- This is the only way for the betrayed partner to heal.
- The story has to make sense to both partners, this is the only way for them to move forward!
- This is the solid foundation that they need in order to save the marriage.
- The simple truth is this: the more the partners discuss the affair, the more likely that they stay together. We have statistical data to prove it.
- Discussing the affair provides clarity even for those who has been unfaithful (increased self-understanding).
- The betraying partner should answer questions to their best ability, but they should never say “that's everything”. Obviously, that is never the case.
- Betraying partners should not lie about details, because that creates suspicion, again.
- All missing pieces should be accounted for (in detail, if necessary: phone calls, calendars etc.).
- All in all: you cannot be close to someone you lie to.
- The relationship cannot be rebuilt on a foundation of secrecy. The ongoing lies will compound overtime and effect the quality of the relationship in the future.



Positive Communication During Affair Recovery

Destructive outbursts and abusive name-calling are not beneficial and not healthy. As a coach, try to encourage the partners to listen to each other.

In your Coaching Treatment Plan, include coaching the couple on techniques that will help them communicate freely and openly.

If you have been trained in Prepare Enrich, get the couple to do the Active Listening exercise, in clinic. Then provide homework exercise's to practice. Check their process on this skill in your next couple session.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION & COMMUNICATION

Communication challenges come in a variety of flavors. Not communicating enough, emotional attachment to words, outcomes or feelings, or a myriad of issues regarding the interaction itself are all stem from poor communication. When a couple fails to stay emotionally connected to the relationship through the conflict of communication, they are off target before they even attempt a resolution. It is our connection with these other factors (emotion, volume, meaning, outcomes), that cause most communication to derail.

Communication is not simply talking, but knowing how to talk, how to start a conversation, and how to continue to communicate through conflict and love alike. The manner of a couple's communication, or lack thereof, can predict who has some troubling times ahead for them.

Problem vs. Pattern

It is important to distinguish between a problem and a pattern. Problems are an integral part of any relationship. How we cope with problems becomes a pattern for resolution. It takes concerted effort, at first, to disconnect feelings during a high level discussion. Getting to an enlightened state where one can sincerely agree to disagree without disdain and anger is the goal. When an "enlightened" couple



become keenly aware of their issue and detach their feelings from it, what's left is a clinical and clear path to resolution.

Signs Of Dysfunction

There are dozens of dysfunctional “dances” human beings fall into. Below are six common ones that most people at one time or another, have some experience with:

- The Harsh Startup
- The Four Horsemen
- Flooding
- Body Language
- Failed Repair Attempts
- Altered Memories

The Harsh Startup

Does one partner begin a conversation with a harsh tone? Something negative or accusatory? This sort of beginning dooms the conversation from the start. Studies have shown that the majority of our communication is non-verbal. The cues we get through body language and “tone” have more to do with understanding a person's point of view as opposed to the actual words being used.

Humans naturally go on the defensive when attacked, both physically and verbally. What if that same person approached you with a softer tone and a more positive attitude? How would that affect your communication?

-Compare, “*You forgot to take out the Trash. Again!*” to a far more gentler, “*Oh, the trash isn't emptied yet and I've got the kids to deal with. Do you mind? Thanks.*” One of these starts a fight, while the other one will probably end with, “*Sure, hon. But I've got to be off to work after that.*”

The Four Horsemen

Best-selling author, John Gottman refers to as the Four Horsemen of an apocalyptic relationship. Starting up conversations on a negative note can lead the relationship through a series of four types of negative interactions he calls, the Four Horsemen

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling

Criticism is different from complaining. We all have at least a little complaint about someone, but a criticism differs in how these complaints are expressed. A



complaint focuses on one specific behavior- you didn't take out the trash, you left the seat up on the toilet again, for example. A criticism attacks the character of the person. You are so selfish, you're just a lazy bum, you are inconsiderate, and so on. Criticism happens from time to time, but having too much of it can lead to the second horseman; contempt.

Contempt communicates disgust at the person it is intended for, not only in words but body language. Eye rolling or smirks, coupled with sarcasm, name-calling, and mockery are all body language signals of contempt. When contempt is in one's heart, it is impossible to resolve the conflict because the one with contempt is not open to the possibility of resolution. The contempt acts as a barrier to healing.

Contempt causes the other partner to become defensive. This puts the blame back on the criticizer but never solves the problem at hand and creates more escalation of discourse. Eventually one partner tunes the other out, which leads to our fourth horseman; Stonewalling. More common in men than in women, it is a way of avoiding the flood of negativity as a conflict escalates. The stonewaller ignores his partner, showing no signs of responding, which of course makes his partner all the angrier.

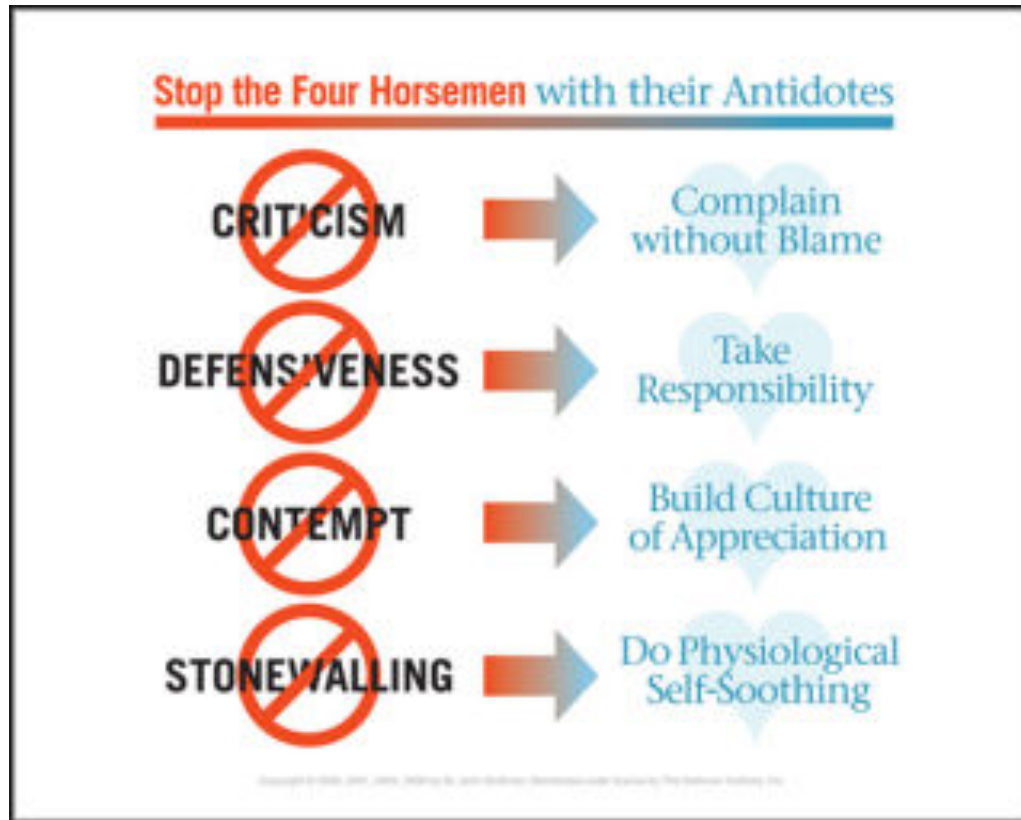
Stonewalling itself is criticized and the vicious cycle is complete. The man may go off by himself in an effort to not react or show his anger, but the wife perceives this as being ignored and rejecting her, which begins the cycle. The wife complains, the husband withdraws, and so the wife complains the more.

