

Couple Challenges: the Series - Infidelity

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Few issues a couple may face have a more devastating impact as an affair, infidelity or cheating. Infidelity erodes the basic foundational reason the couple exists; their emotional bond. This emotional bond is substantiated by the couple's believe that they are the most important person in their partner's life, that they are the most special and the most trusted. No one is more intimate than their spouse or partner. All that makes this emotional bond safe and sacred for the couple is eliminated in one fell swoop by the destructive effects of infidelity.

A myth in the couple therapy world is that if infidelity takes place, the couple has to divorce or split up. Although this is certainly the result on many occasions, it does not have to be the case. Many couples successfully navigate their relationship through the rough waters of infidelity. It's not easy, but it can be done. Here are some basic steps for helping save a relationship.

- 1) Get into couple therapy. Find a therapist that believes couples can survive infidelity and knows how to guide the couple through the emotional process needed to reestablish that secure emotional bond in which the relationship was build in the first place.
- 2) Get educated. Read books and articles on what to expect emotionally from the experience. Normalization of the experience is critical to accepting that what you are feeling is ok and expected. You are not crazy for feeling the way you are.
- 3) Process your emotional experience with a therapist. This goes for both the one who was cheated on and the one that did the cheating. This process is typically done without the partner in the room. Don't be afraid to acknowledge the immense hurt and losses created by this situation. Losses such as no longer feeling special to your spouse or partner, the loss of trust, the loss of world order and quite possibly the loss of the lover.
- 4) Make an honest decision to stay and work on the marriage or relationship. By processing in therapy the emotional experience caused by infidelity, one can and needs to come to a decision to stay or leave the relationship. Without an honest decision one way or the other, the couple will be stuck and held in the pain of disconnection. If both decides to stay and work on the relationship, then every effort possible needs to be done to work through the infidelity and reestablish the trusting and loving bond.
- 5) Risk trusting in the relationship again. This process is tough. It's like jumping off a cliff and hoping your partner will be there to catch you. And, the only way someone is going to reestablish trust is with the active participation of their partner. Without this participation, trust is not going to happen, no matter how hard one tries. Trust is not a one-way street, it takes two.
- 6) Once trust has begun to take hold and the foundation begins to rebuild, deepen the emotional experience through intense couple therapy, preferably Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT). This form of couple therapy is the most empirically supported form of couple therapy in psychology and works to create a deep, safe emotional connection between partners. Infidelity is hard but not always too hard to overcome. Make a clear and honest choice to either stay and fight for the relationship or cash in your emotional chips. That decision is yours to make. As long as your partner is willing to work to reestablish trust, then the couple has a fighting chance to defeat the devastating effects infidelity can cause.

If you would like more explanation on how to survive infidelity, please feel free to [contact me](#) through my website or blog by clicking on the links provided below.

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Besides being a professor at both SDSU and Alliant International University in their Master's and Doctorate programs, I am in private practice located in the heart of Mission Valley in San Diego, CA.

I see clients on an individual, relationship, and family basis. My primary focus is Couples Therapy and aim to create greater levels of trust, safety and stronger emotional bonds through the use of Emotionally Focus Therapy. Further issues addressed range from relational conflicts, work concerns, and family difficulties to depression, grief, stress, anger, anxiety and substance abuse. I work with all ages, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I have also been providing services for multiple Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) for over 15 years. Additionally, I am an AAMFT Approved Supervisor, Certified EFT Therapist and EFT Supervisor. With the addition of being a university professor my private practice benefits greatly because I am able to keep my skills fresh and be kept up to date on the current research. I teach subjects such as Couple Therapy and Advanced Couple Therapy, Sex Therapy, MFT Techniques and Supervision at both the Masters and Doctoral levels.

For more information please visit my [Couple Marriage and Family Therapy Website](#) or my [Couple's Therapy Blog](#) for these and other Marriage and Family therapy related topics.

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