

**How to Break Free  
From The Affair!**

# Break Free From the Affair

Discover What You Must Do to Stop  
The Affair and Save Your Marriage

Find the Love and Happiness  
You Really Want

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## I. Introduction

Welcome! There is hope. You can find relief. It is possible to break free from your affair and chart a new course for your life and relationship.

This is a most difficult journey. The affair most likely will, or is, shaking you to your very core. It stirs up profound feelings such as betrayal, rage, hurt, sadness or confusion, to name a few, that often control your every waking thought and often disturb you in the middle of the night.

So, your journey is intense and to be honest, quite complex. My vision is to use my two decades plus of experience, study and research as a therapist to provide a wealth of in-depth and solid information to help you break free from the affair.

Your life will never be the same but it can be better, and you can find the life and love relationship you really want. You will discover how.

### Get Through the Affair More Quickly

I don't want you to remain stuck forever. I want the lousy feelings and obsessive thoughts to fade, fade, fade until they are merely a distant memory.

Here's the story of one woman:

Around 7 years ago my husband had an affair. Almost 7 years later I still feel so broken hearted and some resentment toward him.

I still go over her name (first only, number and address). Every time we fight I am sure to throw it in his face.

I had him sell his car and boat, our bed and we had to move because I didn't want anything around that reminded me of her.

I am almost always depressed and think about how I could ruin her life.

Why is everything still so fresh in my mind? Why do I hate this person much and just want vengeance?

Will these feelings ever go away??

It doesn't have to be this way for you. Your life and relationship(s) are not doomed to a caldron of pain, anger and explicit mental images. In reality, your affair may be the best thing that ever happened to you and/or your marriage.

I hope at some point soon you will powerfully discover that your life and relationships can be immensely satisfying, and that the affair in your life was a path that lead you to that source of satisfaction.

Unfortunately, most of us have been taught little about relationships and specifically affairs. Most of us have grown up rather clueless about love and marital development. We needed a course in Love 101 but never got it.

This book will point you in the right direction.

## **Build Self-Esteem and Confidence**

Nothing goes down the toilet faster in an affair than your self-esteem. Wow! I believe a huge chunk of the pain and anger has beneath it the awful thoughts of being inadequate, unwanted, and discarded sexually, emotionally...you name it.

This book, my site and my coaching are aimed initially at helping you not personalize the affair.

Begin to learn that you are not responsible for the affair. You did not create it.

The marriage did not make it happen. Your spouse chose to have an affair. IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU!

Got the point? Make sense? Probably not. But, we will work on that.

You will begin to understand what I'm talking about. And as you do, you will begin to unhook yourself from the affair and your spouse, which paradoxically gives you the only chance of saving the marriage, if you choose to save it.

## You are Not Alone

Recent statistics suggest that 40% of women (and that number is increasing) and 60% of men at one point indulge in an affair.

Put those numbers together and it is estimated that 80% of the marriages will have one spouse at one point or another involved in an affair.

No, you are not alone. In my work with thousands of individuals over the past 20+ years, I've come across a significant number of people who were in affairs, but no one knew, nor did anyone ever discover. So, I believe that statistic.

This will not diminish your suffering, but please know that others in similar situations are experiencing similar feelings and thoughts.

There are patterns, themes and characteristic ways of feeling and thinking that will bombard you and others in similar situations.

In the pages that follow you will begin to learn about patterns and themes that are typical of those who navigate affairs.

## Learn to Strategize, Take Control

I want you to be confidently decisive.

Part of being decisive and planning a strategy, is knowing what you are up against. I want you to be more than a loose cannon flailing around on the deck.

You want to know the target, aim carefully and have a real good idea of what will happen when you shoot. (I'm not sure I like the metaphor, but it seemed to stick in my mind. I suppose a cannon in the hands of someone who just discovered his spouse is having an affair might lend itself to more images!)

An affair is not an affair. Affairs are exceedingly complex.

Part of the sense of lostness comes from being confronted with something that makes no sense and to be blunt, seems crazy. But, we will begin pulling the nature of affairs apart and make sense of the seemingly senseless.

I want you to know where you are going, how to get there and know when you arrive.

I want you to know that you can make it through the affair. I want you to come to the conclusion that perhaps the affair is the best thing that happened. Your marriage can be infinitely better and you can be better.

## II. How This Book Can Help You

### A Starting Point

The major purpose of this book is to get you started in the right direction and to begin acting now on significant, well-thought-out, time-tested strategies.

You are not helpless. You do have power; more than what you probably realize. You need to find that power. Know that power. The “Break Free From the Affair” gives you a taste of that power.

### Get You Out of the Rut

Here’s a truism: we tend to want to learn how to do better the very things that don’t work, but actually make things worse. Get this?

I see it in myself and I hear it every day from dissatisfied people. We keep doing over and over the very things that buy us grief.

This book offers you a contrast between tactics that work and tactics that fail. Some tactics defy common sense. Others seem contrary to what we are taught.

Begin to learn. Begin to notice. Begin to understand the wide range of responses that are available to you to break free from or remain in the affair.

### Begin to Focus Where You Should – on YOU

I want this book to be a haven for you. As you read it, I want the thoughts about him/her, what he/she is, or is not, doing and thinking to quit for a minute and for you to begin thinking about you.

This will be your most important journey – to shift your focal point to your actions, your thoughts, your feelings, what you want, what you need and the strategies you



employ.

You will notice a change. He/she will notice a change.

### III. How to Use this Book

You might want to start with the appendix.

The appendix offers you first: 7 Powerful Tactics to Break Free From the Affair and Stop it NOW! This is a condensation of what you will find in other books on affairs and those that focus on the theme of saving your marriage.

You will find 7 general tactics that work and are very helpful and useful. However, not all of them work in all situations. Don't believe it when someone says that these tactics work all of the time. People, affairs, relationships and marriages are just too complex to be subject to a few simplistic instructions.

However, I have gone about the chore of gathering together the major themes of major authors and major works. Enjoy and learn. Use. Experiment.

The second section of the appendix includes this article: 12 Unattractive, Ugly, Typical Tactics Most People Use to Prolong the Affair and Guarantee Their Own Misery. This obviously contrasts to the 7 tactics that do work. I give you these two articles in sequence to see just that: the contrast.

Here's a word of caution: Please, don't get down on yourself once you read these twelve tactics. Remember as you read, we all do or have engaged at one time in probably all of these tactics, while majoring in three or four!

I hope some of them jolt you. I hope you make some shifts in your thinking. I hope you observe yourself to the degree that you can see exactly when and with whom you use some of the tactics.

But, read to learn. Don't read to bury yourself deeper in lousy feelings.

After reading the appendix and reflecting on the contrast between the different tactics, go back and read about the different kinds of affairs and the sub headings.

Read through the 7 kinds quickly the first time. Get a feel for the flow and especially the differences between the different kinds of affairs.

Notice what you agree with. Notice what you don't understand. Notice what jumps

out at you. If you have a strong reaction, pay close attention. What you are reading about at that time is most likely very important to you and your situation.

Outline a couple tactics you want to employ. Be very specific about what you will say and do. Think it through. Rehearse in your mind.

Take a few minutes each day to reflect on what you are learning and doing.

- What seems to be working?
- What might work better?
- How is he/she responding?

If helpful, write your thoughts and plans in a journal. If that doesn't work for you, still spend some quality time – 30 minutes or so – reflecting on your efforts.

## IV. Identifying the Type of Affair Facing You

In working with hundreds of couples and thousands of individuals I've been able to identify patterns and themes that run through marriages, relationships and affairs.

Knowing a pattern is exceedingly helpful. It helps you get to the core of the issue or issues. And, when you are at the core, you achieve a high degree of clarity about what you need to do to make something happen.

Once you identify a pattern (or the nature of the affair facing you) you have a head start on moving through the affair with more knowledge and power.

Most studies indicate it takes two to four years to move completely through an affair, healing the feelings and reconstructing your relationships.

If you study these 7 different affairs, focus on the areas that apply to you and implement some of the strategies, you will cut down on that time frame significantly.

Here they are: Go to it!!

### #1: My Marriage Made Me Do It

Ask someone why they had, or are having an affair and you may hear something like this: "I have a lousy marriage. My marriage is dead. There is no intimacy, no sex, and no excitement. The love is gone. We've grown apart. I can't stand the marriage. There was nothing happening in the marriage and the affair just happened."

## Key Points

1. It's as if a marriage is an animal gone bad. A marriage does not have a life of its own. In reality, there is no such thing as a "marriage." One is "married" as a result of making some promises and signing a paper.

2.

After the paper is signed, two people continue communicating and acting toward each other in particular ways that they hope will help them get what they individually want.

Just as there is no "marriage," there is no such thing as a "relationship." There are, however, ways of relating for which each person is responsible. Remember the comedian Flip Wilson (that dates me) and his "The devil made me do it" skit?

2. We idealize "marriage" or "romantic relationships" with the expectation that we will get what we want, and without much effort. The movies, popular public press and romance novels/stories don't help much here. A "marriage" is behind the eight ball from the word go. "IT" can't win.

3. From day one most of us don't have a clue about how to get, build, nurture and maintain healthy and intimate ways of relating. We need 'love 101' and it's not there. We rely upon experimentation or bad models.

4. If the "marriage" is dead, why in the world would one choose to have an affair? Talk about jumping from the frying pan into the fire. It really is stupid. You add a whole layer of deceit and shame that eventually will result in consequences more dire than approaching your spouse and saying, "I'm really unhappy. What I'm doing with you obviously is not working. I want out." Oh well, maybe some people need more problems and suffering.

5. If the "marriage" is bad, obviously, I don't have to look at me. I can blame "it" on the other. Some of us find it difficult to look at me. Some of us don't know how to look at me. Some of us never think of looking at me.

Tip: If your partner/spouse is having an affair and blames it on the "marriage," don't buy into it. The "marriage" is not the problem. You are not the problem. Your spouse/partner chose the affair out of ignorance, fear or inadequacy.

Characteristics of the person who says that a bad marriage made me do it

- At one time was clingy and fairly passive in the marriage
- Does not want to take responsibility for his/her behavior

- Attaches self to others. Others become the guiding star
- May have bouts of sadness and dejection
- Deep down thinks of self as inadequate and weak

Reluctant and seemingly incapable of expressing own desires wants, needs, ideas (doesn't know what they are)

- Can be very generous and has difficulty saying no
- May be naive or Polly Anna like
- More passive, does not like competition
- May be closely attached to parents
- May be overprotected by parents
- May typically express put-downs about self
- Complains. Whines. Things are never right or good enough
- Those who know him/her well will usually be exasperated and frustrated

### What can I expect will happen?

1. Expect that your spouse will have a very powerful attachment to the other person. The other person will consistently be on her mind. Your spouse will shift energy away from you, the children, the household and her career to her affair relationship. She will be focused, but not on you.

Your spouse will attempt to push you away by avoiding you, ignoring you, closing off communication or walking away.

2. The affair will most likely be a long-term affair. It will be very difficult for your spouse to walk away from the other person. He may try on a number of occasions but will continue to gravitate back to the other person. He will hold on tenaciously.

This is probably the first or only affair for your spouse. Your spouse is not interested in playing or fooling around but powerfully attaching to the other person. The other person is the savior!

3. Don't believe that the affair was planned before hand because of a bad marriage. These affairs usually just happen. They usually happen with someone in close proximity: co-worker, neighbor, friend (frequently of friends with whom you socialize), etc.

The other person is usually the aggressor, your spouse lacking the confidence to seek out the affair. The rationale that it happened because of a lousy marriage comes after the affair is in bloom.

4. The more you try to persuade, convince or pursue, the more strongly he will attach to the other person. He will perceive your efforts as weakness and will want to attach more intently to the other person whom he (at perhaps an unconscious level) deems to be the powerful and loving answer-to-all.

5. Efforts to use moral or religious arguments to call a halt to the affair will be strongly resisted. Your spouse is not guided by rightness or wrongness. These standards have not been internalized and do not carry much weight, especially when it comes to the important chunks of her life.

The actions and thoughts of your spouse primarily originate from her need to attach to another person. Any behavior or concept that serves the purpose of maintaining the attachment will be valued. Others are discarded.

6. Expect you will spend a significant amount of time and emotional energy in the next 2 to 4 years (especially if there are children) attempting to resolve the relationship. By resolve, I mean, coming to a point where each of you are fairly free of the emotional entanglement that holds you together and generates the pain and fear. It will be important for you to resolve the relationship whether you continue to be married or separate and divorce.

Again, if children are present, it is vital, let me repeat, vital, that you and your spouse or ex-spouse come to a working relationship freer of emotional baggage and game playing.

### Will they live happily ever after?

This scenario is based on the premise that you, your partner and the other person will continue with the same behavioral and emotional patterns that you are employing and do not consciously make changes in how you think or what you do. (If you begin to change, you may upset the apple cart. But, more on that later.)

This kind of affair often ends in your divorce with your spouse continuing the affair and frequently marrying the other person. Eventually that relationship will recycle through the dynamics listed above.

The affair relationship will run a predictable course. Most likely, a very similar

dynamic was at play in the beginning of your relationship with your spouse. She leaned on you, perhaps clutched tightly. You carried the strength, the lead. She adored and worshiped you and guided her life by your every action.

As the relationship developed, she began to perceive your strength as stifling control. Her negative behavior became more and more pronounced.

Her reactivity and increased devaluation of your strength became puzzling. You really hadn't changed. You still continued to be the same person with the same strengths and cared for her, provided stability for her and assumed that same old role with your dogged persistence.

The emotional and physical distance between the two of you increased. This did not happen suddenly but developed over the course of years.

The affair relationship will most likely follow the same course. So, months or perhaps years down the road, your spouse will experience the same impasse with the other person as he did with you.

If he (or the other person) chooses not to intentionally reflect on his marriage and the new relationship; if he chooses to forgo therapy or some other formal educative process, it's almost as predictable as paying taxes that he (they) will recycle the same issues.

Wish them well!

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



Not very good.

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being as bad as it can get, I would say your chance of saving this marriage is about an 8 or 9.

Remember, this is based on the fact that you, your spouse and the other person continue with the same emotional, cognitive (how you think) and behavioral (what you do) patterns.

If the three of you continue playing the game the same way, following the same rules, it's about an 8 or 9.

## Do you really want to save the marriage?

Make sure you don't jump past this question too quickly. It is important! Actually this question helps you take responsibility and begin the change process.

If you are serious about saving the marriage and want to learn exactly what you can say and do to switch the momentum of the affair and marriage, you must begin with this question.

This question gets at the truth. And, only the ferreting out of the truth will put you on the road to breaking free from the affair, and perhaps saving your marriage – if that is what you REALLY want.

So, take some time. Think hard. Be brutally honest. This is your first step toward breaking free and getting the life and relationship you really want.

1. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you want the feelings of embarrassment and humiliation to end? You thought this would never happen to you. It might be difficult to face family, friends, or co-workers.

Do you mull over what you could have said or done to prevent the affair? Do you think of yourself as a failure and feel eager to reclaim your confidence and self-esteem?

2. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you long for the way it used to be? Do you long for the predictability and the seeming comfort of your marriage in past days?

Do you assume that by getting your marriage back, to where it was, things will be better? (Note: You will never go back. It will never be the same. Those days are gone and will not return. Your relationship will be different, guaranteed.)

3. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you miss your old role – of being the strong one, the one in control and the one who held it together? Do you feel lost, not sure of who you are, what to do and “at loose ends?”

Breaking free from the affair and moving toward saving the marriage will mean you will need to develop the freedom to assume different roles and to act differently in the relationship. Do you really want to do that? Are you willing to expand who you are?

4. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you want vindication against the other person? Do you feel like you have lost out to this other person? You came in second? Does that bother the heck out of you and

having the “marriage back” would mean that you can stick it in the face of

the other person?

Is competition stirring your juices?

5. Do you really want the marriage back or do you primarily want to end the pain? The pain of abandonment and being alone can be exceedingly intense. Do you think you can handle it? Endure? Actually learn from it?

Or, are you intent upon the affair ending and getting the marriage back to eradicate your pain?

6. Do you really want the marriage back even though you might not like your spouse very much and perhaps you doubted the wisdom of getting married in the first place? There are innumerable reasons why we marry. Some conscious. Most of them unconscious.

Couples who possess rock solid certainty that their marriage was meant to be and had few, if any, doubts on the wedding day are a rarity. Give this question some serious thought.

Perhaps the affair is a symptom, sign or indication that the marriage was in serious trouble from the get-go. Perhaps not only your spouse, but you have reflected on the validity of the marriage or a secret desire to be somewhere else.

7. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you ultimately concerned and fearful of the financial drain of a divorce and the need to alter your lifestyle? Does the prospect of being responsible for your own financial independence scare the bejeebies out of you? Or is that a part of you that refuses to consider lowering your lifestyle or standard of living?

8. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you hooked tightly to your family of origin and for one reason or other, dread the thought of them finding out?

Are there some strong moral or family injunctions that you feel you **MUST** live by and a divorce would run counter to those family ties?

9. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you petrified of being alone? Do you experience yourself floating in a world without any significant emotional relationships whereby you receive the support and encouragement you need?

Do you see a bleak future without friends or personal investment without your spouse in the picture?



10. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you terrified of starting over? Does the thought of dating or entering the dating world leave you cold? Can you NOT see yourself with another significant person in your life? Do you think of yourself as undesirable and probably unwanted by someone of the opposite sex?

11. Do you really want to save the marriage because you need your spouse rather than love your spouse? Many proclaim their love for the spouse that is having an affair. They attempt to prove their “love” with the hope of ending the affair and getting their spouse back.

Love is a huge word and often bereft of meaning when an affair sits in the middle of a marriage. Saying “I love you” may mean “I need you” and almost always is interpreted by the offending spouse as I need you.

If you answered yes to some or most of these questions, don't fret. Most of us do when facing the intensity of an affair.

Use this as a starting point to face the truth, which will enable you to face yourself and your spouse and the other person in new ways and generate more effective ways of saving the marriage – if you really want to do that!

**What you can specifically do to increase the odds of saving the marriage.**

Are you ready?? If you are ready and truly want to break free from the affair and save the marriage let's go.

But, bear this in mind. Breaking free from the affair means you must make some changes in how you typically approach yourself and your spouse.

This will take practice, practice and more practice.

And, you may need to act and communicate in ways that seem very strange or foreign to you. You also may not understand why you need to do what you need to do, but stick with me.

Here's a key skill you need to master. I call it charging neutral.

If you are like most of us, the disclosure of the affair rips you apart and your feelings are on your sleeves. You react to your spouse. You communicate fear, worry, angst and/or anger with every fiber of your body and in every intonation of your voice.

You communicate this verbally and mostly nonverbally. Your reaction increases the distance and gives ammunition to your spouse to justify and even continue the affair. (Gosh, no wonder I want to get away from this. My lover certainly is not like this!)

Rather than reacting and your feelings flowing all over the place, practice charging neutral.

I want you to be able to communicate to your spouse with neither an Up or Down but Neutral charge. Communicate calmness, not only in your tone of voice but also in how you carry your body. Don't speak with a charge to your voice. Control your voice!

Here's what will happen when you are able to do this:

1. You will be able to point out something big, without making a big deal out of it. You make your point! And, it is heard!

You will learn how to confront and feel more and more comfortable (well...maybe that is a stretch, at least at first) with this skill.

2. You will be in control of you. This will feel great.

3. This skill gives you personal power. People are really attracted to someone who is able to charge neutral. (Can you think of someone who does this well?)

4. You defuse the reactivity of your spouse. You change the rules of communication. Your spouse will probably be confused, internally impressed and not be quite sure what to do with you.

5. You break the destructive pattern of communication that hits the brick wall and only results in misery.

Charge neutral is clean communication that's about the truth being spoken without accusations, defensiveness or explanations that typically mire communication.

Charge neutral is very subtle but very powerful.

Charge neutral is about stating the truth directly, without anything added. No hidden agendas.

Charge neutral is not monotone or about being boring. The truth is not boring.

It's hard to give examples of charging neutral since charging neutral is not so much

what you say, but how you say it. Maybe this will help. Here's what you can convey by charging neutral without giving you specific words:

- Your life is a mess. (By charging neutral you can almost make that feel like good news.)
- You've failed. (Like, no big deal. So what? Yet I understand.)  
Keep charging neutral in mind as I give you other specific skills that require you to communicate in particular ways. You will communicate using Charging neutral.

Send messages

Messaging is a basic communication skill.

Messaging converts what you want to say into a simple sentence or phrase that expresses the truth and intends to spark reflection and perhaps action in the other person.

You want your message to "grab" the other person as your words pierce to the heart of the matter.

You message when you have a point to make, when you want the other person to act and especially when time is of the essence.

Messaging can and should be used effectively in all communication but can be especially powerful when facing the affair in your life.

Messaging works because it bypasses the defenses of the other person.

Your spouse will find it difficult to defend herself (attack, explain or withdraw) when you message. As well, when crafted correctly, the message speaks the truth. The truth cannot be ignored.

Here's where you begin.

Make sure you stand in the shoes of your spouse. Try to imagine and feel what it is like for him to be in his situation. (This may take some doing, but hey, it's his problem, he's messing up his life. He's going off the deep end. You don't have to jump off behind him.)

Study and become very familiar with the dynamics of this kind of affair. This knowledge will help you message the truth.

When messaging, do not use the word I. Messaging is about him, never about you. The message refers to the actions, behaviors or dynamics of the other person. It refers to the truth about the other person, or that person's life or situation.

Here are some examples:

- It must be easy for you to lose yourself with her.
- You don't seem to think much beyond your relationship with him. You must wonder how long that can continue.
- It is very normal to throw yourself at another person when you feel so empty.
- It is very easy to question a marriage when Prince Charming comes along.
- You can throw away an old pair of pants when you get a new one. But, the new one also becomes old.
- Your need to fill your emptiness is overriding your integrity.
- It seems to me that there is this great hole in you, and you think the other person will fill it.
- Do you ever wonder whether she is as great as you think she is?
- You seem to give all your energy to him and not have much left.
- Do you REALLY know what you are doing? Any doubts?

Remember, how you present the message is just as important as the message itself.

Keep in mind:

- Charge Neutral. Charge Neutral. Charge Neutral. Charge Neutral. Without Charging Neutral your message loses its impact.
- Keep is short and sweet. No lectures. Don't go on and on and on....
- Speak straight and speak simple. Speak and let silence prevail.

## # 2: I Can't Say No

People can't say no? Well, I believe we all have the capacity, at some level, to say

no. However, not all have developed that capacity or reached that level to firmly say no and mean it.

Some have many “unconscious” tugs and pulls that lead to an affair. They are “stuck” and seem to lack the ability to consistently act on the “no.” Please remember that all of us are “grabbed” by something and find it difficult to let go. One’s history, personal development and internal blocks play a role here.

## Key Points

1. Sex takes on an inflated role or value. Sex, sexual conquest, sexual release becomes a powerful force. Acting on the sexual impulse is a frequent activity.

Thinking about sex likewise consumes an inordinate amount of time. Multiple ways of acting out sexually (porn, strip clubs, multiple sex partners, etc.) are common.

2. This activity is bound by fear. The person lives with fear: the fear of getting caught, the fear of consequences, the fear of “being found out,” the fear of being abnormal, the fear of being punished, and the fear of losing family, spouse, job and respect.

3. A promise/failure cycle ebbs and flows with the inability to say no. After an “acting out” episode the person usually experiences guilt/fear and promises to self or others, “I won’t do it again.”

This will last...until the “urge” is acted upon again. The spouse may be aware or unaware (but sense that something is not “right”) of the “roller coaster” and succession of broken promises.

4. Others are used or seen as objects for personal gratification. No true intimacy is developed.

5. Sexuality is often confused with other needs or connected to unresolved past pain or trauma. A child who experiences confusion around sexuality or sexual abuse of one form or another, may carry along that confusion and attempt to “work that through” in a marriage or extramarital affairs. (I worked with one woman who “used” a one-night fling with a significant person to “clear up” a particular issue.) She was free of that “urge” from that point on. No one ever knew. Could she have chosen a different way? Maybe.

6. Such a person lives in a distorted world. They come to see the world and relationship through the eyes of their “addiction.” They have a great

capacity to rationalize their behavior, deceive others and may lead a “dual” life.

Tip: If you suspect these characteristics fit you or someone you love, get some help before your world disintegrates further or falls apart. Life can be different. Life, sexuality, a truly intimate relationship IS different. You can get there. You are stuck, and need some true love, care and guidance to arrive at the next level.

### Characteristics of the person who “can’t say no”

- Very controlled and controlling most of the time.
- May erupt when provoked or may erupt for no apparent reason.
- Tends to be ingratiating (kiss butt) to those in authority and autocratic or rude to those “under” her.
- You get the feeling sometimes that you really don’t know this person.
- May exhibit secretive behaviors.
- May disappear or isolate himself for periods of time. Claims he needs his space.
- Usually adheres to opinions and ideas tenaciously.
- Lacks a capacity to kick back and enjoy. Life is pretty serious.
- Has an inner desire to please others or gain their approval but may be hidden by tough exterior.
- Lying or avoiding the truth becomes a habit and almost automatic, even though at the time there may be no need to lie.
- Is usually concerned about doing the right thing the right way and expects others around her to do it her way.
- Experiences an intense internal level of guilt which may emerge as remorse after an eruption or acting out episode. (Promises to never do that again.)

### What can I expect will happen?

1. Expect a roller coaster ride and expect a long one. There will be many twists and turns and ups and downs. You may threaten to leave and walk

out the door and if you are convincing enough she will acquiesce and promise to change her ways.

This will last – for a while – but she will return to the other person or a different person or again engage in some form of sexual activity without your knowledge.

2. The time interval between the sexual acting out episodes shortens during the course of your marriage. The first occurrence may be followed by years. The second followed by months. The next followed by weeks until the episodes become more frequent.
3. There is a progression to the destructive behavior. Sexual acting out may take different forms. He most likely will have multiple sex partners. He may be careless about his health, and yours. He never seems to get enough or there is a drive to experience more.
4. Her compulsive need to get more is compartmentalized and, in her mind, separate from the marriage. She is blind to the detrimental impact of her behavior upon the marriage. She doesn't get why you are so upset. (You're making too big a deal out of this!) She really believes this.

Her marriage is vitally important to her and is the part of her life that offers the stability and care she desperately needs. She separates the two parts of her life.

5. You will be a hugely important player in her life. She truly depends on you to hold things together and be there at all times and in all ways. She will watch you carefully.

If you deviate from focusing on her (as in begin to get a life of your own) she will revert to old patterns of behavior that traditionally “get you back in line.” (i.e. make promises, be good for a while, meet your needs exquisitely, be charming, elicit guilt, throw a tantrum, etc.)

6. You will experience more and more restriction and isolation in your life. Your life will revolve around her life. You will increasingly live for her. You will cut yourself off from your friends and family.

You will put your life plans on hold. You will not “be allowed” to have healthy relationships with those of the opposite sex. She will work hard to make sure you won't leave.

7. You will begin to think you are going crazy. Your world will shrink. It will become more and more difficult to know what is true. The lies and deception will take their toll. It will be more difficult to trust your intuition

and your sense of what is right and true.

Your self-esteem will shrink. You will increasingly doubt your self. Every so often the family will erupt into an emotional uproar.

8. You will need outside help to shift the destructive course. You won't be able to do this on your own. She will not be able to do this on her own. The earlier in the marriage this is addressed, the better. Don't wait.

### Will they live happily ever after?

If he is in the early stages of the addictive process and is involved with one other person over a fairly long period of time, no they will not live happily ever after. As a matter of fact, they most likely are not living very happily right now.

He lacks the capacity to have a truly intimate relationship with another person. This person is a source of sexual, temporary gratification at best.

If he chooses to divorce you and marry her, or if he leaves you to live with her, the same patterns that characterize your relationship with him will play out in the other relationship. You can bank on it.

His slide will continue if he stays on the same course. The destructiveness of his behavior will multiply. The partners he chooses will reflect the deterioration in his standards and behaviors. It's sad, but true.

### What are the odds of saving the marriage?



Not very good. On a scale of 1 – 10, 10 being no chance at all, I would give most marriages where the spouse can't say no about an 8 or 9.

Having said that, I will give myself an out. Where your spouse is in the downhill slide influences the chance of saving the marriage.

If her behaviors are deeply engrained, are frequent occurrences and she seems locked into denial with little awareness of her situation, your chances ride close to a 10.

If she is not so locked into her behaviors, (they occur infrequently and some insight and awareness of the patterns exist) the chances for saving the marriage are a little better.



As well, if you can extricate yourself from assuming responsibility for her behaviors or more accurately the consequences of her behavior, and can create a life of your own, the chances of saving the marriage are enhanced a degree. We will get into this a little later.

## Do you really want to save the marriage?

As I stated before, make sure you don't jump past this question too quickly. It is important!

If you are serious about saving the marriage and want to learn exactly what you can say and do to switch the momentum of the affair and marriage, you must begin with this question.

This question gets at the truth. And, only the ferreting out of the truth will put you on the road to breaking free from the affair, and perhaps saving your marriage – if that is what you REALLY want.

1. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you just plain worn out? Does it seem that it would be much easier to just put up and tolerate the crazy kind of behavior you bump into with him?

Are you emotionally fried and think of confronting him with your feelings and thoughts of ending the marriage as jumping into more emotional turmoil?

2. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you think you should hang in there for religious, moral or other “should” reasons? Most spouses who partner with those who can't say no are very conscientious people. Is that you? Do you want to do the right thing?

Are you willing to continue feeling the humiliation and facing the dangers because you believe you should stay in the marriage? Do convictions rather than practical and personal concerns dictate your decisions?

3. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you believe you should stay to protect the children? Do you think you are the only spouse who can care for the children? (You may be.) Or maybe your spouse cares deeply for the children and is a good parent. (That may be also.)

Do you think that ending the marriage would make life immeasurably worse for your children? Do you fear for their welfare if you confront his behavior?

4. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you see absolutely no way out and are resigned to this marriage? You may experience a powerful pervasive feeling of being stuck. You may believe that you have tried everything and that it is in the best interest of everyone to stay where you are.

Couple your weariness with your sense of being stuck and you may tolerate a great deal of disappointment and pain for the sake of the marriage.

5. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you see yourself as incapable of getting out? Your self-esteem may be at rock bottom. You may think of yourself as incapable of starting over, incapable of starting a new relationship, incapable of making the transition to a new life and incapable of making decisions on your own.

It is not unusual for the spouse of someone who can't say no to lose her sense of dignity and self-respect as he attempts to control, intimidate and dictate.

6. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you need to protect her? Do you see beyond what is there to her basic emptiness and fear? It's there and you know it? Perhaps you fear what might happen to her if you do indeed leave? Will she be able to cope? What destructive path might she take next?

So you hang in there, aware of her underlying pain and hope some day it will be addressed.

7. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you live in the fear that if you talk about leaving you will face danger? Perhaps you might face violence? You might face the emotional game playing at a new level of intensity?

Does it seem wiser to hold back, not confront, not move toward change for fear of what he might say or do? Do you sometimes feel frozen with fear?

8. Do you really want to save the marriage or have you given no thought to how you might start over? This is a little different than the fear of starting over. Perhaps your life has been so wrapped around his or the care of your children that you have given little, if any, thought to you.

Have you thought of your desires, your skills, your dreams, your hopes and your future apart from him? Or, apart from your children?

**What you can specifically do to increase the odds of saving the marriage.**

You must first be able to keep your cool. You must respond and react with a calm voice and at-ease body language. You must be able to hold your own and hold your self.

Any form of reactivity, attack or defensiveness will put into gear the old patterns. You will merely recycle the old feelings and words and find yourself back at that familiar impasse.

I gave you a blueprint on how to work toward keeping your cool with the segment on charging neutral earlier. Go back and review if need be.

One of the biggest obstacles in “getting to” someone who can’t say no is the denial that wraps around the affair or sexual acting out. Plain and simple, those who can’t say no frequently do not believe they have a problem. Or, they admit they might have a problem but they minimize it. It’s not that bad. Or, it’s temporary. Or, they point to the circumstances or someone else as the ultimate reason for doing what they do.

They will not assume ultimate responsibility for their behavior.

### Problemize

You can increase the odds of getting through to them by using what I call, problemize. In other words, in your calmness and with a controlled voice you throw out short sentences and phrases that point to HIS problem. You do so without judgment. You do so without incrimination. You do so matter-of-factly. Don’t be dramatic. Don’t be superior.