To avoid the Four Horsemen in the first place, you need a strong base of love and respect to overcome any negativity and learn how to properly deal with any conflict.

It doesn't matter if you are having your first fight or are filing divorce papers that week, when couples take the steps to understand and positively cope with their "virus-laden" patterns, a new program is ready to be installed.

In addition to the "Four Horsemen" there are other negative coping patterns and signals that you may recognize in yourself or your partner.

NOTE: APPENDIX has another explanation of the 4 Horseman for your clients understanding.



Flooding

Another negative pattern of coping is when one partner becomes flooded by so much negativity by the other they become shell-shocked. This causes them to emotionally disengage or stonewall to protect themselves.

Flooding is similar to being at school as a kid, when the bullies just keep at you day in and day out. Enough people yelling and teasing you to the point where you want to crawl under a rock for self-preservation. As adults it can still happen, only the bully isn't a kid on the playground, but your partner. Being under constant attack, what would you expect the other person to do? There's only so much negativity that one can take before they just say "Enough!" and go off somewhere to disconnect from the world.

If you see signs that you or your partner is being flooded, ease up for a while. Ease up a lot. You don't have to resolve all conflicts immediately. Sometimes, the proper thing to do is nothing. When a flood is occurring, the best strategy may be to let the rain subside before attempting to dry out the basement.

Body Language

There are physiological changes in the body that accompany flooding and other negative reactions, including increased blood pressure, heart rate and adrenaline



that makes it impossible to maintain any discussion in a civil manner. When a person is visibly upset, it becomes harder to pay attention to what the other is saying or figure a way to intellectually resolve the situation. The other person often reacts more out of reflex than logic. This reactive response is readily apparent in their body language.

Ever seen someone's face flush red with anger? Or too angry to properly form words? It's a physiological fact that emotions affect your body and metabolism. You might twitch when you feel nervous or feel that fluttering in your stomach. Depression leaves you feeling like lead and having a complete lack in energy.

Likewise when you're angry. Anger triggers the instinctive fight or flight mode your body is hard wired for. The pulse quickens, adrenaline floods the body, preparing you for a fight, and the thinking part of your brain is shut out of the conversation. The same holds true when a high-security computer system detects a virus; all connections are shut down as the anti-virus software starts hunting it down. You are in a state of war, ready to take on all attackers, even if it happens to be your spouse, and the signs of such readiness will display clearly in your body language for the alert person to see.

Failed Repair Attempts

When one partner tries to make amends through an apology, laughter or anything to ease the tension, but the other consistently refuses due to being flooded, the attempted repair becomes futile. The flooded partner has completely disengaged from the discussion. In fact, such repair attempts may be seen as just another part of the argument. That laugh may be seen as the partner being laughed at, or the joke possibly at their expense. Everything will be seen through storm-tinted glasses and the repair attempt simply makes things worse.

Altered Memories

The final sign is when a couple recalls their past with a negative view, see "signs" that should have warned them of the bad times to come, or even changed the way they remember things to correspond to their current negative view on the relationship. The excess negativity has led to a distorted view of their past. The "good times" are reduced or even forgotten showing no sign of success and a future with no roadmap to a better tomorrow.

NOTE: The MSTL helps the couple focus on the good times, so the relationship is not seen in a negative light.



Offering help with conflict resolution and communication mustn't seem like a lecture at this stage. **Remember that the focus is on helping the couple overcome Infidelity. Not a course on communication!**

As I said before, many couples feel they didn't have a problem with communication. The faithful partner will often say "we didn't have any problems in this area before the affair!"

However, now that there is something to fight about (the affair), the couple really needs some rules and boundaries before the tension escalates to a point where the couple cannot stand to be around each other any longer, and divorce will seem like the only option. Rather than offering the couple lengthy books to read, is better to give them simple exercises and concepts such as the Gottman's 4 horseman.

We have attached some information about this concept below, but I encourage you to further your reading in this area.

The couple needs rules and strategies to live by at this point. One of the goals with Infidelity recovery coaching is to give the couple a fresh new relationship by the end of the infidelity recovery program.

HOMEWORK EXERCISES

Having them do 20 minute monologues; understanding the four Horsemen; question and answer time about the affair, again for a set 20 minutes; and timeout sessions for when it gets too heated with the understanding that you will pick it up later!

Prepare Enrich certified students - if your couple has already completed the Prepare Enrich assessment you will already be able to confirm the communication score. It is most likely they have scored low on communication and conflict resolution. Feel free to print out this page of the report and do the exercise on active listening.

Most couples in long-term relationships have stopped actively listening to their significant other. Instead they assume what the other has to say, I need to shut them off at body language or with words. This will always leave the person feeling misunderstood and as a result will become emotionally detached.

To give you an example I will take you back to the case of Chris and Suzanne....



Suzanne never thought Chris and her had a problem with communication. They had been together for 17 years, married for 10 years, and have three young children.

"We are the perfect family! Everybody thinks Chris and I the most perfect couple ever. We are the role model couple. Even through his last affair I was angry for a while but then I didn't want to stay angry and I just got over it."

During the couple session, I observed the couple's body language. Obviously Chris felt guilty. And Suzanne was angry. However she rarely allowed him to express himself. If I insisted Chris expressed himself, she would sit back cross her legs and rolled her eyes. She tapped her foot and looked in the other direction I seem patiently waited for him to speak. Chris could not speak. When I asked if this was coming at home he said yes.

This is where it becomes more complex. In the individual in the view I asked Chris about his family upbringing. He's father was also unfaithful to his mother, and left his mother for the other woman. The family struggled for money and is Chris was the eldest he was the main support for his mother. We will talk about the effects from family of origin later.

One of the homework assignments for the monologues with Chris and Suzanne, was to have Chris talk about subjects he generally couldn't. His challenge was not to react to Suzanne's words or body language, but to talk to her as he would friend. And Suzanne's challenge was to listen without interrupting.

In the next session both people reported that for the first time in years they felt "heard" by the other.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONFLICTS EXERCISE

- Additional exercise that can help some clients

Instructions:

This exercise is a guide for processing and evaluating a fight or any discussion of an issue that did not go well. The goal is to increase understanding between the two of you without falling back into the disagreement. The belief here is that there is no absolute “reality” in a disagreement but rather there are two “subjective realities”. This form is designed to help you get at these two realities and to ease similar situations in the future.

Step One: Feelings

Each of you is to take turns describing what you were feeling during the disagreement. You may either chose from the list below or come up with your own description. Remember to keep your comments simple and keep to the format “I felt.....:”, avoiding statements such as, “I felt like you.....”

1. I felt defensive.
2. I felt listened to.
3. My feelings got hurt.
4. I felt understood.
5. I felt angry.
6. I felt sad.
7. I felt happy.
8. I felt misunderstood.
9. I felt criticized.
10. I didn't take my partner's complaints personally.
11. I felt like my partner didn't even like me.
12. I felt cared for.
13. I was worried.
14. I felt afraid.
15. I felt safe.
16. I was relaxed.
17. I felt I was right and my partner was wrong.
18. I felt that both of us were partly right.
19. I felt out of control.
20. I felt in control.
21. I felt righteously indignant.



