

[Marital Infidelity: Get Counseling Before Its Too Late! From Crystal Lake and McHenry](#)

Large numbers of people are involved in marital infidelity. In fact, recent data suggests that approximately 45% of women (and that statistic continues to increase) and 59% of men at one point participate in marital infidelity.

That means that the shocking reality is that 80% of today's marriages will have one spouse, at one time or another, involved in an extramarital affair. That may appear to be a huge number.

However after thirty years of practice as a psychologist and family therapist, it sounds realistic to me. Also, I have worked with many cheating spouses who were never discovered.

The reality is that the odds that someone close to you, is or soon, will be involved in an extramarital relationship is extremely high and very troubling. Sometimes people can tell.

You may even see telltale signs in someone close to you. One red flag that may strike you is noticeable changes in his or her habits or behavior.

Others include detachment, defensiveness and reduced reliability and predictability. Maybe you sometimes sense that something is not quite right, but are unable to pinpoint what it is.

He or she may not tell you. Those hiding an affair usually continue to act like nothing is out of the ordinary.

The victim of the infidelity is often initially wracked with anger, hurt, anxiety, humiliation and thoughts of failing. That usually prevents him or her from divulging the truth.

Depending on the status of your relationship with the person, it might be helpful to confront him or her with your observations. Extramarital affairs are different and consequently serve different purposes.

From my experience, I have noted 6 different kinds of extramarital relationships. Some are an immature reaction to a perceived lack of intimacy in the marriage. Others are caused by tendencies toward sexual addiction or a history of sexual trauma.

Males sometimes process issues of entitlement and power and become trophy chasers. Others become involved in extramarital relationships because of a compelling need for drama and excitement; they are often obsessed with ideas of being in love and experiencing that rush and excitement.

Sometimes people embark on the path of extramarital affairs to exact revenge because of a spouse that did or did not do something. Sometimes the revenge may stem from a compelling or deeply felt rage.

Another type of infidelity is used to affirm one's desirability. Nagging doubts that one is OK often leads an offender to test his or her desirability through an affair.

And sometimes infidelity is used by a spouse as a way to balance needs for distance and intimacy in the marriage.

The outlook for the survivability of the wounded marriage varies. Sometimes an affair can be the best thing that happens to a marriage. At other times it signals its end.

Different types of affairs demand different coping methods on the part of spouses that want to heal the relationship. Some demand tough love. Others demand tender love, patience and understanding.

The discovery of a spouse's infidelity usually has a very profound impact on the offended spouse. Weeks and months of insomnia, obsession, fantasies (many sexual) and confusion follow. It can take anywhere from 2 to 4 years to work through the far-reaching issues.

A professional therapist can accelerate and facilitate this delicate process. The emotional devastation results from the fact that trust is shattered; not only trust in your offending partner's character but also trust in your ability to discern the truth.

The central task for you as an offended spouse is NOT to learn to trust your partner, but to work diligently to trust yourself.

Another cause of emotional devastation is THE Secret that is central to an affair. The fact of having such an intimate secret with someone other than the spouse, can exact a horrendous and overwhelming emotional and sometimes physical toll on the offended partner.

How can counseling or therapy help me? Counseling and therapy will provide:

1. A place to vent, to express all your feelings without being judged or blamed. After all, sometimes you may want to say something that does not sound good.

Even though your feelings may not be nice, pretty or mild, your therapist understands that and will let you get it off your chest.

2. Through counseling you will be reminded over and over that your current hurt and rage is not forever and will pass.

3. You will be validated. Your counselor will let you know that you are OK by demonstrating empathy for you, nodding acceptance and providing alternative solutions and insightful feedback.

4. Your therapist will ask you, what you are learning. What are you doing to take care of yourself and meet your personal needs? Spouses often need this little jolt to move them beyond their pain to see the larger picture.

5. Your counselor will give you space and be quiet and patient as you try to sort through and express your thoughts and feelings. You will be given time to stammer, stutter and even stumble around as you think things through.

6. After listening carefully, your therapist will point out some new options or different roads that you might consider to improve the quality of your life.

7. Your therapist will recommend books, movies or other resources that you will find helpful.

8. Your therapist will be very concerned about your progress and will genuinely inquire about how your life IS going from meeting to meeting.

9. Your counselor will understand and welcome your confusing feelings and thoughts. He or she is trained to be comfortable with the gray areas and the contradictions about how you feel and what you may want.

10. Your therapist will be trustworthy and reliable. You will be able to count on him or her to be there, listen and provide valuable feedback.

Marital infidelity is powerful and affairs are costly. They affect practically everyone you care about: Family, friends, colleagues and employers.

Infidelity can be converted into an opportunity, however, to redesign your life and love relationships so that they create honor, joy and true intimacy.

About the Author

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