Here are some sample statements you might use or rephrase that typically apply to the problem he has in not being able to say no:

- It seems as if you are more and more out of control of your life.
- I wonder what it feels like inside you not to be able to say no.
- Do you ever think about the kind of model you are to your children?
- Do you ever wonder about what your children think about what you do?
- Do you ever wonder how long this marriage will last?
- Do you ever wonder where your life will be in 5 years?
- Do you ever wonder how many women you will have to go through to find what you really want?
- Your relationship with her must be pretty empty.
- I wonder if you ever feel how empty and lost I think you really are.
- It must be horrible to not be able to say no.
- There must be quite a battle within you.

- Sometimes it seems like you do nothing but run...and don't know where you are running.
- I wonder what you would do without this marriage. I also wonder sometimes what I would do without this marriage.
- It seems you have a real hang up with sex – something I've known for a long time.

### #3: I Don't Want to Say NO

Some people just don't want to say no, and they believe they don't have to say no. The older term of “philanderer” applies. Their relationships are marked by a series of sexual conquests, and that's what they basically are – nothing more than the thrill of the score.

#### Key Points

1. There is an underlying need for excitement, thrill and adventure. The thrill of the chase or hunt is what drives this person.
2. Once the “score” is achieved the person is likely to move on to the next conquest. The chasing of these relationships is viewed as a game or hobby. The person collects a number of “trophies” along the way that supposedly inflates his/her sense of well-being.
3. The other object/person may be someone who seems highly unobtainable, making the chase more challenging.
4. The person seeks “quality” – someone who is perceived to be beautiful, attractive, handsome, alluring, with position, power or with status. The person desires someone who will “mirror back” those qualities of perfection that seemingly flame and keep alive grandiose thoughts of ones self.
5. This behavior is subtly admired in our culture, and often “excused.” “Boys will be boys” you know. This behavior can continue with knowledge of colleagues, friends and even spouse provided it doesn't interfere in particular ways or “cause damage.”

People often “look the other way” so they might continue to be the recipient of or aligned with this person's “charm and power.”

6. This person will only stop philandering if his/her behavior results in the possibility of losing something perceived as important – job, position,

family, prestige, children, etc.

There is usually a huge, hollow and empty cavern in this person – marshmallows inside – that is exposed once the reality of a significant loss appears imminent.

7. Once the fear of loss subsides and/or the person talks and charms his/her way out of the difficult situation (I will never do this again!) and has not faced the internal emptiness, the person usually resumes the chase games.

*Tip: If you are married to such a person, there is a major question to face: Am I willing to tolerate and put up with this behavior in exchange for the perceived benefits I receive from this person and what he/she provides? The affairs most likely will not cease. Where will you draw the line? How can you maintain your integrity and what is the level of integrity you need?*

### Characteristics of the person who doesn't want to say no

- Very self-assured. Usually displays a great deal of external confidence.
- Has a tendency to be manipulative and exploitive. Primarily is concerned with getting what she wants.
- Very optimistic. Everything will work out...especially to her advantage. Has little doubt that she will get what she wants.
- Usually overindulged by parents and those around her. May be the only child.
- Often is not loud or ostentatious with her confidence. She just firmly believes that she deserves what she wants and will get it.
- She expects that others will serve her. That's why they are here. She will have a hard time understanding why others don't understand that.
- Often has a position of power, influence and status. Feels comfortable in those positions. Projects well.
- Will not see her deficiencies but will readily point out the deficiencies of others.
- Can talk her way out of any situation. Eventually might have you believing that she does not have a problem – someone else does.
- Is not concerned about her personal growth or developing insight. (That's derisively psycho-babble.)

- Sees the world in ways that fit her and what she wants. Distorts what she sees. This may cause serious problems that she will find difficult to face. Will learn only when others or society impose consequences for her inappropriate behaviors.
- Is like a steel tank filled with marshmallows. Once cornered with her rationalizations or an experience of failure she will emotionally disintegrate. Often begs for forgiveness or willingness to start over. (Which may be a form of manipulation to right her ship.)

What can I expect will happen?

1. There most likely will be more than one other person. He sees affairs as conquest, usually sexual, and not as a place to find intimacy. Actually he lacks many of the tools and the mind set to have intimate relationships.

He most likely will move from one conquest to another. His gratification on a basic level remains primary.

2. He will have little internal conflict about the affair. This differs markedly from the person who can't say no. Your spouse will view the affair or affairs as entitlement. He deserves them.

He deserves to be adored. He deserves to have excitement and personal gratification in his life. He has earned it. There is nothing wrong with this. Actually others, perhaps you included, ought to understand this!

3. He will operate in a world that supports his illusion and behavior. He will surround himself with those who look the other way or actually encourage his philandering behavior.

You will probably not find yourself welcomed in this world. He and his colleagues and friends collude to maintain their world.

4. You might run into a problem with the other person or persons. Remember Fatal Attraction? The other person might attach herself to him with specific expectations to be cared for and perhaps married – perhaps part of his strategy in his conquest efforts.

When she is “dumped” or the expectations fail to materialize she may pursue revenge. You might be involved.

5. You may not experience a great deal of conflict with him. There is no talk of divorce. Your life might be quite copasetic – unless you rock the boat. He has his playtime and you fill another specific role of quiet support. Keep the balance and life moves along fairly seamlessly.

6. There is one problem, however. The problem of aging. Depending on his social context, you might become a liability as you increasingly fail to project a young attractive vibrant image.

He wants those around him to reflect back beauty and perfection. If you fail in this regard you may be cast aside. Part of this depends on the financial cost of such “trade-in.”

7. His fragile, illusionary world and yours may crumble if he encounters failure. Failure is his Achilles heel. Unfortunately, the distortion and illusion he lives under do not always coincide with reality. He pushes and bends the rules to his advantage.

He may not pay close attention to the consequences of his behavior. Those consequences – legal, financial or health – may bite him at some point. He most likely will count on you to be there for him, to cry on your shoulder (perhaps literally) and help him regain his confidence.

### Will they live happily ever after?

First, there will most likely be a succession of other people. The initial attraction (to power and sexual excitement the relationship offers) will be intense but the intensity will soon fade.

There may be one person who becomes more of a permanent fixture. This person becomes the confidant as well as sexual partner. The role of confidant may increase in importance, with sexual activity lessening.

The confidant becomes a nurturing person where he can “be himself.” She becomes much like his mother, offering soothing words when his ego is bruised in the cruel world. Poor baby.

There is an understanding that the relationship goes no further. Both may, from their point of view, comfortably and without guilt, maintain a family and career while having each other in reserve.

The arrangement limits the opportunity to develop further intimacy. This suits him just fine. He loves to be pampered, but not really known.

### What are the odds of saving the marriage?



Actually, many marriages such as this continue. A publicly known example is that of Bill and Hillary. The couple establishes an understanding or balance that keeps the relationship, at least legally, intact.

The relationship faces the possibility of dissolution when he is forced to face the consequences of his behavior. The crisis is not usually precipitated by an announcement by his spouse that she is out of there, but usually by legal, business or financial failure. All of the dirty laundry may then be aired.

He doesn't do well with failure, weakness or humiliation. She may say she has had enough. He will most likely beg for understanding and forgiveness.

The assets the couple hold may also hold the relationship together. Divorce is expensive. Both may give the established lifestyle more importance than establishing intimacy in the marriage.

Once the storms are weathered the relationship can often be saved. I give it a 4 on the 1 to 10 scale.

Do you really want to save the marriage?

So, take some time. Think hard. Be brutally honest. This is your first step toward breaking free and getting the life and relationship you really want.

1. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you want to maintain your lifestyle?

Leaving your neighborhood and community where you are established and seeing your financial reserves split through a divorce give plenty of room for pause. These are considerations. Reserves do give us more freedom to explore the world, provide opportunities for our children and offer a measure of security.

2. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you afraid of what he might do?

Perhaps you know of his internal emptiness and how he, during times of failure, seems so fragile. Do you feel at some level bound to him or feel vital to him to provide a measure of emotional stability? Do you find yourself thinking more about how HE can cope with the situation more than how you are coping?



3. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you need to maintain your role as the caretaker or solid one for him and your family? Does the theme of responsibility flow throughout your life? Are you the oldest child in your family of origin? Do you derive a sense of purpose and satisfaction from being perceived as a “strong and tolerant” person?
4. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you unsure about your capacity to relate comfortably, intimately and sexually with someone of the opposite sex? After all, you probably have not received many overt messages about being wanted, nor have you received warm comments about your desirability.  
And covertly, the message you probably heard over and over again, and assimilated into your very being, was that others are more beautiful, exciting, sexy and wonderful than you.
5. Do you really want to save the marriage or does the thought of competing alone in the world terrify you? Will you need to ramp up your career if you want to maintain your lifestyle on your own efforts? Will new skills, new relationships and new career avenues be demanded of you?
6. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you feel the pressure from others and yourself to hang on to what you have? Do others sometimes wonder what your problem is? Do they think it foolish to give up what you have?
7. Do you really want to save the marriage or have you been the moral guiding light in the family and feel compelled to continue with that role? Are you fearful of what might happen to your family or spouse if you fail to be the compass? Do you have moral injunctions that preclude a divorce? Do you struggle with this?

What you can specifically do to increase the odds of saving the marriage.

Because he is fairly clueless when it comes to the consequences of his actions, it will be incumbent upon you to be the person who consistently points out what will happen if his behavior continues in the same fashion.

The skill you will use to increase the chances for saving the marriage or more aptly, create a marriage with deeper and richer intimacy, is called “consequence ‘em.”

The purpose of the skill is to wake your spouse up and scare him into action by pointing out what logically or naturally will follow from his actions.

This may not sound very pretty and you may not like the responsibility that falls on your shoulders (although you probably are a very responsible person). But, this is THE strategy that will work best to not only keep him in the marriage, but perhaps more importantly, relating to you with more integrity!

You must learn to be very direct (without raging or emotionally falling apart.) You must learn to stop tolerating particular behaviors. You must matter of factly point out what WILL happen if his behavior continues. AND, you must be willing to back up your words with action.

Remember, he is blind to the consequences of his action, although a part deep within him feels the emptiness and knows that if he continues in his ways his world will disintegrate.

Do not threaten or terrorize him. Keep pointing out to him what will happen if he follows the course he is on. (You can say this with a measure of compassion, because in some ways his actions and attitudes border on the pathetic – especially for anyone who values people, relationships and integrity in words and deeds.)

Here are some tips:

- Point out the consequences you see occurring already or the consequences he doesn't see or isn't taking very seriously.
- Help him see the upcoming costs and how this is threatening his quality of life with that which might be more important to him today (you and his family).
- If he doesn't seem to hear you, point out stories of others who have gone down the same path as he.
- Try to stick with him in the conversation when he dismisses, argues, charms, minimizes, denies, smirks, defends, attacks or otherwise does the thing he typically does to keep others away from the reality of his life.

Your strategy will take some time to play itself out, if he is free of a present crisis. He will have a difficult time acknowledging the reality of your statements when he perceives that his life is smooth.

You will get better responses when his world is falling apart, although his promises for “reforming” are temporary.

Here are sample statements to use when confronting him with his behavior when he is attempting to deny reality.

- I want you to know that I know exactly what is happening. (Give specific information, details. Hiring a detective is often appropriate for this kind of affair. There is not arguing, denial or charm that can counter pictures, times, dates, etc.)
- I've been very patient with you. I've given you the benefit of the doubt often. BUT, no longer. I refuse to live with your philandering.
- If your behavior continues, and I WILL know if it does, I am prepared to leave this marriage. (This is not a threat. You must be ready!)
- Do you ever wonder what your children think of you having an affair? And they know, of course, at some level, what you are doing. You can't hide that from them.
- You seem to be walking a tight rope at work and at home. How long do you think you can do that?
- And when you fall off the rope, there will be a big splat. I'm not sure I want to be around for that.

Get the idea? Keep hammering. Avoid drama; just matter of fact statements about the reality of the situation.

Ok, so this work, marriage, family life, income or health begins to crumble, which it will. Then you see the marshmallow. You most likely will see the tears and hear the promises of a reformed soul and new person. Don't believe it. Hold firm. Continue to point out the consequences of his behavior.

See if any of these statements might fit:

- Your tears don't impress me. Sorry, but I want to see changed behavior – over the long term. This is just the beginning, if you truly want something different.
- I saw this coming. This doesn't surprise me.
- I don't like being around you when you are like this either. I wonder if you are manipulating me now as you have others and me in the past.
- So, what are you going to do? And, how will I know you are going to do it once the dust settles and you get back on your feet?
- It will take a long time, much conversation and the building up of trust for me to want to be with you totally.

- I'm not going to baby you.

Does this help? This will take some inner strength on your part. You will need a secondary plan to care for yourself and establish your self-sufficiency, whether you remain married or move toward divorce.

#### #4: I Fell Out of Love (and just love being in love)

I find this dilemma rather common for younger couples, probably mid or late 30s and younger. Usually one reports, "falling out of love" and is truly disturbed by

this shift. He/she (and this is not merely a female problem!) wants to "recapture" those feelings.

This person has found a "significant other" who has stirred those dormant feelings and this person once again "feels in love." They are determined not to "settle" for a less than ideal relationship, which means, of course, feeling the love feelings.

#### Key Points

1. Unfortunately, our culture (movies, songs, romance novels, soap operas, romance comedies) teaches us that this is how it's supposed to be. "Falling in love" is the norm – the implication being, that if it doesn't happen, or if it goes away, something is wrong – with you, your spouse or the marriage. A good relationship must first unlearn a great deal.
2. The person who was driven to find "that loving feeling" (reminds me of a song...) usually experiences a high degree of guilt and conflict. He/she is often married to a "good" person and the desire to "find that loving feeling" seems selfish (which it is) and immature (which it is). Intuitively (and this person usually has a great deal of intuition and sensitivity) it is known at another level that he/she is not on the right path.
3. This person usually has a need for drama and excitement. Life easily becomes a soap opera. Emotional juice from the fall-out of emotionally intense relationships reigns rather than living life from the core of who one is.
4. There is little understanding, or perhaps healthy models, of the shifts needed as a relationship matures. For example, "falling out of love" usually happens when the attractors become the distractors. For example: His love for fun and spontaneity, which drew her initially to him, becomes irresponsibility. Her stability and calm, which drew him initially to her, become control.

5. The person “looking for love” is actually looking for the ideal, someone out there, who will project back to him/her that he/she is OK. No, more than OK, close to perfect.
6. This person needs to be adored, or think another adores him/her, because there is a lack of inner strength and solid identity. The other becomes my world, because I lack a world. Being “in love” is the panacea for my emptiness.
7. Sexual intercourse does not need to be a part of these relationships. Sexual activity may indeed END the relationship or at least move it to the point where the attractors become, again, the distracters. The idealized images may be held together by long phone calls, gifts, holding, love letters, e-mails, etc.
8. This type of affair often occurs when there is a “lull” in the marriage relationship. The responsibility of raising children, starting and maintaining a career, paying bills, etc. become the focal point for the couple. Romance becomes a foreign word.

People are especially vulnerable for this type of affair after the children are in school and/or the oldest child reaches early adolescence. (There are good reasons for this, from a family systems perspective, but I won't get into that here.)

*Tip: If your spouse is struggling with this type of relationship, make sure you hold and care for your self. Your spouse does not have the capacity to do this for you (or anyone) at this point. Yes, you are ok. Her/his affair says less about you and much more about the emptiness within her/him. It is time for you to know you better. Model for him/her what it means to be a person with a core, with integrity, with boundaries, with values, with meaning, with purpose and actively figure out what your needs are, and get them met. Maybe she will ask questions. Maybe she will not. Maybe soon. Maybe later.*

### Characteristics of the person who has fallen out of love and loves being in love

- Usually gregarious and sociable. Likes to be with people. Seems to get energy from others.
- Is demonstrative. Can have a flair for the dramatic.
- Feelings tend to go up and down. Never quite sure what you are going to get from this person.

- Doesn't think too deeply. Flits along the surface of life. Shies away from "in-depth" conversations.
- Is easily impressed and latches on to that which is "hot" at the moment.
- Can be manipulative. Knows how to get what he thinks he wants from others.
- Responds quickly and intensely to most things around him. Dives into whatever it is before him.  
Parents may have exhibited the same characteristics.
- Values and standards may shift. Never sure what he really believes or where he is going to 'hang his hat.'
- Can be very seductive, flirtatious and a tease. Likes to be around those of the opposite sex.
- Seductive capricious behavior covers inner emptiness and contradictory feelings.

### What can I expect will happen?

1. Hang on to your seat. This may be some ride, much like a thrill ride at Sandusky. There will likely be many ups and downs, spiced with dramatic flair. Watching your spouse go through his gyrations may leave you somewhat dizzy.

He will give his all to this new-found "love" and at other times might find his way back to you.