22. I felt we were both morally justified in our views.
23. I felt unfairly picked on.
24. I felt appreciated.
25. I felt unappreciated.
26. I felt unattractive.
27. I felt attractive.
28. I was morally outraged.
29. I felt taken for granted.
30. I didn't feel taken for granted.
31. I felt like leaving.
32. I felt like staying and talking this through.
33. I was overwhelmed with emotion.
34. I felt calm.
35. I felt powerful.
36. I felt powerless.
37. I felt I had no influence.
38. I felt I could be persuasive.
39. I felt like my opinions didn't even matter.
40. There was a lot of give and take.
41. I had no feelings at all.
42. I had no idea what I was feeling.
43. I felt lonely.
44. I felt alienated.

Other feelings?

Step Two: Share your subjective realities

Summarize your own reality about the disagreement. What was the reality for you?

Step Three: Find something in his/her story which you can understand

Now, try and see how your partner's subjective reality might make sense, given your partner's perspective. Tell your partner about one piece of his/her reality which makes sense to you.

Step Four: Are you Flooded?

Check and see if either of you is flooded. If so, take a break and self-soothe before continuing.



Step Five: Admitting your own role

It is essential that each of you take some responsibility for what happened. See if anything from the list below applies to your situation.

1. I have been very stressed and irritable lately.
2. I have not expressed much appreciation toward my spouse lately.
3. I have taken my spouse for granted.
4. I have been overly sensitive lately.
5. I have been overly critical lately.
6. I have not shared very much of my inner world.
7. I have not been emotionally available.
8. I have been turning away from my partner.
9. I have been getting easily upset.
10. I have been depressed lately.
11. I would say that I have a chip on my shoulder lately.
12. I have not been very affectionate.
13. I have not made time for good things between us.
14. I have not been a very good listener.
15. I have not asked for what I need.
16. I have been feeling a bit like a martyr.
17. I have needed to be alone.
18. I have not wanted to take care of anybody.

Add your own.

Overall, my contribution to this fight was:

Step Six: Making it better in the future

1. What is one thing your spouse could do differently next time?
2. What is one thing you could do differently next time?



OTHER COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Inhibit, inhibit, inhibit

Tell your clients to always think about the intent when they speak. Is it only about venting the frustration, or is it about trying to understand the other? The watchword is this: **inhibit** nasty outbursts.

Remind your clients that their words are weapons and they are lethal.

Couples in distress also often engage in tit-for-tat negative cycles. Those negative cycles should be inhibited, too. Also, teach your clients to not to rehash previous discussions, and to inhibit analyzing and mind reading. They suck at it, and that is exactly the reason why they are in your office!

Ping-pong and the power of listening

Teach your clients to react to what the other says (i.e. going back and forth in a conversation). Taking turns and letting the other speak is important. No one should behave like God in a relationship who has the right to pronouncing a “revelation”. Therefore, tell your clients that they should learn to listen, to react, etc. (communication is a **four-way street**: message sent, acknowledged, reaction sent, acknowledged) Talk about reflecting, validating and empathizing in a discussion. Talk about the importance of support in a relationship.

“I” messages

Teach your clients to talk about their feelings instead of labeling the other (or the actions of the other). Teach them to express their own feelings instead of analyzing and attempting to read the mind of the partner.



CHECK POINT

By this point you have done the following before proceeding to the apology:

Couple/Client has:

- ✓ Disclosed the affair (did the infidel complete the letters to the lover/s)
- ✓ Story of affair letter completed
- ✓ Started on some relationship building exercises
- ✓ A same-sex friend who is in favor of the relationship and is willing to listen
- ✓ Rituals for love
- ✓ Learning to communicate without any of the 4 horsemen entering the conversation or argument. If a horseman gallops in - STOP or have a timeout.

You have:

- ✓ Determined Affair Type
- ✓ Couple Treatment Plan complete
- ✓ Introduced concepts of
 - Quality Time
 - Monologues
 - Transparency
 - Active listening
 - The 4 Horsemen

You can now move the couple forward to the exercise of the “apology”.



The Apology

Depending on the Type of Affair, you can offer your client two options:

1. Verbal Apology
2. The 6 Steps to a Heart Felt Apology

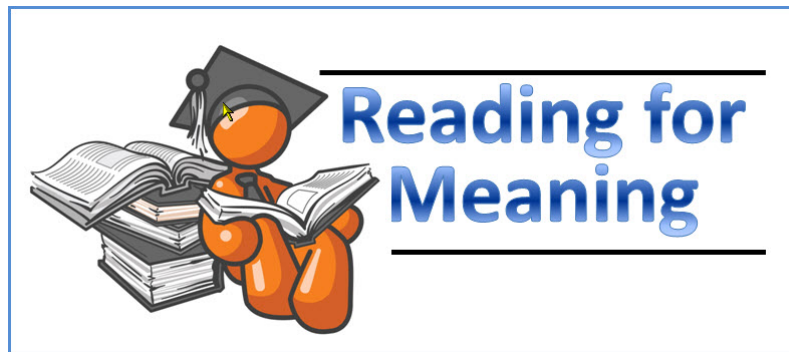
Six Steps to Creating a Heartfelt Apology

The “Apology” is simply that...an apology. We are not asking the betrayed partner for forgiveness at this stage and in fact we discourage it. Often, the betrayed partner will say the infidel has not apologized as yet for what they have done. So a formal apology is required.

The apology is better accepted at this stage, after a week or two of communication exercises and monologues, so the couple has a chance to build empathy and listening skills.

The Infidelity Recovery Institute has created [“6 Steps to a Heart Felt Apology”](#). **You can use and adapt these steps as long as The Infidelity Recovery Institute is given credit in your references.**

To explain the 6 Step, you can read the following pages from the clients view point. Excerpt from the Infidelity Recovery Institute *Online Home Study Course for Couples*.



In order to make the next step in healing your relationship, the cheater must apologize to the injured partner. This apology is much more than a simple, “I’m sorry for what I’ve done,” although that sentiment is certainly part of it.

This apology needs to be an unequivocal statement that communicates to the injured partner a real understanding of the pain the cheater has caused and a legitimate and heartfelt promise never to engage in the same behavior again. The apology might also include, as an optional bonus, an explanation of what or how things have changed and are changing in the cheater’s personal world, perceptions, understandings, and experiences that contribute to the cheater’s recommitment to faithfulness.

In this apology, the cheater should explain that they understand they are solely responsible for the affair, and explain in detail, setting the scene into context, how they have caused their partner pain. They should apologize for the pain they have caused and assure the partner that they intend to do everything in their power, giving details whenever possible, to make this relationship strong and stable again.

Above all, this apology must be genuine. If you try and apologize in order to move the healing process forward more quickly, your partner will sense this and you will simply do further damage to the relationship. This means that you need to wait to apologize until you really feel the apology in your heart. You will know when it is time.

If you have already apologized for your actions, you need to do it again. And again; and again; until your partner can hear it. Even when you do it “perfectly,” it almost always takes a few repetitions because the injured person wants to hear the authenticity again or wants to make sure of some specific point you might have made earlier. This doesn’t mean you should rain down apologies every time you see them. It means you should take every available opportunity to let your partner know how badly you feel for what you did.



In my experience, the injured person is most likely to hear the apology when the cheater begins by describing the context and process of pain and suffering that the cheater perpetrated against the injured person. We'll go over this in more detail shortly.