2. Typically you will struggle with being ignored and feeling rather awful that you can't provide the "love" this other person seems to provide. You might find yourself questioning your capacity to "love" and your desirability. His affections will obviously be centered on that other person.

3. He may want to tell you about this other person. Not only might he want you to know about the other person he may desire to share with you some of the details of this relationship. He might want you involved.

This creates an intense triangle that juices the drama. (Most classical love stories are dramas, complete with a triangle; he "falls in love" with the forbidden or unattainable princess. Often the drama ends as a tragedy – Romeo and Juliet.)

4. Expect some juvenile behavior such as love letters (e-mail), special names, special promises, secrets only for the two of them, etc.

Some of these affair relationships are the result of unfinished business from adolescence. Perhaps he was responsible for family or beset by some trauma or internally or externally imposed injunctions that precluded him from dating, socializing with the opposite sex, and “falling in and out of love” a number of times, which is so important and vital for adolescent development.

5. You may hear the persistent phrase, “I love you, but I’m not in love with you.” He may truly “like you” and depend on your stability, goodness and understanding. The thought of losing that may keep him connected with you.

His fear of losing that which is stable and enduring may conflict with his need to follow his feelings. As well, the possibility of loss may point to the internal emptiness that stirs up very uncomfortable feelings and thoughts. This is part of the roller coaster ride.

6. He may feel very badly about his “inability” to love you and his “inability” not to love the other person. He may express great remorse for the dilemma. He may profess deep sadness for “hurting” you – but, as you know, he has no control. His feelings drive him. His “concern” for you indicates his superficial understanding of relationships. Or, his “concern” for you may be a manipulative attempt to find an easier exit from the marriage.

7. Expect his feelings for the other person to fade. They will fade quickly if this is a pure “I’ve fallen out of love (and just love being in love)” affair. The “romance” of adolescent love affairs start quickly and end as abruptly. If, however, other issues come into play, such as, resentment and/or the inability to say no, you have a more complicated situation that takes longer to resolve.

### Will they live happily ever after?

Most affairs of this nature are usually brief in duration. I have a saying I use often with people, “Feelings are like the Michigan weather (living near Lake Michigan provides contrasting weather patterns). Stick around, and they will change.”

The “loving feelings” one experiences in the beginning of a relationship always fade and change. It is good to have those feelings as a base for a relationship, but guaranteed, they will change.

They begin to change once a couple experiences the qualities that attracted them in the first place as distracters. (His spontaneity becomes irresponsibility and her stability is now perceived as control.)

Or, the feelings begin to change once doses of reality demand consumption. Camelot is threatened by the problems that need to be faced and solved as they consider the day-to-day, mundane issues that face them. Eventually the couple will be confronted with the same “stuck points” that they experienced in previous relationships.

“This too shall pass” is a good mantra to use when faced with this kind of affair. The novelty wears off.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



People tell me a great deal in therapy – more than they would tell anyone else. I know for a fact that over your lifetime you can count on being attracted to other people. Talking in depth to hundreds of people, I conclude that it is not an unusual experience.

Our needs, our models, our values and our capacity to set boundaries according to our personality influence what we do with those attractions. As well, the feelings of love (some call infatuation or to a more extreme, “a case of temporary insanity created by narcissistic flattery”) eventually fade. Whether you can hang in there until this feeling fades is one question.

Another question is the length of time it takes for the feelings to fade for your spouse and the other person. This depends on a number of factors, but they will fade.

All in all, there is a good possibility the marriage can be saved. The odds are especially good if you and your spouse had those “loving feelings” at the beginning of your relationship. Your relationship will fall back on those feelings. If you do not have those feelings to fall upon – were brought together for other reasons - or if the marriage has consistently been characterized by emotional distance, your chances of saving the marriage decrease.

Do you really want to save the marriage?

This question gets at the truth. And, only the ferreting out of the truth will put you on the road to breaking free from the affair, and perhaps saving your marriage – if that is what you REALLY want.



1. Do you really want to save the marriage or does a part of you like the excitement? Do you live vicariously through your partner's emotionality because you have difficulty finding that part within you? Does it appeal to you, but you are unsure how you can create "sparks" for yourself?
2. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you stuck in a role and have difficulty imagining yourself being anywhere or anyone else? Do you feel locked into a role of assuming responsibility and stability? Are you unsure of who you are apart from those behaviors? Do you want to return to what was at least familiar?
3. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you feel as if you are in competition with the other person...and you don't like to lose? You want to win him back and maybe even rub it in her face?
4. Do you really want to save the marriage or do you see yourself as "romantically" incapable? Do you experience yourself as a practical, sometimes emotionally distant person and deep down doubt your capacity to feel what you think he is feeling?

Does the thought of being that "emotional" with someone else also frighten you because you wonder if you can manage such feelings and intensity? Do you think of such romance as a bunch of nonsense?

5. Do you really want to save the marriage or have you learned to tolerate and put up with a great deal of stress, unpredictability and capriciousness from your spouse?

Are you somewhat numb to your own needs and desires? Are you reluctant to state them, and hope he will come to his senses and the two of you can recapture or at least go back to what was?

6. Do you really want to save the marriage or are you fearful of what others might think? Are you duty bound? Is it extremely important to do what is right or what you think you should do? Are you bound by present or past injunctions whereas he seems foot-loose-and-fancy-free?

**What you can specifically do to increase the odds of saving the marriage.**

For many, hearing that your spouse is "in love" with someone else is devastating. I hear often, "I can take her having sex with someone else. I think I can live with that. But, for her to give herself emotionally and "love" someone else...man, that is hard."

So often the offended spouse reacts with intense feelings and pulls out all stops to “win her back.” He applies pressure. Begg. Cajoles. Makes promises. Gets in her face. Sends flowers. Arranges for dates. Talks to her family and friends. Calls her on the phone. Asks questions... daily, sometimes hourly. He is on her like a fly on do-do.

It doesn't work.

Why? Well, for one reason she has found all the stimulation and excitement she supposedly needs in her new found “love.” At a deeper level this is confusing

enough for her. Any additional input will be overwhelming and she is liable to close the door on the marriage even further.

Plus, she is really looking for some stability, some solid centered core that will hold her firm when the wind of drama entices her and blows around her. If you bombard her with your neediness, you are certainly not the person who can help her in ways she really seeks.

She also is liable to create a polarity and begin comparing you to him. With your neediness dripping all over you, you don't stand a very good chance of coming out on top. Sorry!

Here's a tactic that helps solve the dilemma and gives you a greater chance of saving the marriage.

It's called “back off!”

Stop pressing. Slow down the pace. Be silent – most of the time. Stop making requests. Stop asking questions. Stop trying to wiggle out some assurance. Stop being a pain!

Remember, this “in love” state will fade. You need to have the confidence that it will. You need patience. The relationship will run its course.

She needs the space. She needs some quiet moments to truly hear herself and face the emptiness within. There will be a voice within her that says, “This will not last. Is this what I really want? At some time I must live in the real world. Where is this taking me? Is this where I really want to go? Why am I so dependent on him? Why do I feel this empty pit in my stomach when I'm not with him? What does this say about me?”

This is her opportunity to learn about TRUE love. Don't get in her way.

I know. I know. This is easier said than done. But, you must do it. It is vitally important that you learn to quiet yourself, control yourself and keep on the straight

and narrow path. Go back and read the segment on charging neutral if you must. Use that skill.

This will take some effort. It might take some coaching or therapy. It most likely will demand that you get to know yourself better, that you gain more confidence in you – apart from what she does with him – that you build a strong foundation under yourself that can weather any storm. This is your opportunity to grow to another level.

Oh, by the way. She will notice! And....she might like it.

Backing off does not mean that you don't have anything to do with her. Quite the contrary. You want to maintain your contact with her, but it will be **QUALITY** contact. It will be contact that does honor to you, confronts her with the reality of her decisions and works toward resolution for the marriage.

A skill to learn for this situation is called "contextualize."

Contextualizing means that you grasp the larger picture and make comments to her about what you observe happening. You do not engage her in arguments and you need not go into lengthy explanations. You ascribe labels to the behaviors and what is "behind" the affair.

Your job is to provide a compass and she is invited to follow your direction. You point the way or let her know there is another way. Hopefully, she will gain her bearings.

Allow me to give some examples of what you might say. (These are just suggested questions or comments. If they fit, take a couple and adapt them to your style of communication.) I want you to get an idea of what this would sound like in a face to face confrontation. Here they are:

- You seem to put your eggs in one basket without consideration of the long-term consequences.
- You know these feelings you have for him will fade, don't you?
- You must feel like a teenager sometimes. I wonder if that is how you **REALLY** want to feel?
- I wonder what you do with the inner confusion?
- Do you ever think you might be ruining a good thing between you and I?
- What is happening to you is infatuation. It feels good. But, it won't last.

- You seem so needy and unsure of who you really are sometimes.
- You thrive on drama.
- You seem to skip along the surface of life. At once I was enticed by that, but not any more.
- Is there ever any peaceful quiet in your life?
- You have a very seductive way of getting what you think you want.
- You certainly have passion. I hope it doesn't get you hurt.

Get the idea?

It often matters more how you say something than what you say. That is the case here. Charge neutral is your goal. You are making comments, not inviting a conversation or argument. If she defends, explains or attacks respond calmly with, "I respect your thoughts. But, I don't agree. I don't care to argue about this. I was just making an observation."

Focus on making your statements in an "open-ended" fashion as well. In other words, don't come across dogmatically or like a know-it-all. Allow your voice to rise at the end of the sentence, indicating that you think this might be the case, are not absolutely sure, but are stating something for her consideration.

Be patient. Wait. Most often it takes time for comments to sink in. She will think about what you said. (She probably IS thinking about what you are saying) but she won't let you know. Give her time to reorient her life around her truth.

You don't have time? You want her to stop this foolishness now? Of course you do. But, it doesn't usually work that way. The best wine takes time to ferment.

The issue of time is your problem. Take your anxiety about when this will end and instead of expressing it to her, look at your anxiety and begin a reconstruction project on your self. Move yourself to a higher level of living and functioning. Use this as an opportunity to gain self-confidence. Move out of the old roles and ways of relating that kept you locked in an unsatisfying marriage.

THIS will work. You will feel better and more confident about the relationships you establish. And, really...it is the first step in saving your marriage...if you really want to.

## #5: I Want to Get Back at Him/Her

This is the revenge affair. It occurs in a marriage in which one feels slighted in

some manner and seeks revenge by engaging in an affair. It is less a movement toward the other person and more a movement away from one's spouse.

## Key Points

1. The affair may be a direct response to the affair of the spouse. "I'll show you! Take this! I want you to hurt as much as I hurt." Or the affair may be revenge for some other form of cut-off or perceived emotional injury: "I'm not getting enough here, so I'll show you!" Or, "There, I got your attention!"

2. This typically occurs in a marriage where effective personal confrontation does not happen or happens ineffectively. There is a mistrust of expressing one's self fully to the other person. The marriage relationship usually is marked by civility, but the two, in essence, do not know each other very well. They are polite, but there is no fire. They may want more, but are not sure how to get more.

3. The fire that does exist is a smoldering tension under the surface of the marriage. The tension may be the result of the frustration that one or both experience when they believe their needs are not being met. There is a genuine desire for more – from the spouse – but it's not happening.

4. This form of revenge affair serves as a wake-up call for the relationship. If, and I use the word if advisedly, the couple can "get it out" – drain off the tension – and begin talking about needs, yes, the relationship stands a very good chance of turning into something wonderful. One or both must say with a great deal of passion, "I REALLY want you! I no longer will settle for the boiling frustration and seeming indifference to my needs. This is what I need and expect...."

5. There is another kind of revenge affair that holds less hope and is more destructive. A revenge affair may be the result of long-standing and unresolved anger or rage toward the opposite sex. There is a persistent pattern of the person pushing others away with rage or anger. There also is a great deal of projection, or this person blaming others for his/her situation.

6. This form of anger is more rage than frustration. The rage emerges from a desire to hurt rather than from the frustration of needs not being met. This person exhibits little concern, as well, for the other person. Whereas someone more frustrated because they want their needs met, is usually more considerate of the other person.

Tip: Begin to make distinctions between rage and frustration. Determine the type of revenge affair you must face. If it is rage, learn to protect yourself and set boundaries. Begin to take exceptional care of yourself. Begin to say no! If it is an

affair of frustration, begin looking at your needs. Identify and express those needs. Take a risk. Turn up the passion button. Dare to engage about needs, both yours and the others.

## Characteristics of the person who wants to get back at him/her

These characteristics apply mainly to the person who is revenge and not rage oriented. The rage component is tied to someone who can't say no. If you need a refresher, go back to the section that describes someone who can't say no.

- Usually is rather unpredictable and erratic in his behavior.
- Has a hard time making decisions.
- Is often impatient and irritable when things don't go his way.
- Some of the resentment seems to "seep out" along the edges, maybe when you least expect it.
- Engages in teasing.
- Can be stubborn and unyielding.
- May often take oppositional view and pride himself on being contrary or taking an unpopular stance.
- Can have moments of impulsive behavior and be labeled high-strung or tightly wired.
- Has an underlying worldview that is pessimistic. Glass is half empty.
- Has a tendency to whine or complain.
- May have moments of sullenness and dejection.
- Women may respond very intensely during their menstrual cycle. Men may appear very moody at certain times of the month.
- Manipulates others with unpredictability and demandingness.
- Family of origin often marked by factions and sibling rivalry.
- Has difficulty with intimacy since his behavior patterns push people away.

## What can I expect will happen?

As mentioned earlier, these expectations apply to a revenge affair, not necessarily a rage affair. Rage is more primitive and more deeply engrained and is much more difficult to deal with. See if these expectations fit the revenge affair.

- It may become obvious that he really wants you to know about the affair. He will not be very careful in covering his tracks. There will be clues, some obvious and others not so obvious, that he is engaged with someone else. And he might anticipate, and at one level welcome, an intense response.
- There will be moments of quiet whereby he withdraws and those moments will be punctuated with outbursts or some form of crisis. You are never sure when or where it is going to come from. You will feel on edge, vigilant, waiting for the next outburst.
- He may sometimes, in a fairly passive manner, rub the affair in your face. He may draw comparisons between you and the other person. And of course, you come out on the losing end. He may “misplace” notes or leave e-mails for you to find in which you feel diminished. He may spend more money on her or take her to places the two of you talked about visiting. And of course, you will find out.
- It might seem like a game. He won't let go of you but he keeps the other person on the string, and reminds you of that fact. He probably won't confide in you about the nature of his relationship with the other person. He wants you to guess. Will he? Won't he? He claims he doesn't know what he's going to do. And, you feel like you have no clue.
- There is an undercurrent of hostility. You feel it. It seems as if he is seething most days, but it's just under the surface. Although he works hard at being a “nice guy” his body language, tone of voice, the words he uses drip with this hostility.
- If confronted, he will most likely deny that he is hostile or angry. You are aware of the tension you feel when he is around or when you think of him being around.
- Your relationship with him feels like a tug-of-war. This is different from the roller-coaster feeling that some marriages experience. Your relationship with him is a constant struggle. You pull in one direction and he pulls just as hard in the other. You can count on it. There seems to be no meeting, no negotiation, and no discussion about what is happening. The hostility poisons that possibility.

## Will they live happily ever after?

Remember, his focal point is not so much the other person but you. Although he may profess his love for her or it may seem to you that his relationship with her is solid and passionate, he keeps one eye on you.

The length of his relationship with the other person depends on a couple things.

First, it depends on how long it takes him to address his underlying tension and frustration. Internally he is tied in knots – and has been for a long time. View the affair as his attempt to move to a greater awareness of this conflict within and his desire to achieve a different way of moderating and expressing his turmoil and getting what he truly wants – without pushing others away.

It will be difficult for him to face his internal dissatisfaction and turmoil and express it more directly to you. The more difficult and the longer it takes, the more he will want the other person to “hang around.”

Second, the other person might get tired of tolerating his moodiness, erratic behavior and not knowing the direction of the relationship. She most likely will feel “strung along” (which probably is the truth) and will not receive definitive answers about his intentions. She might end the relationship, depending on her situation and the reasons for her being with him in the first place.

Again, he most interested in having a passionate, intimate “peace-filled” relationship with you, but doesn’t know how. If the two of you can begin to face constructively and ameliorate the underlying tension, the other person will quickly become history.

## What are the odds of saving the marriage?

Let’s break this down into the two components.

First, the revenge affair. Because of the underlying commitment and emotional connection there is a good chance the marriage will be saved. He really does want you. He doesn’t know how to get it. I give this one a 3.



The rage affair is different. This holds the potential for a great deal of pain and the rage indicates some fairly strong and deeply engrained patterns of destructive thoughts and behavior. The rage affair fits more accurately with someone who has a difficult time saying no.



Even though the emotional investment is usually high the offended spouse at one point, when the torment becomes too much, will reluctantly leave the relationship. I give this one a 7.



Do you really want to save the marriage?

If you are serious about saving the marriage and want to learn exactly what you can say and do to switch the momentum of the affair and marriage, you must begin with this question.

So, take some time. Think hard. Be brutally honest. This is your first step toward breaking free and getting the life and relationship you really want.

- Do you really want to save the marriage or have you been through the cycle with him so many times it feels like an old friend? Over time the tension builds within him. He allows it no constructive outlet. It's like a balloon expanding with air. Too much pressure and it explodes.

He might not explode but every so often you watch the tension boil over. It oozes out over the edges in one form or another. You've been there. Done that. Do you see the pattern? Is it familiar?

- Do you really want to save the marriage or are you immune to the ante being raised each time? It is very hard to see the forest when we are in the midst of the trees. As you go through the cycles of tension – release, you may be aware that the release of tension each time becomes more destructive or it takes longer to release. There is a spiraling effect whereby each time feels like it screws you into a deeper hole.

Are you so deep, you see no way out except to continue doing what you have done; which is get back with him and repeat the cycle again?

- Do you really want to save the marriage or are you fearful of his anger and hostility and dare not confront? Having him back may mean you can truly hold off letting him know the depth of your pain, confusion and self. Having him back may seem like the safe route.
- Do you really want to save the marriage or is your self-esteem battered to the degree that you believe you cannot function independently? Being on the receiving end of passive aggressive behaviors (subtle digs, rolling the eyes, condescending tone of voice, being late, not keeping promises, put-

downs in public, withholding, etc.) takes its toll, especially over the years.

You hear the message frequently and consistently (although not overtly loud) that there is something wrong with you. It tarnishes your soul. It clouds your thinking. It deadens your spirit. You question your capacity to function.

- Do you really want to save the marriage or is it difficult to think of not being the beacon light for your family, or perhaps even marriage? Perhaps you have held the family together in the midst of his erratic, unpredictable and sometimes impulsive negative behaviors. Do you wonder what would happen to your children, or to him if you weren't the bright guiding star that made the peace?
- Do you really want to save the marriage or have you through the constant habit of vigilantly watching him; attempting to predict the eruptions and moderate the tension, lost sight of your self? Does the thought of reclaiming or building YOUR self seem strange and foreign? Are you so tuned into him that you no longer seem able to tune into you?
- Do you really want to save the marriage or do you get something from the game that seems important to you right now? Perhaps there is a secondary gain for you that keeps you hanging in there. What might that be? Does it keep you connected with him? Do you get some form of recognition although it frequently may be negative? Something often is better than nothing. Is it important for you to be a person who holds it together? Is there a sense of predictability in the face of his unpredictability?

**What you can specifically do to increase the odds of saving the marriage.**

This type of affair is born out of intense frustration that doesn't know where to go.

The frustration is generated by the fact that he doesn't have a clue what to do with his personal needs. He usually hasn't given much thought to what he really needs and less to what he can do to get those personal needs met once he identifies them. This is a common problem. Have you ever given much intentional thought to how you want your personal needs met to make your life great? Not many of us have.

(I've included a segment in my membership program that allows you to choose from dozens of personal needs and forge a plan to get them met. Once met, they lose their power to control you, and the frustration vanishes.)

Another problem you run into with him is his resistance to most of what you suggest. Rather than face the truth with you, he mutters, walks away or in some way refuses to hear you. You say black, he says white. You say white, he says

black.

I'm giving you three strategies to combat this pattern. These three suggestions will dramatically increase your chances of stopping the affair and moving the marriage toward the possibility of being saved and made richer.

The first is called "Gapping the Goal."

Remember, the major problem is that he really wants something but doesn't know how to get it. He has a goal, albeit fuzzy, but it seems unattainable or does not know what path to take to get it.

The affair may be an attempt to let you know what he really wants. This may indicate a desire on his part to bridge the gap. (Not a very intelligent or practical way to bridge the gap, but oh well...)

This strategy helps you help him identify what it is he wants/needs, exactly. You set the context or atmosphere where it is OK to talk about and explore personal needs directly. You want him to feel pulled toward his goals rather than having to fight and push to get what he really wants.

Charging neutral is important. If you are unable to do that, get some coaching or spend significant time and energy learning that skill.

Here is what you want to communicate.

(Remember, most of communication is nonverbal. Watch your tone of voice, body posture, etc. Practice in front of a mirror if necessary. Take these words, and if you feel comfortable using them, feel free. If you need to adapt the words to your style, do so, of course.)

- There must be something you desperately want for yourself – but aren't sure how to find it?
- Do you truly find your personal needs met in the other relationship?
- You obviously think of this marriage as a place where your needs are not met. Is that true?
- I see you struggling so hard...trying to find or get something....
- I wonder sometimes if you need love, affection, recognition,  
\_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).
- Tell me about your vision of the perfect relationship.
- Do you remember a time when your needs were met in our relationship?

- Could you tell me one thing that you find attractive in your relationship with her?

Notice the focus on his needs. Also remember that his needs not being met says more about him than about your or your relationship with him. Keep that in mind so you can hold yourself, not become defensive or reactive.

The second strategy is called “Make Him Right.”

This may sound strange, but it works. It works because it counters the oppositional stance that he usually takes. Rather than oppose him, argue or withdraw yourself, agree with him! This defuses the tension and hostility and may bring you closer to him.

Now, you say, how in the world can I agree with what he is doing? You are not agreeing with what he is doing, but you are agreeing with who he is and the underlying needs he attempts to meet. Make them right.

You will break out the predictable and frustrating cycle that has probably plagued your relationship for a long time. If you are serious about saving the marriage, give this a try.

Here is what you want to convey:

- I agree with you: this relationship has left something to be desired.
- I can understand your desire to see someone else. When I’m feeling down, I wonder sometimes what it would be like to be with someone else.
- You certainly are entitled to your frustration and resentment. I’ve felt some too.
- I agree with your attempt to find a different way to make your life better.
- I’m actually glad (well...sometimes) that you took this step to resolve our relationship.
- I think you are right. It is time to evaluate the marriage.
- You are doing what you need to do for you at this point in your life, and I want you to know that I respect that. I may not like it, but I respect it.

The third strategy coincides or makes more complete the first two. This strategy is called, “Matching the Mood.”

Again, the underlying goal is to generate conversation about needs, because that is what he probably needs! To do so, you must first break through the tendency for him, and perhaps yourself, to take oppositional stances. You must begin to get a sense of melting together rather than going to your respective corners.

You want to be “with” him wherever he might be in terms of his mood or energy level. It’s called in the therapy business, “pacing.” Follow his pace. Follow his lead. If necessary, practice matching his tone of voice, rate of speech, body movements. (Be subtle, OK? Or again, practice and rehearse.)

Don’t overdo this. Be aware. Don’t mimic his frustration by being frustrated. But do follow his rate of speech and tone of voice. (i.e. “I hear you being very frustrated right now” – using same tone, pitch, rate!).

Get close to him. Start talking about needs.

## #6: I Need to Prove My Desirability

Let’s face it: Most of us are on pretty shaky grounds when it comes to our sexuality. Look at the models before us on TV, the big screens and magazines. Geezzz-Louise, how is anyone ever to feel as if they measure up or are desirable?

Also, a key in a marriage is the degree to which someone feels wanted. I want to be wanted. After “familiarity” sets into a marriage, self-doubts are easily rekindled. (A key component of “being in love” is the giddy feeling of thinking I am deeply wanted or adored. If one does not understand the stages of marital growth or lacks a core sense of self from which to live, he/she becomes prey to confusion and disenchantment.)

### Key Points

1. General feelings and thoughts of inadequacy may emerge as the passion of a committed relationship fades. This typically triggers deeply engrained negative ways of thinking culminating in: “There must be something wrong with me!” This person may begin a quiet internal nagging dialogue about his/her intimate/sexual relationship.
2. The perceived area of inadequacy and desirability may be very specific. He/she may feel very inferior with particular parts of foreplay, intercourse, sexual thoughts, fantasies, body image or ability to relate intimately with the opposite sex.
3. A relationship outside of the marriage may emerge that seemingly offers an opportunity to explore those areas of concern and perceived inadequacy. The relationship may seem safe. Geographical distance, background

differences, strong family commitments or other issues mean that the length and degree of true intimacy in the relationship will be limited.

4. The affair is usually of brief duration and will probably be the only affair in that person's life. Sometimes it's a matter of a one-night stand. A huge drive to "find out" is met. Some internal changes usually take place that internally realign his/her thinking and feelings about sexuality and intimacy.

5. Intense guilt usually is a by-product of this affair. The person will feel legitimately terrible about what he/she did. Remorse prevails.

6. Others view the affair as very uncharacteristic of this person. No one expected that he/she would do such a thing. They are puzzled. They are even more puzzled when they ask why he/she did it and they hear, "I don't know." Truly, they may not know or be aware of the power or source of the underlying quest to be, in their minds, desirable.

*Tip: This type of affair is a great opportunity for a married couple to move their level of sexual and emotional intimacy to new levels. It is crucial to talk... talk some more...and more. Often, sex can be surprisingly passionate and powerful once the disclosure is made. The "wounded" spouse must work hard at not personalizing the affair and provide a warm accepting environment to talk... and talk more...and more. The "offending" spouse must open up and continue exploring in detail his/her sexuality.*

### Characteristics of the person who needs to prove her desirability

- Usually shy or introverted.
- Often cares deeply for others and may focus life around caring for others
- Serious about life and would not fit "life of the party" category
- Can be very creative and imaginative
- Tends to enjoy time alone and can find value in being with self
- Has as "sensitivity" to life; likes animals, nature, the arts
- Takes a while to warm up to others, but once she does, is a great friend
- May seem to be a mystery, not sure what she is thinking
- It may not cross your mind to ask her what she is thinking. She doesn't make waves

- May have struggled for recognition and belonging as a teenager
- She probably did not receive much validation from her family who raised her
- Thinks deeply, may read a great deal, “the gears are always turning”
- Internally may be bound by significant guilt and shame
- Is a very wonderful person to be around; liked by most

### What can I expect will happen?

- Secrecy. She will be very reluctant to tell you what happened or is happening. You might pick up on her not “being the same” but it will be difficult to pinpoint exactly the problem. She might appear more withdrawn and she might pull away from you when you approach her. Or, she will make sure that she places herself in situations where she doesn’t have to talk to you or confront you.
- You may see tears and much remorse. The tears may flow freely but she may find it very difficult to talk about them. You may ask and she may not respond. She truly may NOT know what to say. She hasn’t figured out within herself what is or has happened and truly has no words, just tears. Her behavior may seem incomprehensible to her.
- You may see tears and much remorse and she may know exactly where they come from, but will find it very difficult to share that with you. This arises not out of her desire to push you away but out of her guilt and shame. It literally pains her to think of what she did or is doing. Her guilt and shame, in her mind, reinforce her negative thinking that tells her, “You really are not desirable or OK.”
- She may threaten to leave you or walk out. She may pack her bags or leave for a while, saying she needs her “space.” It’s not that she really wants to leave, but at that point does not see herself as worthy or capable of being with you. It’s also doubtful she will go to the other person. She truly may need some time to gather herself, apart from anyone else.
- She may very slowly and tentatively approach you with herself. She will send out clues, some very subtle, that she is willing to talk...a little. She is sending you a message that you are important to her but she needs to know it is safe to be around you. She anticipates that you will reject her. She needs to know and experience safety with you.
- Her affair may serve the purpose of ameliorating and resolving left over

sexual abuse or sexual trauma issues from her history. If so, the process will take longer. She will want you to hang in there with her, although she will not be able to tell you what that means.

- If past sexual encounters contribute to her pain, she will begin to experience more clearly images and feelings “locked” in her from her past experiences. These may be very frightening and powerful. She truly may not know where they come from. Her life and your life with her may take on a chaotic and unpredictable flavor.

### Will they live happily ever after?

These affairs are usually short lived – one night stands or relationships that crescendo toward intercourse and then evaporate.

You must remember that it usually violates her principles and values to be in such a relationship. Actually she surprises herself. She may not be able to believe that she is doing such a thing. “It doesn’t seem like her.” She usually approaches the relationship with a high degree of anxiety and trepidation. It seems to be more of an experiment than a search for another relationship.

It takes courage for her to follow through. She may wade through a long period of vacillation and wavering before she “goes through with it.” Or, the opportunity may present itself (or she puts herself in situations where the opportunity may present itself) and she rather impulsively gives way to her desires.

Sometimes she may be driven by an “unknown force” within that seems to control her thinking and actions. Again, this may seem very “unlike” her. She is highly conflicted, confused by this impulse and yet “feels powerless” in its presence. Her internal conflict may come close to a panic point.

Her focus is not so much on the other person as it is on this internal struggle. In reality she values her marriage and does not want it to end. She is committed to the marriage. Although she finds it extremely difficult to put this struggle into words, let alone share it with him, she does in fact love her husband without many reservations.

Her focal point is her understanding of herself and the resolution of long standing questions about her well-being. Reconstruction of her inner life is paramount, although she may not be consciously aware of that fact. Am I OK as a woman, sexual being and am I, bottom line, a person of value and worth? These are the primary considerations.

### What are the odds of saving the marriage?





The odds of saving this marriage are very good. Although the recovery from the affair often is arduous and long, the offending spouse, if the affair was a “learning experience,” renews his commitment to the marriage.

Often, as well, the offended spouse has the capacity to hang in there and work through the issues. This is a great opportunity for her to reconfigure her life in ways that help create a deeper richer relationship.

If the general intent (often unconscious) of the affair was to repair a sense of inadequacy and this occurred, I give this marriage a 2, and it is well worth saving.

Do you really want to save the marriage?

- Do you have the patience to be with her? This will take patience. Can you put aside your needs and concerns and listen, and I mean really listen? That’s what it will take. Her inadequacies, questions and doubts need to be the focal point of your attention. Often, in this type of marriage, it is you, your needs and life that have been the focal point. She has been in the background. Are you ready to consciously embrace the shift?
- Are you secure in yourself. Do you think well enough of yourself as a sexual being, as a mate and as a person to hang onto yourself as she falls apart? Can you hold your head up high? Can you refuse to put yourself down? Can you maintain that it is her problem, not yours, in a very loving and caring way?
- Can you handle feelings and emotions? There are a bunch of them lying underneath the surface of her life. Can they not frighten you off? Intense appropriate emotions, most likely, have not been in the forefront of your marriage. They will be now! Are you ready?
- Are you ready for a new level of intimacy? Don’t say yes too quickly because a new dose of intimacy may be fairly uncomfortable and seem different, although initially pleasant. You will need to rebalance the relationship with newfound intimacy. Intimacy is just as frightening as too much distance. It’s new. It’s different. You will be called to share new parts of you with her. Are you ready?
- If you want to save the marriage it may mean some changes for you in

terms of new roles. Were you more often the center of attention? The more outgoing person? The one who made the decisions? The one who took the initiative socially, sexually or in other ways? Did she typically defer to you? That may change. She may want more of the attention and action. She will develop new parts of you, that might seemingly conflict with who you think you are or want to be.

- Are you willing to trust again? You never thought this of her. You may have thought that everything was just fine! You had no clue. No idea. And, now this! Are you ready to trust that it won't happen again? Are you willing

to give her the benefit of your doubts? Do you fear getting close to her for fear that you might have to traverse the pain again?

- Are you willing to live with more uncertainty in your life, as she changes, grows and matures and you are called upon to make shifts? Can you trust in the midst of the unknowns, not sure what your future may bring?

What you can specifically do to increase the odds of saving the marriage.

To break free from the affair and work toward a great, not good marriage, you must develop particular skills that are powerful when used correctly. Unfortunately, we do not often see these skills used or modeled properly around us.

Let's start with the fact that her struggle to think of herself as desirable comes from within. The affair is her attempt, albeit a feeble one, to somehow convince her internal self that she is desirable. The battle wages within.

She is most likely very sensitive to anything that comes close to criticism. She has lived her life amidst critics, both internally and externally. She expects criticism. She expects she will not measure up. She expects the negative.