Even if your partner can never completely forgive you for what you did, making a heart-felt apology and asking for forgiveness is an important step in helping both of you accept what you have done and move forward with the relationship. It shows them, in a tangible way, that you are taking responsibility for your actions and that you understand what you have done. We will look at what acceptance means in more detail in Step 6. For now, suffice it to say that it is time you tell your partner how sorry you are for what you've done.

To assist you in this process, I developed a 6-step program for generating a meaningful apology. Remember that this model is built to help you express what you already feel in your heart. It is not meant as a template to help you get away from dealing with the pain you have caused.

As an example of how this system works, we will follow the process as Susan and Bilal experienced it.

Heartfelt Apology Step 1

The first step in making an apology is for the cheater to understand as fully and completely as possible all the pain they inflicted on their partner. This means coming to terms with the pain they caused them both directly and indirectly, as well as the pain they caused by what they did and the pain they caused by what they failed to do.

One way that the cheater can clarify this is by following the "Living in Another's Shoes" visualization, applying it to the moment when they first told their partner about the affair. Imagine how your partner must have felt in that moment. It's time to feel how they felt, see what they saw, hear what they heard, and accept that you caused them this pain.

You won't be able to make a meaningful and heartfelt apology until you are able to completely understand the pain you caused your partner. This step is going to hurt. You will have to face things that you might have been trying to keep at bay for a long time.

Nonetheless, it is necessary if you really want to heal your relationship.

Let's listen to how Susan approached Step 1.



"I had told Bilal I was sorry so many times without really thinking about what I was saying. I told him I was sorry right after I told him about the affair, and I told him I was sorry every time it was even mentioned.

"These apologies were meaningless until I was able to truly see the situation from Bilal's perspective. For a long time, I thought I did understand his perspective, but I didn't. I was only thinking about how I would feel if the situation was reversed. It wasn't until I really got inside his eyes that I could see what it must be like for him.

"When I did the visualization exercise the first time, I thought about an argument Bilal and I had about my being home late one night. At one point during the argument he said, 'How can I trust what you are telling me after what has happened?' I got really angry at him for that. I thought he was being unfair because I was trying so hard to do everything right.

"The visualization allowed me to see that the question wasn't some kind of indirect accusation. He wasn't just trying to hurt me by saying it. He really wondered how he could trust me after what I had done. I would have felt the same way had the tables been turned.

"Seeing this allowed me to start seeing other things from Bilal's perspective. I realized that all the times I said, 'I'm sorry,' must have sounded so hollow. Saying that was too little too late.

"Over time I tried to understand more and more how Bilal felt using the visualization exercise. This process was anything but easy. When the visualizations were really successful it was like I could actually feel his pain. But I also had to deal with the fact that it was me that caused him this pain. At times that was almost too much to bear.

"But the reward in this was that it allowed me to understand what a real apology to Bilal would look like. I could finally get away from my vacuous apologies and tell him something that was really meaningful."

– Susan Miller



Heartfelt Apology Step 2

Once the cheater has a complete understanding of all the pain they have caused the injured person, they need to express that understanding fully and completely to their partner in a way that shows that they accept full responsibility for having caused so much pain.

This expression should be made without giving any reasons or justifications for the behavior. This means no excuses, no defensive statements, and taking the full “hit” for causing the pain you are describing.

What you say exactly will depend on your particular situation. Each relationship is different, and there will be different things to apologize for contingent on what has gone on in the course of your relationship. In addition, people simply express things differently.

Whatever you decide to say, it is important that you completely open yourself up to the feelings that you now know your partner has experienced and take full responsibility for your actions. At this stage in the game, there is no holding back. It's time to put your heart on the line and let your partner know that you are sorry if you want to repair what is broken in your relationship.

Compare these two examples of the cheater expressing an understanding of the injured person's pain and suffering:

Example one: “I understand that you were hurting a lot – you were hurt and angry that I had the affair.”

Example two: (setting the context) “You said you felt we had been distant for some time. You were willing to endure the distance between us because you knew that we had an enduring love and commitment to each other. It was your faith in my commitment that gave you the strength to take on more responsibility when I was working the long hours.” (setting the betrayal into the context) “Then, you found out that some of my long hours were spent with someone else while you were home taking on the additional responsibilities to help me be there with that someone else. On top of that, you found out that your motivating force for continuing our already strained relationship, my commitment to you, was a sham. This made you feel doubly betrayed, as if your guts had been torn out.”

(Note that the final description of the feeling included a good guess by the cheater that the partner felt “doubly betrayed” and a description of “guts having been torn



out.” This is due to the fact that the whole conversation is not included here.

The injured person in this example had already described the pain to the cheater using that term.

You don’t even have to ask which of these is more compassionate and understanding of the experience the injured person went through. Adding the context and putting the pain into the context makes a world of difference in helping the injured person know and feel that the cheater really understands what they went through.

Here’s how Step 2 worked for Susan.

“Once I felt like I had a fairly complete understanding of how Bilal must have been feeling, I decided it was time I tell him how sorry I was for all the pain I caused him.

“One evening when we were sitting around in the living room, I asked him if I might have a few words about our relationship. He knew that meant that I wanted to discuss the affair and what was going on with us at this point. He agreed, and I started my apology.

“‘Bilal, I have spent a fair amount of time trying to understand how you might feel about what I did. I know that I can never completely understand it, but I have been trying hard to imagine where you are coming from so that I can properly apologize to you. We have known each other for a lifetime. We have been through some difficult times, and though it hasn’t always been easy, you always stuck by me. You put your heart into this relationship, and I took advantage of the fact that you trusted me completely. It is clear to me that when I cheated on you, I must have not only broken your heart, but fundamentally changed your perception of me, our relationship, and our whole history together. I am so sorry that I caused you all this pain and anguish; I take full responsibility for my actions. It was my fault, and I have no excuses.’”

–Susan Miller



Heartfelt Apology Step 3

You will know it is time to move on to Step 3 when the injured partner agrees that the cheater understands or, at least, can express some understanding of what the injured partner went through and continues to go through in terms of the pain and suffering they are experiencing.

A repetition of an earlier caution: The cheater often wants to move quickly to the third step because they don't want to hear or acknowledge the extent of the pain and suffering they have caused. In this case, the cheater might try to pressure the injured partner to accept their understanding without further detail or explanation.

If you try and rush the injured partner in this way, you are undermining this entire process. At this point, you need to let your partner take as much time as they need to accept that you truly understand what you did. This might mean that you, the cheater, need to offer additional explanation to assure them that you are clear on what you have done.

A word to the injured person who is reading this: you should willingly help your partner understand the hurt you have been through and continue to experience. You don't have to force it on them, but if they are struggling with understanding you, or they don't understand the full impact, assist them in a helpful and cooperative way.

It is better to go through this too many times than not enough. You need to help the injured person feel that their pain is understood and validated.

Once the injured is able to accept the idea that the cheater has a legitimate understanding of what they have done, the third step is for the cheater to make a separate statement of accepting responsibility for having committed these wrong actions and inactions. At this point, they need to specify exactly what it was they did (or did not do) that was so wrong.

A reminder here from Step 2: when you are accepting responsibility for your bad behavior, this should be done without giving any reasons or justifications for the behavior.