Now, you may not be aware of this. For one thing, she might not talk much about her internal experiences and the way she judges herself. This is her secret world.

Think of her as a flower that is getting ready to bloom. At this point she is closed, tight and perhaps unavailable. She wants to blossom, perhaps she is ready, but needs the proper temperature, light, water and nourishment to take that next step.

Provide that environment and you will find yourself developing a rich marriage.

Provide a harsh environment - one of criticism, judgment and condemnation and the flower remains closed and may never open. You may think you feel better by "venting" or showing her the error of her way, but, for one thing, she knows that already. And secondly, it is not going to help you save the marriage and make it

better.

To increase the odds of having a great marriage, it is important for you to emotionally “hold” yourself so that you no longer have the desire to lash out or extract remorse or guilt. Remember, this is really HER problem.

Do not personalize the affair. (I know, I know, easier said than done. But, this is the best path for you to follow if you want to save the marriage. If you find it impossible to “hold” yourself and not react, get yourself a good coach and work it through. You will be glad you did.)

I will list three different skills and strategies you can intentionally employ.

The first is called being “unconditionally constructive.”

You want to speak to her in ways that are respectful and totally supportive. This does not mean you agree or condone what she did (she knows it was a mistake) but you convey respect to her as a person. Look beneath, beyond the affair to the struggling soul within.

Let her know in your words, body language, and tone of voice that you love HER. Never diminish her. (You can be direct and point out the truth, but you do so in an unconditionally positive way.)

Here are some tips on how to do that.

- Always point to her positive attributes or a positive aspect of the situation.
- You are a sensitive caring person and I love that about you - even though it seemed to get you into trouble in this situation.
- This crisis opens up all kinds of possibilities for us to grow together more deeply.
- You must be tired of beating up on yourself and want to pat yourself on the back.
- You must be searching hard to get affirmation that you are OK. I want to be the person who can do that for you.
- Your struggle with this will open new possibilities for us.
- There is a part of me that is glad, in a way, that this happened. I really want to know you and I want for you to hold your head up high.
- I love you. (said judiciously and when heart-felt.)

Never compare her to other people, to whom she was in the past or the progress she is making. This is judgment and you want to stay away from any sort of judgment. She's been a master at that and is attempting to shift that pattern. Link what is happening to who she is as a person. This will empower her rather than overwhelm her.

- Your quietness seems to be a way for you to think this through. Would you like me to give you more space?
- I saw a smile on your face today.
- You look lost in thought every once in a while.
- I am committed to being with you because you are important to me.

Build up the relationship. Look for the positive, for everything possesses something that is positive.

A second strategy is called, "Peel Layers of the Truth."

This strategy asks you to talk, talk and talk some more, gently peeling back the layers until you arrive at the truth. It's like shedding the layers of an onion until you come to the core.

She has spent a significant amount of energy and effort attempting to protect herself from being known (because, way down there somewhere, she doubts if she will be likeable if truly known). She has developed layer after layer of protective covering under which she hides. (Hey, don't be critical; we all do this!)

Through opening the door with warmth and acceptance, you invite her to share her deeper self, which results in trust and greater intimacy.

In some ways this is more of an art than a skill. Be patient. Learn how to calm yourself and shift your focus to what she is saying underneath the words. Listen! Listen! Welcome! Invite her deeper self.

Just so this doesn't seem so jumbo-mumbo, I will illustrate what I mean through this short conversation. Here it goes:

You: It's important for me to understand why this happened, so hopefully I can be helpful. I don't want us to go through this again. How do you understand what happened?

She: I'm not sure. I don't understand myself.

You: Do you have any clues?

She: Well, to be honest, I've never felt very good about myself...when it came to intimacy.

You: Yeah, I sensed that sometimes. I guess I wasn't sure what to do either. Was there anything specifically that you had a hard time with?

She: Well...I would pull back sometimes. You know, it's really hard for me to talk about this.

You: OK, it's not that easy for me either. But I want you to feel safe to continue. Are you willing to do that?

She: Yes. I really to want to talk about it. I've been holding too much in for too long (the truth!).

I suggest you experiment with this third strategy: silence.

Yes, good ole silence. In reality, it is a lost art. Not many of us think of using silence when it comes to communication. However, it can be a powerful tool when used in particular circumstances and at the right time.

This skill is important for her because she probably does most of her "work" internally. You see, some people need to talk. That's where they solve their problems. They talk them out. They need sound boards. They formulate solutions and ideas as they interact with others.

Some people need to act. They are doers. They learn through trying something and evaluating the outcome. They will try different venues of action. They will play out the problem and look for the solution in what happens.

Others of us think things through. We ruminate. We are not merely lost in thought, but that time is used to rehearse conversations, evaluate what happened, plan a future course of action or replay over and over in our minds what was said and what happened.

Her awareness, insights and solutions to her crisis will emerge from within.

It is often important for you to silently allow her the time to formulate within her mind. So, you might make a statement and see how she responds. Do you know when she is "thinking?" Can you pick up when she goes "inside herself" to think something through. Watch her eyes, her posture and other body language to tell you when she goes "inside."

When she goes inside, be silent. Give her all the time she needs to think. Wait.

Allow her to be the first to speak. Don't interrupt the silence. Bite your tongue or do whatever you need to do to shut up!

Allow her to come up with the insights, comments and solutions. They will be the best kind. And, she will love you for respecting her and knowing exactly what she needs to work through that particular issue.

Sometimes miracles occur in the gaps of our conversations.

Oh, being silent does not mean being disinterested. Be silent but remain connected. Watch her closely. Be attentive to facial movements, eye movements, change in skin color, change in tension of facial muscles and any changes in breathing patterns. She will feel your connection and you might learn a great deal...by being silent.

## #7: I Want to Be Close to Someone (which means I can't stand intimacy)

A marriage or relationship of investment is a dance – a dance of joining and distancing. A couple moves close with the purpose of joining and being one and after a fashion moves apart to claim their own space and uniqueness.

Usually we choose or are attracted to someone with the same comfort zone in the distance/joining continuum or with a similar capacity for joining and/or distancing.

The couple does their dance to balance the pull for joining and the push for individual space and expression. Intimacy is the capacity to talk about and the freedom to move between joining and individual expression.

Someone has an affair because ostensibly they say they want to be close to someone. However, a relationship with a third party is NEVER intimate, but may serve the purpose for that person of never having to be intimate with anyone, although someone may feel close. Got this?

### Key Points

1. Affairs of this nature may be fairly long term in nature, usually with only one other person. The affair serves to siphon off the tension between the spouses as the two experience difficulty in talking about their needs for joining and distancing and successfully working out agreements (usually unspoken) to achieve a balance of being close and apart.
2. The affair may be a highly guarded secret. This secret, in itself, almost guarantees that the marital relationship will remain stuck and not develop in intimacy. A secret is like a blanket that smothers growth.

3. The affair may not be a closely guarded secret. The other spouse may have knowledge of the affair or have a strong inkling, but chooses not to bring it up or say anything. There will be consequences in facing the elephant sitting in the room.
4. The three parties walk somewhat of an emotional tightrope to maintain the balance in the relationships. There is an underlying sense of unease or emptiness.
5. Those nearby will usually pick up on the underlying tension. (At one level, children KNOW what is happening.) Children will sense the tension and may display disturbing symptoms such as illness, acting out, withdrawal, poor performance, etc. as a way of responding to the elephant in the room.

Tip: The biggest obstacle for this couple is garnering the courage to face the truth. Truth telling (either, I'm involved with someone else or, I know you are involved with someone else) will begin the healing and growth process. Both will have an opportunity to evaluate the relationship, explore and define their needs and begin charting a future that holds for them greater freedom and enhanced capacity for intimacy. They will begin to LIVE, whether they choose to maintain the marriage or divorce.

### Characteristics of the person who wants to be close to someone (but can't stand intimacy)

- Usually over controlling of others and himself.
- Is often very methodical, calculating and disciplined about his life.
- Has a hard time laughing and enjoying life. Somewhat grim.
- May appear very proper and respectful on the surface.
- May try to please his superiors and be rather harsh on those "below" him.
- One senses a powerful underlying tension and may fear it erupting at any moment.
- Will disclose little about his inner life or about himself.
- May hint at having a secret life, or you suspect there may be one.
- May isolate himself from family members or family activities.
- May appear calm, and then for no apparent reason "blow up."

- Seems rather mechanical in speech and behavior, especially if confronted by another.
- Has a hard time with change.

### What can I expect will happen?

- If the affair is “in the open” you can expect a great deal of “waffling.” He will sit on the fence and find it difficult to make and keep a commitment to either the marriage or the other person.

He most likely will do with you what he does with the other person. At times you are hopeful that some resolution will take place and then your hopefulness is dashed as he heads in the other direction.

- You will find him very difficult to read. This has always been true, but even more so now. He will play his cards close to the vest, so to speak. His behavior may externally appear very consistent. You may notice him “staring into space” but will not have a clue about the content of that staring. And, he will not acknowledge his staring or will dismiss you as seeing something that doesn’t exist.
- He most likely will display some secretive behavior. He may go somewhere and not tell you. He may hide his briefcase, mail, schedule or other parts of his life from you. This hiding may not be related to the other person, but you do not know. And, he will not volunteer information to help you move off center. A nagging suspiciousness will follow you around.
- He may make promises to leave her or end the relationship. He will tell you when he is going to do that – if you just leave him alone. He says he will take care of it. However, he usually doesn’t follow through.

He probably fully intended to end the relationship but did not. And, he may not tell you if he tried to end the relationship or what happened if indeed he did attempt to do so. In reality, he probably “ended” the relationship a number of times, but found himself wandering back.

- Some form of crisis may develop. The underlying tension takes its toll on him, you, his coworkers, and your children, if you have them. It takes its toll on health and healthy functioning.

Do not be surprised as the tension mounts, and as you try to move toward some form of resolution that illness develops, an accident happens, a work crisis develops or one of your children begins acting out or do what they do to deal with the unspoken stress and tension. The functioning level of your family system loses its effectiveness.



- Find yourself giving a tremendous amount of energy to the process. It takes great effort being around him. It takes great effort communicating verbally with him. You are emotionally taxed at every turn. It's like "pulling teeth" as you attempt to elicit from him some form of self disclosure. He gives you a little but not enough. You throw up your hands and he offers a little more. You ask for more and he backs away. Balancing the teeter-totter is work.
- You feel like tiptoeing. Perhaps you sense and underlying fragility about him. Perhaps you sense that at any day or any moment his world might come crashing down, that his mechanisms to hold his world together will no longer work. You are concerned about how he responds to what you say or what you don't say.

You are concerned about how he responds to what might be happening with the other person. You are fearful to talk about the elephant sitting in the room.

- Without any of the basic patterns altered, expect that it will take months to end the affair, if indeed it does. His wrenching apart from the other relationship and moving toward you takes energy and time. It is a fairly slow process for this kind of affair.

Change does not happen easily with deeply engrained ambivalence. The tendency to hang on drags effective resolution and change to a snails pace.

### Will they live happily ever after?

There often is a sense of "safety" he will experience with the other person, since there is an unspoken agreement to maintain some emotional distance, yet not move too far away from each other.

If it is a long-term affair, that sense of safety may be entrenched. The relationship may fit like a form-fitting glove.

If your marriage remains intact, he most likely will want to keep a "friendship" with her. Do not be tempted to give the green light (for fear of losing him if you say no.) His desire to maintain the "friendship" is his desire to maintain some of the dynamics (or distance) between himself, her AND you.

The other person MUST leave the scene; otherwise, the possibility of you and he facing the truth, confronting each other more powerfully with your needs and desires will be diluted and you will fall back into the familiar distancing patterns.

Here are some other considerations:

If your marriage does not make it, there is a strong possibility that the emotional intensity of his relationship with the other person will fade. He will be faced with the option of committing to her, which may not be appealing for him or her. This would violate the rules of distance/intimacy that have characterized their relationship.

If your marriage does not make it, there is a possibility the two of them may become more like “friends” than lovers or committed partners. They may continue to rely upon each other to siphon off the tension that may develop in other romantic relationships that are pursued.

If they do indeed marry or form a more committed relationship, a very strong possibility exists that the relationship may take on exactly the same flavor as your marriage with him. This holds true unless he gains significant insight and makes the emotional and behavioral shifts necessary for intimacy.

And, if he makes the shifts, it most likely holds true that you too made the shifts and readied your self for a deeper, richer relationship.

A major issue for him, if your relationship ends in divorce, will be one of trust. Can he entrust fully to another? Unless this issue is brought to his awareness and he modifies his thinking and ways of moderating emotional distance, he will find himself in relationships that lack healthy emotional connectiveness.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



This kind of affair is fraught with a great deal of ambivalence. Do I? Don't I? And the ambivalence is frequently locked tight, which means she finds it difficult to move off center and commit.

As well, an underlying frustration, irritability, impatience, almost seething anger boils. This gets in the way of looking at her spouse in a realistic light. Do you feel the underlying tension?

She has developed many defenses over the years to avoid intimacy, which become deeply ingrained and mitigate her from facing and working through her ambivalence. She is stuck! Mainly for that reason, I give this couple a 7.

Do you really want to save the marriage?

- Do you really want to save the marriage or are you short on patience? Making

the shifts and changes necessary to establish a rich relationship for someone locked tightly in their ambivalence is often an arduous and long path.

Progress may seem painfully slow. You may be the one who takes the leap of change and growth and he may be left in your wake. Can, or will, he catch up?

- Do you really want to save the marriage or are you locked into fear? It takes courage to face the truth and take a hard look at one's needs and patterns. Confronting the relationship and moving through the impasse takes energy and determination. After all, you are not sure what will emerge.
- Do you really want to save the marriage or is there a strange sense of comfort you get, or at least familiarity, with another person in the mix? Does it ever seem "safe" that he is with her and you are not required to face the emptiness within the marriage? This may seem rather unusual, but in fact, it is very common. Do you find yourself protesting, but not taking the action necessary to resolve the dilemma?
- Do you really want to save the marriage or are you bound by your mistrust? Do you find it difficult to trust your own feelings, your own thoughts and intuitions? Are you not sure what you really want or how to get it and thereby prolong your place in the marriage or find it difficult to take the necessary actions to break free from the affair? Does your confusion keep you where you are?

What you can specifically do to increase the odds of saving the marriage.

The underlying dynamic of "being stuck" is a polarity.

Allow me to explain. It's really not that mysterious or difficult to understand. What makes you stuck? Well, it's usually that one "part" of you pulls you in one direction, and another "part" pulls you in another direction.

One part of you wants to take a fabulous vacation. Another part says, "No, I can't afford it." One part says, "I must lose weight." Another part, "I want that desert." One part thinks, "I want to have children." Another, "I want my freedom and a career."

The greater the emotional investment and the more impacting the consequences, the more difficult it becomes to "decide" which part to follow. So, no decision is made and one continues moving hesitantly toward one part, and then is beckoned back by the other.

This process, if the investment is high, generates internal tension. One feels the tug

and pull and expends energy trying to decide and manage the resulting tension. One is stuck when it seems that one part does not take precedence. You go nowhere. You spin your wheels and run over the same territory time and time again.

So, one part of him feels pulled toward the marriage, where he finds familiarity and stability. Another part feels pulled toward the other person, where he believes he can find excitement and freedom. Or he sees the marriage as the place to find authentic intimacy or the freedom to express himself, and he also sees the other person providing those opportunities.

He becomes stuck in his ambivalence and movement ceases. He doesn't know. He has difficulty expressing his desires or needs largely because he has not stopped to become aware of his own ambivalence. He has not given full weight to each part. Instead he is locked in the middle, attempting to manage the tension and avoiding facing the truth of both poles.

It is vitally important to get off center. You do so by first identifying the poles, and start pulling anything you can get your mind around into pieces.

I offer you three techniques or tactics to help you do this.

(Remember, you probably are ambivalent yourself. Correct? You waffle as much as he? You are not sure, really, what direction you want to pursue? If so, this is normal. Apply these tactics to yourself as well as to your marriage.)

Here's the first tactic: Get to the Real Commitment.

Being stuck means you are reluctant to commit because you have not found that to which you truthfully want to commit.

Getting to the real commitment means you sort through the different layers until you arrive at the real commitment. Covering the real commitment is a series of shoulds and musts that dictate behavior that is played out in a begrudging way. He also may repeatedly attempt to get his personal needs met without much luck. The energy he expends in these two futile goals keeps him away from identifying his real commitments.

Here are some ways to dig beneath the surface, uncover the real commitment and move toward a resolution of the affair.