That means no excuses, no defensive statements, and taking the full "hit" for the behaviors leading to and starting the affair. After all, you always had a choice at each step along the way.

Again, let's look at Susan's experience with this step.



"Even after I told Bilal that I understood his pain and was ready to accept responsibility for the fact that I had caused him this pain, he wasn't completely convinced.

"He actually asked me a number of questions about what I meant when I was trying to apologize to him. He asked me what I had been doing to try and understand his pain, why I was doing it, and what I meant when I suggested his perception of our relationship must be fundamentally altered.

"I wanted so badly for him to accept that I understood what he was going through, but I knew that might take some time. I also knew he deserved an explanation to the questions he asked. I realized that the best course of action was simply to answer his questions as honestly as I could.

"I told him that I had been doing visualization exercises to try and get in touch with what he was feeling. I told him that I was doing this in order to make a meaningful apology to him – one that he might be able to accept someday.

"I explained that in the course of my visualizations I imagined that when I told him I had an affair it must have made him not only completely lose all faith in me, but perhaps even in himself or the world at large. I knew that if I trusted someone completely and they betrayed me, I would feel like I might be cursed or losing my mind or something. I imagined he might be feeling this way too.

"It took him a little while and a few more conversations to come to a point where he was ready to accept the idea that I had some understanding of what he might be going through. When this did happen, I knew it was time for me to take the next step in the apology process.

"I told him that I took full responsibility for having the affair, for trampling on his feeling of security and trust in me, and for not communicating my needs to him in a meaningful way so that we might have worked on our relationship.

"I accepted responsibility for and apologized for all the lies, all the deceit, and all the indiscretions. I also said that I knew there were other things for which he deserved an apology."

– Susan Miller



Heartfelt Apology Step 4

When the injured partner is able to accept that the cheater has an understanding of the pain they have caused, and the cheater tells the injured partner that they accept responsibility for everything they did that lead to the affair, it is time to move on to Step 4.

At this point, it is time for the cheater to realize that they don't want to be the kind of person who would lie, cheat, or have an affair. They have to find that part of themselves that doesn't want to be the kind of person who could or would inflict such pain on another human being, especially their partner.

Again, you cannot rush this part of the process. Do not simply decide one day that you have made this change. You need to really search inside yourself and prove to yourself that you have made a substantial and significant character change.

Look at it this way. Imagine a good friend came to you and told you they had an affair. At what point would you know that they had made sufficient internal changes to truly feel sorry for what they did and want to change so that they never made the same mistake again. How would you judge their sincerity?

Now apply that information to your own situation. Are you truly able to look inside yourself and see that you are a changed person and that you don't want to be the kind of person you once were?

When that realization comes, you must describe the changes you have experienced to your partner. You should try and make them understand that you have undergone a fundamental shift in character and that you never want to be the kind of person that would cause them pain again.



"When I first told Bilal about the affair, I immediately felt sorry for what I had done. There was no question about that. The pain on his face, my own negative emotions, and the tension in our relationship was so great that I just wanted to keep saying, "I'm sorry," until he could hear it.

"But that was different than the apology I was trying to make when I used the structured apology Dr. Ellis gave me. In a lot of ways, my first attempts at apologizing were really about my own need to escape from pain. I thought that if Bilal would just accept my apology I would be off the hook.

"But this was about something else entirely. This was about checking in with myself and making fundamental changes about the way that I think, feel, and behave in order to make sure that I would never hurt Bilal that way again. This was a much deeper, more intense process.

"So I searched inside myself. I tried to find that part of me that didn't want to be the type of person who would lie to and cheat on my partner.

"The truth is that I had known Bilal so long that I somehow stopped taking the fidelity component of our relationship all that seriously. It was as though it never occurred to me that this wonderful thing we had together could ever go away. I had known Bilal all my life. How could that ever change?

"Of course, that meant I had started taking him for granted, and that is never a good thing to do in a relationship.

"The truth was that I cared deeply for Bilal and I didn't want to hurt him. But there was more to it than that. In my heart, I just didn't want to be the type of person who would hurt someone the way I hurt Bilal. I didn't want to be a liar. I didn't want to be disloyal.

"This struck home for me one day at work. A colleague of mine came into my office and told me that she had been applying for a position with a competing company. She was pretty sure she was going to get it. In the meantime, she had just accepted a major promotion at the company we worked for. She dedicated herself to managing one of our marketing teams, while she was looking for a job somewhere else.

"I thought she was so disloyal. I was disgusted. Then I compared her situation to my own. I had, after all, been purporting that I was a loyal partner to Bilal, but I had an affair. What was the difference?

"It was at that point that I realized I really didn't want to be that kind of person, and I told Bilal about this experience.

"I think it affected him somewhat. Although, I'm not sure that he completely appreciated the analogy. Nonetheless, he was receptive. He had known me for a long time, and I think he knew I was telling the truth this time."

– Susan Miller



Heartfelt Apology Step 5

If the cheater is able to successfully negotiate the earlier steps of this apology, it is time for them to make an unequivocal statement about their commitment to the relationship and to their partner.

It is important that the injured person hear this information. If they do not, they might never completely trust that the cheater really desires a deep, long-lasting commitment.

Again, there are as many forms this statement can take as there are people on earth.

To help you along, you're going to read Susan's story below, and I'd like to give you the following tips that you might consider when making this kind of statement:

- Consider wedding vows as an example of what you might say in this circumstance. If you're married, it might be meaningful to reiterate some of what you already said in your original vows. If you aren't married, wedding vows might be a good resource of possible ways to make a clear statement about your commitment.
- Think about a couple you admire, and consider what they might say to one another in this context.
- Imagine your best friend was about to marry someone they had loved for a long time. Imagine what they might say in this situation.
- Think about what your partner would most like to hear from you regarding your commitment to your relationship.
- Imagine what you might like to hear from your partner. Use this as a model for what you could say to them.

Now for Susan's statement of commitment.



"Once I realized that I didn't want to be the kind of woman that would cheat on her partner and I told Bilal this, I realized it was time for me to tell him that I was completely committed to our relationship.

"We sat down together one evening, and I told him that I wanted to be with him forever if he would have me, that I was completely committed to him and to our relationship, and that I would do whatever was necessary to heal the pain I caused.

"He was still a little doubtful; after all, I had lied to him not that long ago. "Nevertheless, it was a powerful moment for us. Up until that point, I'm not sure he was willing to accept the idea that I truly wanted to be with him and that I really was sorry for the tragic mistake I made. It made me feel good to let him know how I really felt about him and our relationship."

–Susan Miller

Heartfelt Apology Step 6

In this step, the cheater needs to make a statement that they will never violate the promise for fidelity that they made in the previous step.

Essentially, this step is a finalization and culmination of the other steps in this process.

You must tell your partner that you won't ever get involved in a situation that could lead even to the earliest stages of an affair. You have to commit to sticking with this promise. This shouldn't be too difficult if you have been able to make the character changes described earlier in the process.

It is important that you make this final statement in order to confirm for your partner and for yourself that everything you have been saying up to this point is true and heartfelt.

Here is how my client Susan made her promise to stick by what she said.



"I didn't want Bilal to have any illusion that I wasn't serious about what I had been saying over the course of this apology. I was completely serious, and I wanted to make sure he knew it.

"So I told Bilal that I was completely committed to sticking to the promise of fidelity I made. I told him that I would never cheat on him again and that I meant everything I had been saying up to this point.

"I also assured him that in order to achieve this I would change any behaviors that I might be engaging in that could lead to even very early stages of an affair. I wanted him to be assured that I wouldn't do anything that would further endanger our relationship.

"It wasn't as though Bilal suddenly forgave me and scooped me up in his arms. It doesn't happen that way. But I could feel his heart soften a little, and I knew that he accepted what I told him. He believed me as much as he could for now, and that was all I needed."

– Susan Miller



CHECKLIST TO STEP 2

- ✓ **A written affair letter**
- ✓ **A written apology**
- ✓ **Classify the affair type (Taught in a few weeks)**
- ✓ **The couple understands the 4 horsemen**
- ✓ **The couple has started monologues**
- ✓ **The couple is meeting the requirement of 10 to 15 hours of QT per week**
- ✓ **Check previous homework**

THINK ABOUT IT

- Have you ever had an affair or have had someone cheat on you? How would you classify it?
- What are your previous beliefs: who is to be blamed for an affair?
- In your personal relationships, what communication errors are you most guilty of, and what will do you today to work on it?
- How are your own communication skills? Can you notice any of the 4 Horsemen regularly in your communication?



APPENDIX 1 – GOTTMAN

Let's go over a few of John Gottman's key concepts.

1. The 4 Horsemen – A couples reference
2. The 7 Predictors of Divorce
3. The 6 Predictors of Relationship Success



GOTTMAN'S FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Criticism

It's okay (and can be healthy) to complain about what's wrong in your relationship. The problem arises when complaining turns into criticizing. A complaint focuses on the event or behavior you want to change, whereas criticism attacks your partner's personality. When you find yourself generalizing that your partner "always" or "never" does something, you are falling prey to criticism. For example, you may want to let your husband know that you find it annoying that we don't travel very often. You could let him know just this – that you wish you traveled more. Or you could blame him for this problem and criticize him by saying something like "We *never* travel because you are *always* so *selfish* and don't care about my interests."

What to do instead: Try to state your complaint without blame. Let your partner know that you are unhappy about something, but don't make it your partner's fault. Avoid "always" and "never."



Defensiveness

This one is particularly hard. When someone suggests I've done something wrong, my instinct is to react quickly with an "It's not my fault" followed by some excuse. Sometimes we go so far as to do this preventively – defending ourselves before we've even been accused. Defensiveness also occurs when you respond to your partner's complaints with complaints of your own, such as when your partner lets you know they find it annoying that you leave empty shampoo bottles in the shower and you respond by pointing out that you find it annoying when they don't make the bed.

What to do instead: The problem with defensiveness is that it doesn't allow you to see your role in the problem and it's frustrating for the other person who feels like they aren't being heard. Take responsibility. If your partner lets you know that something you do bothers them, consider if they might be right and look for your part in the problem.

Contempt

Everybody has their angry moments, but when you begin to feel contempt for your partner, that's a clear sign that something needs to change. Contempt is the best predictor of divorce. Contempt is that feeling that you are better than your partner, and comes out when you make derisive comments to your partner with the intention of being insulting. If you are calling your partner names, mocking your partner and being sarcastic or rolling your eyes at him or her, you are likely feeling contempt. Sometimes you might tease your partner in the spirit of playfulness, which is beneficial. But if you find yourself teasing your partner in a mean-spirited way, such as making fun of something you know they are sensitive about, that is a sign of contempt. Calling your partner an idiot (and meaning it) is a surefire sign your relationship is in the dumps.

What to do instead: Instead of focusing on all the things that you hate about your partner, build a culture of appreciation where you focus on what your partner adds to your relationship. If you are feeling contemptuous, perhaps you need to take a moment to imagine what your life would be like if you'd never met your partner.

Stonewalling

Stonewalling is not so much about what you do, but what you don't do. Imagine how a stone wall would react to you when you told it how you were feeling. When you sit there in stony silence or utter single word answers, you are disengaging



from the interaction. This happens in response to feeling overwhelmed by your partner's strong negativity. Gottman has found that men are more likely than women to engage in stonewalling.

What to do instead: Instead of disengaging as a response to being overwhelmed, try letting your partner know that you need to take some time to calm down and plan to return to the conversation when you feel more relaxed.

Although we have described the four horsemen separately, they often go together – criticism from one partner may lead to the other partner's defensiveness which may promote feelings of contempt, and eventually stonewalling. Couples who can joke, laugh and share moments (a touch, a quick smile) during a fight are better at combating this negative cycle and are happier with their relationships.



Dr. John Gottman: Seven Predictors of Divorce

1. Harsh Start of Arguments

The partner who starts the argument is aggressive or hostile, is insulting, attacks his partner's character, uses sarcasm, shows contempt or disgust—all of which lead to escalation or withdrawal.

2. Criticism

Attacking character or traits, instead of addressing the problem specifically.

3. Contempt

Disgust, disrespect, condescension, sarcasm, eye-rolling.

4. Defensiveness

Trying to prove *I'm* not the problem—you're the problem; justifying your behavior.

5. Flooding

Gottman uses this term to describe the dramatic physiological changes (adrenaline pumping, increases in heart rate, blood pressure, respiration) that precede stonewalling by a partner. Flooding and stonewalling start to occur later in marriage, after years of Harsh Starts, Criticism, Contempt, and Defensiveness.

6. Stonewalling

Withdrawing, silence, no eye contact, no response, blank facial expression, leaving, being physically or emotionally unreachable. Stonewalling's immediate cause is Flooding. Stonewalling appears to be an attempt to reduce Flooding's heavy bodily stress. For prehistoric, hunter-gatherer reasons, Gottman speculates, men are more susceptible to Flooding than women, so men are much more likely to Stonewall. And, as women are 80% more likely to bring up sticky marital issues than men, an important implication of this finding is that women, particularly, need to avoid Harsh Starts in order not to set up the dynamics that lead to Flooding and Stonewalling.

7. Failed Repair Attempts

These are situations where attempts by one partner to repair damage and keep negativity from escalating out of control are ignored or otherwise meet with failure. Partner B doesn't respond positively to Partner A's attempts at apology, humor, or any other means of easing tensions.

Gottman finds that these seven factors both individually and cumulatively predict divorce. The pattern tends to begin with Harsh Starts, and this sets off a cascade of responses that leads over time to the various other Divorce Predictors.



Dr. John Gottman: Six Predictors of Marital Success and Happiness

1. **High Levels of Friendship, Respect, Affection, and Humor**

This is defined as liking each other, being each other's best friend, doing things together; showing interest in and respect for the other's thoughts and feelings, avoiding put-downs, supporting each other's goals and aspirations, feeling affection for each other, having fun and laughter together, being Number One in each other's eyes.

2. **A Ratio of 5:1 or Better of Positive to Negative Interactions**

This means that your relationship averages at least five pleasant, friendly, or loving experiences or periods of time for every hostile word, angry argument, or time spent feeling hurt or resentful. And 5:1 is the minimum!

3. **Successful "Bids for Attention"**

e.g., The wife says, "Hey, listen to this!" She is trying to get her husband's attention for a conversation. If the husband keeps on reading the paper, ignoring her, he's turning away her bid for attention. If he says "Huh?" and lifts his eyes off the Sports Page for a second or two, he's turning toward her—a good sign. And if he actually listens to whatever she wanted to say, that's a real connection!