First, look for inconsistencies. Someone who is stuck and waffles back and forth is filled with inconsistencies. Here are some possible inconsistencies:

- He says he wants to be married but calls her frequently.

- He says he loves the other person but makes no commitment to her.
- He says he wants intimacy but stares off into space when he's with you.
- He says he wants intimacy, or to feel love, but can't express his true feelings and thoughts.
- He says he wants a great relationship but he keeps secrets.
- He says he wants a great relationship but he breaks his promises.
- He says he wants to be free but seems emotionally wired and tied in knots.
- He says he wants to love but withholds himself.

Can you think of more that fit your relationship with him? Jot them down here in the margins. Spend some time reflecting and writing down at least 10 inconsistencies you observe.

Then, I want you to jump on these inconsistencies. Let him know what you see! Point them out! Do so charging neutral, with a calm tone of voice and demeanor. Keep banging away. Keep knocking on his emotional door. Tell him what you observe.

If he seems receptive or at least gives what you say some thought, the next step is to break down what you observe into their polarities. Try on these phrases:

- A part of you wants to be married but another part wants to be with her?
- A part of you wants to make a commitment to the marriage and another part wants to make a commitment to her?
- A part of you wants to be close, but another part pulls back and stares off into space?
- A part of you makes promises to me and another part of you makes promises to her?
- A part of you dreams of letting yourself be known to another person and another part says, "No way!"

Get the idea? Most people tied up in the knots of ambivalence or not making a commitment are unaware of these two different parts, one sitting on one shoulder whispering "yes" in one ear and the other sitting on the other shoulder whispering "no" in the other ear.

Once you begin to talk about the conflicting tugs and pulls you begin to open the gates for constructive conversation. This may be the beginning point to work toward breaking free from the affair and resolving your marriage. At least it is a start.

Second, look for upset. That's right, read him carefully and when you notice emotional upset, be prepared to jump again.

Emotional upset is a marker for the tension that emerges as a result of not making a commitment and teetering back and forth. He most likely will attempt to control his feelings and not let them be known, since he is not sure what to do with them once they are there. Emotional upset is another place to begin breaking down the ambivalence and begin talking about the internal conflict.

Watch carefully for the upset and call attention to what you see. Label what you observe, without judgment or effusive comment. Play it cool. For example:

- "I noticed you just took a deep breath. I wonder what you were thinking about and what might be bothering you?"
- "Your face is turning slightly red as we talk about this. Does talking about this bother you?"
- "I notice that you start to turn away when we get close to "x" topic. You must struggle with that?"
- "You find it hard to look at me when we talk about our marriage? You must feel torn?"
- "I notice you staring off into space every so often. You must be working hard at trying to think something through?"
- "I hear that abruptness in your voice. You don't want to go there?"

Once you call attention to the behaviors that indicate the tension, you are setting the stage to begin communicating about the internal tugs and pulls. Once you begin to explore the conflicting parts and the resulting tension, you increase the chances of moving toward resolution.

Remember however, that this process takes time. Don't expect overnight miracles. The roots of this pattern are deep. Can you be patient?

Turn it up a notch!

You don't get the response you would like? Feel like you are still "pussy-footing" around the issues? Your frustration level is mounting? Turn it up a notch by using what I call Step Over Nothing.

Go for it. Be willing to say something when you hear it. Honor the inklings and intuitions that tell you that something is amiss in what happened. Nothing is sacred. You know that elephant is sitting in the middle of the room. Start looking at it and talking about it.

Use Step Over Nothing when he is indirect, passive or noncommittal in his communication. Use it when he makes an off-the-cuff confusing comment. Use it when he makes a dig or puts you down in a passive way. Use it when he teases or makes light of a situation that bothers you. Use it when you feel the frustration and upset building.

This may open the gates. In reality he might want you to pick up on some of his cryptic messages for which he lacks the courage or know-how to be direct. You might be doing him a service with Step Over Nothing.

Step Over Nothing takes courage. This most likely has not been a part of your communication repertoire and you may feel very uncomfortable or question how he might respond. That's OK. It takes a risk often to break out of the old patterns that bind and hold us from getting what we truly want.

Here are some tips:

- Make sure you charge neutral when using Step Over Nothing. Say it with passion and feeling, but rid yourself of any anger, resentment and judgment that tends to point the finger at him. You **MUST** be in control of you.
- If you notice that something is "off" in the communication, take it seriously. Don't let it slide. This is the time to use Step Over Nothing. Go for it.
- Interrupt if need be. Jump in there.
- Keep pushing. Don't give up. Keep at getting to the truth or what lies beneath what you notice.
- Be light. Take a deep breath. Center yourself. Hold yourself. Taking a risk of this nature is not the end of the world. You are OK!

Here are some examples:

- Hey (name), You're (muttering under your breath, shutting down, walking away, rolling your eyes, etc.) and I'm really tired of the game.
- I refuse to live this way any longer. Let's get to the bottom of whatever we need to get to the bottom of, and get on with our lives.
- What IS going on with you? You CAN speak!
- (He puts you down or makes a dig.) No more! I will not tolerate any longer your digs. It's over. I want to be married to someone who respects me. If you don't like something about me, I want you to look me in the eyes and say, "I have a real problem with 'x' that you do." I CAN handle that. I can no longer handle the digs.
- (He teases and "kids.") I want you to look at me. Tell me what lies behind the teasing. I sense you are trying to say something and avoid something at the same time. What gives? I would rather face the truth and deal with it so we can have a healthy relationship – whether we are married to each other or not.

You are upping the ante when you use this strategy. You are hoping to break free from the impasse and begin some constructive movement and resolution in the relationship. You are opening the box.

He might truly appreciate your forthrightness and you might find him moving a tad closer to you. He might be intrigued by the possibilities of such a relationship. It might be what he truly wants.

Or he might pull away further. He may not be ready, not now or ever, to face the truth with another woman. At least you will know at that point, more accurately, where you stand. Such information can help you make decisions as you move through the process of breaking free from the affair.

Take the leap!

Up to this point your strategy has centered on changing your responses to elicit a different kind of response from him. In essence, you do what you do to get him to do what you want him to do for you! This is dicey because the focal point is outside yourself, on him.

He may resist change because he senses that he is your focal point and he really does not want you to focus on him. He may feel threatened because it invites intimacy or he may truly want to relate to someone who is not afraid to take a firm stand, be decisive and comes from an internal wellspring of ideas, feelings,



opinions and thoughts.

If the first two strategies fall flat, there is a third called Leaping Your Partner.

Use Leaping Your Partner when:

- The circumstances with him feel intolerable. You are at the end of your rope.
- Your integrity is at stake. You are unable to do what is right for you.
- You have tried the above two strategies and find them wanting.

When you Leap Your Partner, you shift your focal point away from him to you. You no longer worry or fret about what he needs, what he is thinking, what he is feeling and what he is going to do next.

You focus on you. Specifically, you focus on you and your needs. What do you really need? And, what plan(s) can you create to get your needs met? (If you are not sure how to do this, contact me. I have a great program used by thousands to identify needs and work toward meeting them. This really works!)

Make changes in your behavior. Make radical changes, providing you act with integrity and refrain from harming others. You take the lead. You step out. You make the shifts and leaps in your life you always dreamed of making.

If you are not sure of how to do this or need some input, get a coach who can support and guide you in the process.

What are possible results of this strategy?

- You get the marriage off center. Growth and forward movement of one person in the marriage, impacts the marriage. It disrupts the old patterns and status quo. The other person who does not grow is faced with the dilemma of how to respond to the changes. This provides the impetus for a new kind of marriage hopefully marked by greater maturity and sustained intimacy.
- You will feel much better. You will get a life. You will have more energy and confidence.
- You will become more attractive. Someone who knows what they need and want and goes for, it is admired. Gosh, how did she do that? I wish I had the courage to speak out and get my needs met!
- He cannot not change. He must respond in some manner to this new person in his life. You have no guarantees how he will respond, but whatever he chooses to do, you will have the internal resources to handle anything.

## V. Appendix

- 7 Powerful Tactics to Break Free From the Affair and Stop it NOW

Follow these 7 suggestions and I guarantee great results. I guarantee that you will feel exceedingly better, and I also guarantee that your spouse WILL NOTICE. If you want to STOP your spouse from having the affair, these are your best strategies, by far. They work.

With that said, let me also stress that this is not an easy road, but is probably easier than you might think right now. These strategies work beautifully for most kinds of affairs. I would guess that they are effective in 75% of affairs. They are least likely to work with philanderers and those entrenched in strong addictive kinds of behaviors.

Also know that these strategies demand strength, energy and emotional control. Are you there? Are you strong enough to control your feelings, to maintain positive thoughts about yourself, at least most of the time? You may not be.

Discovery of the affair usually takes a tremendous toll on one's self esteem and emotional vitality. You might need propping. You might need to develop your strength and internal confidence before, or at least during, the time you try on these 7 strategies.

If you are not there, don't worry and don't berate yourself. There are resources to help build and prepare you for these strategies. It is normal to be devastated, angry, lost and confused. But you can, and will, move on.

One more thing...and this is a little tricky. Do not use these strategies as a manipulative tool to change what your spouse is doing. He/she will pick up on your motive and see through it. He/she will easily manipulate you back to where he/she

wants you (wherever that was to make you predictable and controllable.)

You engage in these exercises and strategies because you want to, for you. You know that this is the best way to live and at this point, be in a relationship with your spouse.

This is the best way for you to survive and retain integrity.

Here's the kicker. A by-product of these efforts is usually dramatic change on the part of your spouse. Don't be surprised if he/she moves closer. Don't be surprised if he/she does a double-take. Don't be surprised if he/she decides to "work on the marriage." But, don't expect it!

Here they are:

1) Act Happy. Be as cheerful as possible. Be positive. Put on this behavior when you have contact with your spouse. Prepare yourself to act this way. Practice if need be. Be an actor/actress if need be. Fake it, if you must. Fake it until you truly do get to the point where you experience your life as positive. (It really is, you know!)

2) Get a life. Rekindle old hobbies or interests that you have discarded but still interest you. Try out new hobbies or interests. Think about what you really liked doing when you were 6 years old. Start doing that. (One coaching client "gave up dancing," which was a passion, for her family and husband. Once she discovered his affair, she took it up again. She loved it. It was therapeutic. But, boy did he have a problem with it!).

3) Focus on 4 key words. Every day, every hour and every minute if need be, plaster your mind with these 4 life-saving words: I WILL MAKE IT! This becomes your mantra. Wake up with it. Put it on your mirror. Eat lunch with it. Go to sleep with it. Tell; convey in every which way to your spouse that you WILL MAKE IT.

Say, "I will make it! I prefer to make it with you (if that is what you REALLY want), but if that doesn't happen, I will make it without you. Either way, I want you to know that I will make it." State with erect, confident body language, unblinking, direct eye contact and calm, firm, consistent tone of voice.

4) To-the-point small talk. Make conversations with your spouse brief and to the point. Talk only about the solutions to specific problems that need to be addressed, such a particular bills, household or children concerns. Let silence prevail if he/she wants to "hook" you into melodrama. Politely but firmly end such conversations.

5) Tend to agree. Try to find the kernel of truth in what your spouse is

saying and agree with it. Acknowledge it. He/she says, “I don’t love you anymore.” You say, “It certainly seems that way. Thank you for your truthfulness.”

He/she says, “I’m not sure what I want.” You say, “Yes, it must be confusing for you.” He/she says, “I’m thinking of moving out.” You say, “Do you have an idea of when you’re going to do that? Knowing would help me plan for my activities.”

6) Expand your social relationships, including those of the OPPOSITE SEX. Make new friends. Go to lunch. Surround yourself with interesting people who have the potential to care about you. Rekindle old friendships that have faded. With the opposite sex? Yes! I’m not talking about a revenge affair or sleeping with someone.

I’m not talking about dating. I’m talking about being friends and learning about you and how you relate, especially to those of the opposite sex.

7) Get sexy – in a healthy way. Get in shape. Lose weight. Run. Walk. Exercise. Eat right. Enjoy your body. Take supplements. Take extreme care of your body. Begin to feel healthy...and healthy is sexy.

Focus on one of these tactics and begin now. Don’t wait.

- **12 Unattractive, Ugly, Typical Tactics Most People Use to Prolong the Affair and Guarantee Their Own Misery**

1) Say “I love you”

Saying “I love you,” especially repeatedly, often pushes your spouse away and in essence, probably does not reflect the truth of what you really want to say.

What does it mean to say, “I love you?” especially at this juncture in your relationship? Do you know? Does he/she?

The words “I love you” are powerful in the beginning stages of a relationship where they match the underlying powerful feelings of attraction. “I love you” then means: I’m attracted to you. I want to be with you. I experience good feelings when I am with you or think about you.

Or, the words are powerful later in the relationship when special occasions recall the feelings that brought you together or when the stability of the relationship is temporarily threatened and you express your commitment to your spouse.

But, when in the midst of dealing with an affair, using the words “I love you” are inadequate and in reality, poor communication. They do not express what you really want to say. Nor does your spouse, who is allegedly “in love” with another person, know what to do with that statement.

Here are ways your spouse might respond internally when he hears those words from you:

- Yeah right! What does she want now? She’s just saying that so I won’t leave. Or, she’s just saying that so I will leave the other woman. She’s using that to manipulate me. So, I will walk away or not say anything.
- He loves ME? Yeah right! How can he love me when I do something like this? It doesn’t make sense. Who would love someone who fools around on them? If he fooled around on me, I know I wouldn’t love him.
- Hey, this is cool! I got two of them wanting me. Man, it feels great to be pursued by two people. It is great to be loved by two people. (This may not be acknowledged but it might lie behind a need to continue the soap opera drama.)
- She loves me? What is the world does that mean? What is she trying to say when she says that? I don’t understand. Is that all she can say? Isn’t there more she needs to say to me? How am I to respond? Say, “I love you too?” Geezzz Louise, it’s not that simple.
- I hate it when he says, “I love you.” That really makes him unattractive. He seems so sickeningly needy when he says that. And, that really turns me off. When he says it, I think of a whining lost little boy who needs reassurance. Sorry, but I’m not there. I don’t want to be a mother.

What are you really saying? Here are some possibilities. Do any fit?

- “I love you,” means I need you. My life is incomplete or insufficient without you. I have little clue of who I am outside of you and I need you to define who I am. I cannot think of having a life of my own.
- “I love you” means don’t leave me. I’m afraid of life on my own. I am terrified of what might happen. Tell me you love me, and that you will be there for me so I don’t have to think of making my own way. Calm my fears, because I’m not sure I can.
- “I love you,” means I’m a wimp. I don’t want to rock the boat. I don’t really want to confront you with what I’m really thinking and feeling. I

don't want to take a stand and say ENOUGH. I will tolerate almost anything.

- “I love you,” means I'm sad. It feels sad to see the relationship and dreams crumble. It's sad to feel the distance, mistrust, pain and agony. It's sad to think of that which might never happen. It's sad to think of maybe not growing old with you.
- “I love you” means I remember with loving feelings who you were and who I was. I remember who we were. I remember the good times. I remember the way it used to be. I remember what it was like to love and be there for each other. I miss that. I love those memories and maybe, that's all they are.

## 2) Criticize, complain, whine, nag

This should be fairly obvious. Criticizing, complaining, whining and nagging are not attractive! Who wants to be around such a person? When I criticize or complain I have a hard time being around myself. This behavior is usually an attempt to deal with the internal tension you feel. You don't know where to go with the tension, so it seeps out around the edges.

Something your spouse says or does, and it doesn't have to be major, will trigger the tension and you spit out the negativity. You may be unaware that it is happening, since it probably is a fairly long-standing habit.

And, of course, your spouse will respond in his/her typical fashion, probably by moving away or countering you with his/her negativity. Ever feel like you hit a brick wall, time and time again? It hurts, doesn't it? And, you go nowhere. What would happen if you stopped using criticism, complaining or whining? What could you do instead? What does your criticizing, complaining and nagging supposedly get for you? Give it some thought.

(Here's what you might find: You are trying to get something, or you want something to happen or you have some expectation and it's not there. Can you find a different way to let this person know what you want, what you need or how you would like your life to be, without resorting to something that is absolutely guaranteed to give you the opposite of what you truly desire?)