In successful marriages, partners turn toward each other 86% of the time (vs. divorcing couples who on average turn toward each other 33% of the time, or less).

4. **Soft Starts of Disagreements**

In successful marriages, disagreements are started softly, without critical, contemptuous remarks about the other person (cf. Gottman's first Divorce Predictor).

5. **Husband Accepts Influence from Wife**

In successful marriages, husbands accept influence from their wives. (e.g., If a wife says she's afraid her husband is driving too fast for the rainy road conditions, and he says, "No way I'm slowing down, I know what I'm doing!"—this is a shaky marriage.)

There must be give and take in a relationship—giving and accepting influence, and research shows that women are well accustomed to accepting influence from men. So it's crucial that men learn to do the same!

6. **Partners are Aware of and Respect the Other's Needs, Likes, Dislikes, and Their Inner Life**

They ask questions to find out; they listen; they care!



APPENDIX 2 – MONOLOGUES

Reminder: Your clients are required to do 10 to 15 hours of “Quality Time” per week during affair recovery.

Monologues are included in the QT hours, and we recommend at least 3 monologues per person per week.

20 Minute timed monologues are the best exercise in this early stage for these reasons:

- Set timed monologues allow for meaningful conversation without interruption
- Conflict avoidant couples are requested to have conversations they would never otherwise have.
- The betrayed can talk about their hurt or the affair, and have the infidel listen, instead of walking away or arguing.
- The Infidel will find relief in knowing that there is an end to the “affair” conversation. Everyone needs a break from talking non stop about the affair.
- The rules of the monologue are that there is no interruption when the other is speaking. Couples stop letting each other talk after time, and as a result, people are not heard or feel understood. *They go and find someone who will listen.*



APPENDIX 3 - Advice on What To Tell

Taken from the “Affair Recovery Home Study Program”, become familiar with why telling the story of the affair is important, and what should be avoided.

Pitfalls to Avoid

Avoid getting locked into escalating power struggles. In a pressurized atmosphere, the more the betrayed partner pushes for information, the more the involved partner pulls away. The more the involved partner retreats into a corner, the more the betrayed partner applies coercive tactics to open up. Both play a significant part in creating a constructive interaction for sharing thoughts, feelings, and memories.

For Betrayed Partners

If you are a betrayed partner who wants to get your spouse to open up and tell you what you want to know, there are specific things you can do to avoid gridlock.

- *Control destructive outbursts:* If you go ballistic every time your partner shares, you are teaching him or her that it's better not to share. If you want openness and honesty, you must show that telling the truth will make things better—not worse, as feared. For example, you can say something like: “I’m glad you told me. Hearing it made me cry, but I want you to know that the truth is helping me to heal.” Painful experiences can create intimacy, but explosive reactions build their own walls. Who wants to get close to a volcano?

One unfaithful wife wrote to me: “When I answer my



husband's questions truthfully, sometimes he lashes out: 'You whore! You're lower than a sleazy slime!' He tells me I'm not allowed to get angry when he says those things because then he just gets more upset.... I'm willing to go through this verbal barrage if it's valuable for my husband. He says everything he has read says these reactions are normal and healthy for betrayed spouses; that he has to get them out in order to heal. When do things go 'too far?'"

I told her that her husband is *not* reacting in a healthy way. He is being emotionally abusive. He will never learn the true story of the entire affair—why it happened—unless their interaction evolves beyond bitter name-calling. Although it is normal for the hurt partner to be angry, this husband will have to develop some empathy and self-control. If he doesn't, his wife will have little incentive to do the hard work of healing the relationship.

- *Silence is golden:* You will learn more if you close your mouth and open your ears. Don't interrupt or contradict. When your partner starts to open up, pretend you are sitting behind a one-way mirror where you can see and hear but cannot be seen or heard. When your partner's story triggers a question or a retort, write down your comments for later. If you step in too quickly and pull your partner off track, you'll never know what else you would have heard.
- *Curtail your interpretations:* Diagnosing your partner's problems is not relationship-enhancing, even if you happen to be a licensed psychotherapist. For example: "The reason you got involved was that you never got enough love from your father." This feels intrusive to the partner who is being analyzed. You want to convey: "I'm trying to understand what you were feeling." Unsolicited interpretations might make *you* feel good, but I'll bet that your partner won't feel better as a result.



What to Tell

The betrayed spouse's need to know is the determining factor for how much detail and discussion is necessary. Some want to know everything; some seek only basic facts. Each couple must figure out what details to share by following their own unique path. You will learn through trial and error what is healing and what adds more scar tissue. Information that quells the obsessive need to know is healing, but information that seems to fuel obsessiveness is retraumatizing and should be avoided. For most people, pressing to hear about graphic sexual details or to see love letters is a mistake because the

vivid images can become intrusive and interfere with intimacy. The desire to know often recedes as the relationship becomes more comforting.

If you are the betrayed spouse, ask yourself whether you can heal without seeing or hearing things that would be upsetting. If you are unsure of the consequences of knowing, ask your partner to discuss one sensitive issue. Notice if the answer makes you feel worse about your spouse or yourself, or if the information helps satisfy your hunger to know it all. Pay attention to whether you feel better a day later or whether the details are haunting you. If they are haunting you *but* you also feel better, then there is a part of you that is healing. Let your partner know so he or she can see the part that's healing as well as the part that's hurting.

For some individuals, an obsessive need to know the details is characteristic of their innate coping strategies. These are the people who get on the Internet and know more about a disease than their doctors do. These are the people who do six months of research before buying a camera. There is no way in the world that such people can let go of their partner's infidelity until they have heard it all.

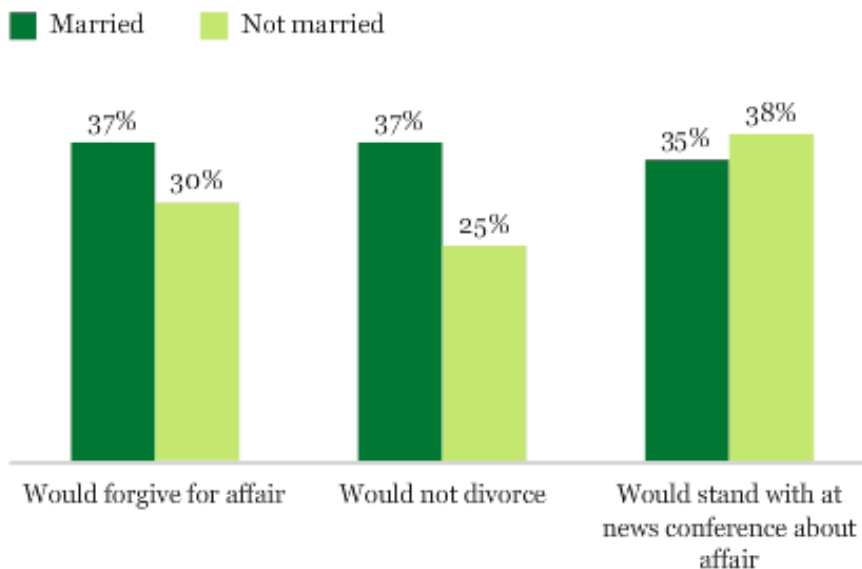


Questions to Answer

Questions about specific details are frequently an entryway into a deeper story. For example, questions about what gifts or cards were exchanged are really probing for how invested the unfaithful partner was in the affair—emotionally and financially. One unfaithful wife and her affair partner made cassette tapes for each other with special love songs. Although it was extremely painful for the betrayed husband to listen to the romantic words of the songs, it helped him realize why it was so hard for his wife to let go of the affair. He was also shaken by what he had neglected. Ultimately, he was inspired to bring more romance back into their marriage.

The following ten questions will guide your exploration of the circumstances of the infidelity and the meaning behind it. Some of

Forgive Spouse for Infidelity, by Current Marital Status



USA Today/Gallup, March 14-16, 2008

GALLUP POLL



them are typical questions posed by betrayed partners, and some of them are questions I use in my clinical practice to bring a slightly different perspective on the underlying motivations. Discussing them will give you the raw material from which to co-construct your story.

1. What did you say to yourself that gave you permission to get involved?

There are all kinds of reasons for not stepping over the line that would normally stop you from entering forbidden territory. Vulnerabilities and values will be revealed by the thoughts and actions that came up as you crossed thresholds into the extramarital relationship. Most likely, discussing these questions will uncover the magnetism of the relationship, the sense of curiosity, or the belief that nothing bad would come of it. One of the most revealing thoughts is whether the unfaithful partner considered the consequences of getting involved or only of getting caught.

2. After the first time you had sex, did you feel guilty?

Asking about guilt reveals the internalized values of the unfaithful partner. Some people never feel any guilt about getting involved. People who anticipate guilty feelings before they act are more inclined to avoid dangerous crossings. Others feel guilty after they act, although guilt after the transgression doesn't necessarily keep them from repeating their "sin."



3. How could it go on so long if you knew it was wrong?

Affairs are both messy and glamorous. The forbidden, unstable nature of secret affairs keeps passion flowing years beyond what's common in a stable relationship. Unfaithful spouses often appear to be addicted to their lovers. They fail in their efforts to end the affair time and time again, pulled back by a magnetic force they can't seem to resist. Only with great determination are they able to break the spell.

Comprehending what started an affair is different from comprehending what kept it going. It may have started out of a shared interest or sexual attraction but continued because of a deepening emotional attachment. Or it may have started as an emotional affair and continued because the sex was so great. Or it may have started because the marriage was in a slump but continued because it assumed a life of its own long after the marriage improved.

It is as important to understand how the affair ended as it is to understand what sustained it. The ramifications of an affair that was ended by the unfaithful spouse before disclosure are very different from an affair that was ended either by the affair partner or by the ultimatums of the betrayed partner. If the affair ended abruptly, the attachment will be harder to break than if the affair died a natural death. It's easier to put a relationship behind you if you're the one



who made the decision to leave.

4. Did you think about me at all?

If the unfaithful partner had been thinking about the betrayed partner, he or she wouldn't have gotten so involved in the first place. The act of infidelity is not about the person who was betrayed—it is about the person who did the betraying. Betrayed spouses often see themselves as a central character in a spouse's affair and believe that every step was taken with them in mind. "How could you do this to me?" they ask. The reality is that the involved spouse probably didn't consider his or her partner much at all. Simply put, unfaithful partners seldom anticipate the tragic consequences or the pain they inflict.

5. What did you share about us?

This question addresses the issues of loyalty to the marriage and the nature of emotional intimacy in the affair. The betrayed partner has an understandable interest in knowing how much of a window the affair partner had into the marriage. The betrayed partner might also want to know how he or she and the marriage were portrayed.

6. Did you talk about love or about a future together?

Talking about love is likely to bring to the surface errors of assumed similarity. The betrayed partner might insist that love and marriage were part of the picture and won't believe otherwise. If the involved partner *does* confess to being in love, this admission can make sense of events in a way that rote denials never could. It would explain why the affair went on so long and why it took so long to recover from the loss.



7. What did you see in the affair partner?

The betrayed partner will already have a portrait of the affair partner, but it is almost never the whole picture. Betrayed spouses are prone to place all the blame on the affair partner, preferring to believe that their gullible spouse was manipulated and seduced. They may not be willing to accept that the person to whom they're married took an active role, and therefore displace a lot of the anger and rage onto the affair partner. Involved partners must recount the ways they encouraged the affair and invested energy to keep it going. It is less likely that an infidelity will happen again when the involved partner owns up to having been a full participant.

8. What did you like about yourself in the affair? How were you different?

Instead of focusing on what the affair partner was like, it is more productive to focus on what the *unfaithful partner* was like in the extramarital relationship. New relationships allow people to be different: more assertive, more frivolous, or more giving. A strong attraction of affairs is the opportunity to try on new roles: the insensitive, detached husband becomes energized by his own empathy and devotion; the sexually uninterested wife is exhilarated by newfound passion and erotic fantasies. In long-term relationships, the potential to develop a different persona is constricted by familiarity. For example, a man who is a powerful CEO in a large corporation is regarded and teased in his family of origin as “the baby.”

A good question for the involved partner is: “What did you experience about *yourself* in the affair that you would like to experience in the marriage?” Perhaps the marriage can begin to foster these positive aspects of the self. In fact, the betrayed partner may have been wishing to see those qualities all along and may find it hurtful that the involved partner enjoyed them first with somebody else.



9. Were there previous infidelities or opportunities, and how was this time similar or different?

This is an opportunity to examine any patterns of infidelity or near misses that may be relevant to how this affair unfolded. Discuss how you or your partner handled previous temptations, even if no lines were crossed. Explore past experiences of slippery slopes and blurred boundaries. If this is not the first incident, ask how this infidelity is different from or the same as the others. Were there earlier experiences that were “only oral sex” or “sex without love” or “love without sex”?

10. Did you have unprotected sex?

Unprotected sex is a painful reminder of how inconsiderate and reckless the unfaithful partner may have been during the affair. Regardless of protestations, both spouses should be tested for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Willingness to submit to these humbling medical exams and tests is an act of consideration and accountability by the involved partner that will remove another obstacle to resuming safe marital sex.



APPENDIX 4 – The Affair Story Check List

☐ The Affair Story

- This is the time for honesty. Your partner deserves to hear the affair story in a way that will satisfy their curiosity and needs. If you do not tell the story in the detail level that they need to hear it – you will only prolong the recovery process. Clients fail at this very important point all the time.
- Write the story in private, after your spouse answers the questions below.
- Betrayed spouse – decide if you need one of the options below. Also decide if you would like the affair story written or spoken. Relay this information in the space below and to your partner.
 1. Complete detail
 2. Some detail
 3. No detail

☐ Questions about the affair

- What other specific questions do you need answered about the affair? Often the betrayed partner is obsessing over the same questions. It is better to write these questions down, and talk about them during this period of disclosure.

☐ Constructing a Shared Narrative

- Achieving a shared understanding of how the affair came about is central to partners' developing a new set of assumptions about themselves, each other and the relationship.
- Use your shared journal to document this shared narrative.
- Do you have any challenges in creating this story at this stage?



☐ Communication

- What horseman do you use the most in your communication?

- Was it difficult to know when a horseman was present?

- Did it improve communication between you both by NOT using any of the horsemen in your communication?

- Any challenges with this tool?

☐ Active Listening

- Reflecting, Validating, Empathizing – did you find any challenges when listening to your partner this week?



- Could you reflect on what they said without a “horseman” being present? Could you feel empathic for your partner? (This is different than sympathy or agreeing with their actions)

- Any challenges with this tool?