## 3) Say “I've changed”

In an attempt to persuade a spouse to stop an affair or restore a relationship you may use the ploy, “But I've changed I'm a different person.” And your behavior may truly be different – most of the time. You try to accommodate in ways you haven't tried before or you alter your behavior to fit your perception of what he/she wants you to do. Here are some problems with this strategy:

- Is it true? Have you really changed or are you in a reactive mode? You are reacting to a painful situation by trying on different behaviors. There is nothing wrong with this. Actually you are to be commended. It probably takes a great deal of energy and conscious thought to alter, especially in a drastic manner, some of your habits.
- If you continue the new behaviors they may gradually sink in and truly become a part of you. However, these changes usually lack staying power because they are born out of reactivity.
- You will return to the old patterns, especially when the heat is off. And, your spouse intuitively knows this. He/she thinks, “This will never last” and is highly suspicious.
- Your change will probably be viewed by your spouse as an attempt to manipulate. He/she will perceive your change as a strategy on your part to get him/her to change. If your spouse felt “cornered” before, the feelings will be greater now. Your spouse will most likely resent these changes, even though these very behaviors are what he/she has been asking for all the previous years. More distance will emerge.
- You will lose credibility. Your spouse will not believe you or will not know what to believe about you. In 80% of the affairs, my experience and analysis tells me that confusion reigns.

Your spouse is very confused about what he/she wants. By faking or trying on changed behaviors, you are only adding to the confusion. The message you are sending is NOT CLEAR.

- You will lose respect. Bottom line: people don’t want other people to try to please or placate them. They just don’t respect that kind of strategy. There is no backbone. There is no core self from which you express yourself and take a firm stand. That is not very attractive.

Here’s a common response I encounter: If you can change so easily now, why didn’t you change when I wanted you to change back then? It’s too late now. Some sadness or resentment may emerge as he/she encounters the new behavior, thinking about what could have been, but is no longer seen as possible.

#### 4) Argue, Reason, Plead

You may believe that the more persistent you are in trying to get your spouse to “understand,” the better off you may be. Not always true. Usually, the harder you try to get your point across, the deeper you drive the wedge into the relationship.

An affair is not based on logic. One’s quest to “find him/herself” through an affair has little to do with reason. The allure of the other person, whatever that allure

might be, has little respect for reason, logic and thinking and talking something through together.

So you may attempt to reason with your partner about seeing the other person, where your partner goes, how he/she spends time, spending more time with the children, how to handle finances and pay the bills and other issues related to your life together, or your lack of life together.

The two of you swirl. It's as if you have been there, done that countless times before. You can predict what he/she will say, can predict your response to his/her response can, in turn, predict how he/she will respond to your response of his/her response. Sound familiar?

You bang into a communication wall filled with the same old nasty feelings and thoughts you've encountered before. And you end in the same fashion; He/she walks away (which gives an "excuse" to run to the arms of someone else.)

Arguing, reasoning and pleading keep the focal point on each other. It keeps the relationship bound together (we call it enmeshment) in a powerfully negative and destructive way. You merely continue to rehash the old stuff with the same fruitless outcome.

## 5) Get friends and family involved

It is not uncommon to look for an ally. But, more than an ally, you may look for someone who will be your eyes and ears, and perhaps mouthpiece.

You may seek out an informant. You quiz others about what your spouse is saying and doing. You pump for information. You may look for signs of hope and hang intently on every word of your ally.

Or, you might enlist a friend or family member to be your mouthpiece. You encourage them to talk to your spouse and hammer some "sense" into this wayward creature. You give them all the information they need to be persuasive.

Unfortunately, many people seem to get off on this. There is an element of drama, suspense and mystery that hooks people into being what they think is helpful. They may be all too willing to join you in your drama.

Getting friends and family involved only worsens your situation. Three people emotionally involved and invested in a relationship form a triangle. Ever watch soap operas? A soap opera is inherently two people talking about a third or two aligned and plotting against the third. There is a lot of juice stirred up, but the relationships are not healthy (unless the triangle is broken).

With such a triangle, you only perpetuate a bad situation. What is an affair?



Basically, it's a triangle: two aligned against the outsider. Adding more triangles to the mix only increases the possibility for a more powerful explosion.

(There are some pretty complicated systems or family therapy concepts involved which I won't get into. Only to let you know that they exist, and that the triangle serves as a basis for some of these concepts.)

To break free from the affair, it is crucial that you and your spouse face one another and begin stating your positions, your needs, your desires, your beliefs, the feelings you. With this process you begin unraveling the story of your respective lives.

## 6) Act helpless, depressed

Talk about unattractive. It takes a tremendous amount of energy for someone to be in relationship with a person who consistently acts helpless and depressed. People, over time, become weary of being around such a person. Do you like being around a depressed person?

Here's the kicker though: Acting helpless and depressed can get mileage. Some people seek out depressing people because it gives them good feelings to take care of someone, or they get a feeling of being a little superior. In the meantime the depressed and helpless person gets a lot of attention and care.

The helpless or poor me syndrome is also a tool to control the other person. After all, you don't want to get too upset with a depressed person. They can't handle that, right? Or, worst case scenario, might they harm themselves, because they are so fragile?

At some point the caretaker begins to pull away from the relationship and resolves not to be a part of that cycle. An affair might be the unconscious strategy (albeit, a not very bright strategy) to cope with one's inability to confront the depressed person with his/her true self.

Acting depressed or helpless in the aftermath of an affair may be a longstanding pattern, only intensified at this point, in your relationship with your partner. It no longer works effectively, but you might turn up the volume a little louder, acting more helpless and depressed, to make your point and get him/her back.

Question: If it does work and your partner comes back, is that the kind of relationship you want? Do you relish the idea of playing the victim/helpless role the rest of your life to control and maintain a relationship? Probably not. At least, I wouldn't want that for you.

So you say you really are depressed? OK, fair enough. Some people do suffer from the clinical definition of depression. If you do, don't wait one more minute. Call your family doctor and ask for a referral to get some help. Assume responsibility

for your illness.

Discover who you really are beneath the depression so you have a true self to offer to your spouse or someone else. Doesn't that sound much better? I would think your partner would think so.

## 7) Give up opposite sex relationships

If your partner is involved in an affair, you most likely have the tendency to shun people of the opposite sex. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, you probably do not feel very attractive or desirable. As I've noted in other writings, being on the receiving end of an affair dumps self-esteem down the toilet. Even if you had an interest in pursuing a relationship, this would get in the way.

An interesting phenomenon I observe very frequently is that the spouse having the affair sends a subtle or not so subtle message that only he/she is allowed to have an extramarital relationship. It is his/her domain.

If the offended partner begins a relationship with a person of the opposite sex, the person having the affair may become jealous and disturbed, sometimes extremely so. Make sense? No, but then again, not much about affairs makes sense.

You may hold back from having an opposite sex relationship because you believe it will only give permission to your partner to continue the affair and provide further ammunition for him/her to actually leave. This does occur, but only in particular kinds of affairs and, I believe, only in a minority of situations. It will NOT be a major factor in his/her decision to truly end the marriage.

Holding back from developing an opposite sex relationship typically indicates you are doggedly determined to focus on what your partner and what he/she is doing or not doing. You are riveted on this painful elusive relationship. It occupies your every moment and breath. To think of having a life of your own seems terribly foreign.

When I talk about having a relationship with someone of the opposite sex, I'm NOT talking about dating or sleeping around. Don't jump off the bridge. But, there is such a thing as a healthy relationship with those of different gender. Actually, it's fairly important to have those relationships without sexualizing them, or at least trusting yourself and the other person well enough to have a friendship that energizes.

You can learn a great deal. Your life will be enriched. You will have a life. And, it will be important to have this life in the future, with or without your partner present.

## 8) Get reassurance from your children

Please don't intentionally involve your children.

Here's what I mean.

- Don't share information with them about their other parent.
- Don't try to pry information from them about your spouse.
- Don't ask (in any way) for them to agree with you, side with you, or comfort you.
- Don't talk about your spouse to them in any way shape or manner.
  
- You can say directly: I'm having a difficult time right now, but I'm doing everything to take care of it and this too shall pass. I will always be here for you.

Why? This is a difficult time emotionally for your children. They know what is going on, even if they don't know the details. They need a PARENT(S). Don't you become the child.

Remember my talk about triangles? What you have with your children is the potential for more triangles. Someone talking to someone about someone else only perpetuates your pain, creates pain for them, and lowers the possibility of effectively resolving your relationship with your spouse.

As long as you are mired in triangles, you offer the opportunity for your spouse to perceive you as undesirable and therefore he/she continues the affair. As well, you remain locked in your pain and merely lengthen the time and intensity of your misery.

Go to other people (adults) for reassurance, comfort, guidance and a listening ear. My site has a rather extensive section that walks you through ways to elicit from your adult friends and family what you need from them. (I have a letter you can send to them on "10 Things I Want From You During Difficult Times").

The ideal way to beat a triangle is to confront your spouse with your thoughts, your needs, set boundaries, declare yourself, take a stand and in essence, look at him/her eyeball-to-eyeball and say, I won't live like this. I'm making some shifts and changes. I will make it, either with or without you. But, I guarantee, I will make it.

## 9) Use the Bible or Dr. Laura

It is a natural impulse to want to beat your wandering spouse over the head, not literally, of course. Well, maybe... (Just kidding. Don't do it!)

But, on a number of occasions I've run across those who throw Bible verses, selected passages from books or talk show hosts' comments about the immorality and path of perdition he/she is following by engaging in an affair.

Now, granted, engaging in an affair is sin because it certainly does miss the mark in terms of having an authentic and truth-filled relationship and it certainly has dire consequences in which the other does walk down a difficult path. However, using this as a weapon to stop the affair brings dubious results at best.

Think about it. Would you really want him/her to come back to the relationship because of coercion? What would that be like? He/she would be there because of moral compunction, not because they really wanted to be with you. Could you live in a relationship of emotional investment where someone was forced to be with you – out of guilt or trying to abide by some law? Don't you really want to be wanted?

Have you ever heard the phrase, "that which you resist, persists?" This concept implies that the more you try to avoid something or work hard to change something, the more power you give it and the possibility for true change diminishes.

Beating him/her over the head with moral persuasion most likely will increase his/her resolve, if not openly at least internally, to oppose you. Poor strategy!

Again, we return to a common theme: gathering moral ammunition and blasting away at the other person means you are focusing your energy on him/her. Your best bet is to turn that finger around and be kind, gentle, encouraging, supportive, directive, and caring to your self. Get your emotions and thoughts under control. Plan your strategy for your survival, growth and moving ahead – with or without him/her.

One more thing: Do you really want to be known as a morally superior person? Most of us do not. I'm not talking about becoming a morally inferior person, i.e. lowering your standards, by any means. I'm suggesting, don't go into the arena of morality or take a morally righteous position. It's booby-trapped. You prolong your misery. You lessen hope for a reconciled marriage or workable future relationship with your spouse.

## 10) Suggest counseling

OK, what's the deal? A therapist who is recommending that you NOT pursue counseling with your spouse? Yes, exactly. Believe me, I've seen hundreds of couples, and counseling when an affair is involved seldom, and I mean real seldom, works.

In most communities, getting counseling is the thing to do when there are marital problems. Family, friends, clergy and others say, "Have you gotten counseling?" Many spouses agree to attend. It usually lasts for a few sessions, if that.

He/she often enters counseling guardedly and with little intent to self disclose. He/she usually in some fashion sabotages counseling. It doesn't work. Here's the kicker: the person is then able to say, "Well, we got counseling, and it just didn't work out!" Counseling becomes a rationalization to pull further away.

Suggesting counseling, because it is socially sanctioned by your community, is perceived by your spouse as coercion. Again, persuasion or coercion usually gets the results you don't intend and shifts the focus away from where it needs to be – your self care and your ability to take a firm, non-reactive stand and move ahead with your life, with or without him/her.

So you want to get your spouse into counseling? Here's your strategy: Say, "I want you to know that I'm getting counseling. There are some changes I want to make for my self. You are basically right, our relationship hasn't been that cool for me either. I want to learn why I attract the kind of people I do. I want to prepare for my future. I'm going to make it!"

Depending on the kind of affair that confronts you, this is your best chance for the two of you to resolve the relationship, with counseling being a helpful tool.

## 11) Tell him/her we need to work on the relationship

This usually means you want to go back to the way the marriage used to be. You remember the good times and your intent is to recapture them. Or, you believe that the two of you, focusing on each other with more purpose, can change the flow of the relationship.

To do that, you believe you need to try. This often means spending more time together, dating, being more attentive to each other, reading self help books together, buying each other gifts and in general, revisiting the courting stage of the relationship.

This usually is very uncomfortable. One is the pursuer and the other hedges, forgets or distances. There are constant thoughts of the other person by both parties.

The comparison game is played internally, but never talked about openly. The stress and strain oozes beneath the surface.

The spouse involved with the other person may concede to trying, since it serves basically the same purpose as counseling. He/she can at some point say, "See, we tried and it just didn't work." It may ease the guilt or give internal permission to pursue with more vigor, the other person.

Trying does not get at the truth. Trying is a band-aid that fails to alter the

underlying dynamics of the marriage or the individuals. Trying to change the relationship is again, other focused, and this only leads to a deeper sense of being stuck.

Don't work on the relationship. Here's my mantra again: Work on you. No, you don't even have to work on you. Be you! If you don't know who you are, find out and then be you. It really is OK. And, it really isn't that difficult. At least it's much easier than trying to change another person or a relationship.

Oh yeah, one more thing. When you are you, stop trying to change someone, especially that which someone in an emotionally invested relationship cannot not change. Think about it!

## 12) Let yourself go to pot

It is very easy when confronted with a trauma that rocks us to our soul to go back to that, which is ugly, negative, and ultimately self-defeating. We revert to the negative thoughts about our self. We revert to those old negative feelings that rip at our emotions and sometimes tear at our body. We revert to those old ways of behaving that get us where we don't want to go. We go back to what I call our "familiar position."

Allowing yourself to go to pot (and I know some who literally go there or find some other substance to ingest that numbs) takes a tremendous amount of energy. It takes more than facing head-on what you need to face.

You continue on a downward spiral whereby each negative thought, word and action builds on the other and accumulates. A cloud of negativity hinders you from taking the action you need to take to see your way through. You become stuck.

Of course, you understand, that when you go down that road, you become exceedingly unattractive. You are exceedingly unattractive. This only reinforces the negative self-thoughts swirling in your mind. To think of you as desirable and wantable seems a long way off.

When in your "familiar position" you will resort to typical behaviors you use to get what you think you want. Basically, you will either withdraw or attack. Neither will serve you well.

OK, so what do you do? Well, it is impossible to totally avoid your negative feelings and thoughts, so don't try. It is also impossible to force yourself onto a different path. (That might last for a while, but the negativity will catch up to you.) There are a couple powerful strategies. First, just notice when you go where you typically go. Don't judge. Just notice. Allow the negativity to be there for a while.

Observe it. Learn from it. Be aware of how you are trying to protect yourself or how you actually are trying to get what is important for you.

Be gracious to yourself. Accept the fact that you are sometimes where you don't want to be. Be kind to yourself. Look beneath. Look deeper. Look within. It will be well worth it.

And, others will notice. They will see the change, and it will be attractive.

Remember these powerful words, "You will be all right!"

## A Hug for you...

Please allow me to give you a literary hug. This must be an exceedingly difficult time for you. Most, in the midst of an affair, find the intensity of the pain, confusion and agony more than they thought possible. It is worse than a death. With death there is finality and a natural progression of events. Not so when facing an affair. You become emotionally embroiled in a strange, foreign land filled with fear, confusion, mistrust as well as the pain of loss. This may be a place that you did not choose to go.

But I assure you: one day the agony will subside and it will be possible for you to enter a new place. You will be wiser. You will be more centered. You will be more compassionate toward others as well as yourself. You will be more attractive in new, subtle and powerful ways. You will be able to express yourself forcefully in a way that brings others to you. You will fill the spaces of your life.

Your pain is not all bad. Pain warns. Pain, when attended to, holds potential for redesign of life and relationships. Pain often invites you to take that next step and enter a land that is richer and fuller than you now know. I have a favorite saying: "Gold is refined through intense heat."

Often, when in the dark valley, we fail to see the mountaintop above. But, it is there. Confusion often means we are on the edge of discovery.

Something new is waiting for you!

And, maybe I can be of further assistance.

Some find one-on-one coaching (over the telephone) very helpful after reading *Break Free from the Affair*. Coaching helps many gain relief from the pain and move through the affair more quickly and with more confidence.

To discover the benefits of coaching and whether it might be perfect for you, go to:  
<http://www.break-free-from-the-affair.com/coach.htm>

Wishing you the best,

Bob

<http://www.break-free-from-the-affair.com>



