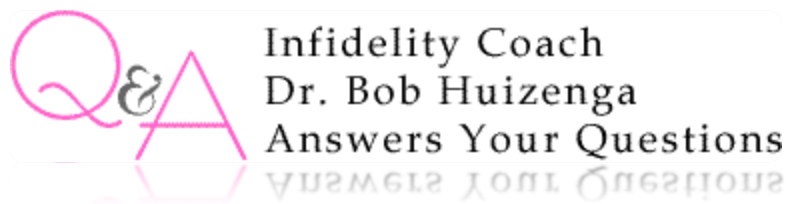


- **An Internet Affair...Again?**
- **But..."We're Just Friends"?**
- **Is This Internet Cheating?**
- **What to Do When There is a Child**
- **He/She Won't Stop Seeing the OP: Needs "Patience"**
- **The Price of a Secret**
- **Say Good-bye**
- **He/she had the Affair - Why do I Need to Change?**



Q&A #1: An Internet Affair...Again?

Dear Dr. Bob,

I have been married for 10 months now. I met my wife playing spades on the internet then we started talking on the phone for hours and hours until I left CA. and moved to TN. with her we have a good relationship but now she spends so much time on the internet thats making me worried and i don't like it when she talks in IM's to strange guys or gets too close online with them. What should I do? the only thing we fight about is that I asked her many times not to get close to guys on the spades games and she tells me i'm being jealous she hides her computer so i can't see what she is doing on their. All i hear is her typing on it in games you click the mouse not type as much as she does she was under her screen name on my computer so i looked at her mail i saw something thats is bugging me very much i saw that she had been talking to this guy and was telling him that she was going to call him when i go to work what should i do?

My response:

As Yogi Berra once said, "This must seem like deja vu all over again." It certainly appears that her behavior now on the net finds some parallels with how your relationship with her started? And, of course, you have a right to be concerned – here she goes again!

You describe behavior that could be labeled "addictive." Her focal point becomes these relationships that generate excitement, intrigue and fantasies? She seemingly can't keep her fingers off the keyboard? Other parts of her life take a back seat? And, she denies that she has a problem or minimizes her activities – she's not doing anything wrong!

Please understand that usually, beneath this minimization, are some guilt and shame and a part of her that is truly looking for something else. And, you want her to find that "something else" with you...not in a series of net/phone "romances."

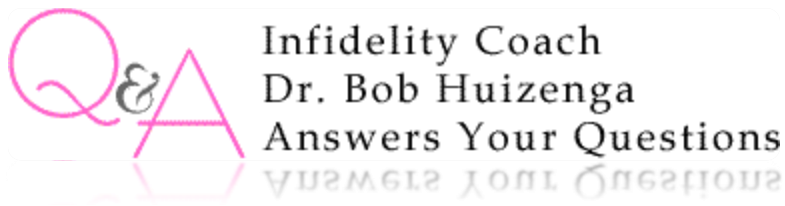
Confronting, pleading and arguing won't work. She will resist, retreat to her keyboard and you will feel increasingly frustrated and alone.

I suggest you start with a tactic I call, "problemize." Periodically make comments about the problem(s) you see. MAKE SURE you use words, tone of voice and body language that convey acceptance, concern and lack a tone of judgment, condemnation or a sense of superiority.

For example: "Does it ever seem to you that you are going through the same thing now as when you first met me?" "Do you ever stop to think what impact your net/phone relationships will have on our relationship?" "Do you ever think there is more to life than meeting someone on the net?" "You must get a 'high' out of these relationships?" "I wonder what you are REALLY looking for?"

"I wonder what I eventually will do with this." "I wonder if you will always be looking?" "

Get the idea? Leave a question in your voice. Open the door for her to talk and explore. This is your first step. If, over time, her actions persist, begin to think about what you are willing to tolerate and what actions you may need to take. But, first, "problemize" and see where that goes.



Q&A #2: But..."We're Just Friends"?

Hi,

My name is Maria. 4 months ago I found out my husband cheated. I thought I would die I am still in a lot of pain. but my question is they have stayed friends. Has this ever happened and whose to say that this won't happen again? They both swear it won't. They both feel remorse for what they have done? They said they were both caught up in the passion but never thought for a minute that they were hurting someone else in the process. I have been married for eighteen years and have 4 children with him and am still very much in love with him. But I have a hard time dealing with him and her being friends. I'm suffering health ways because of this. They have destroyed my life. and I can't seem to get out of this state am in. Please help me.

My response:

Maria, if I could get a dime for every time I hear the, "we're just friends" schlick, I could buy those Ping golf clubs I've been looking at, PLUS accessories, PLUS a membership to the most exclusive country club in town.

Here's what "we're just friends" may mean:

"I don't want to talk about it. Go away. Don't bring it up again. I don't want to address your concerns. I don't want to acknowledge your pain and hurt. Leave me (and her) alone. I can't handle talking to you about this. I don't know how to talk to you about this". (It may mean he is naive or lacks relationship skills.)

So... don't take that phrase literally.

And, allow me to guess what happened. I would bet my old golf clubs that the two of them had less than stellar sex. It most likely was a dud - a big fat DUD. Great expectations but the follow through left them cold as ice. And, that relationship will probably fade like fog in a hot sun.

Remorse? When they never had a clue such an act would impact anyone else? Doesn't sound like he suffers from great compassion or emotional awareness. Remorse sounds like a good word to cover up the fact that it didn't work.

Actually, Maria, I would guess that you are the one in the relationship that carries the sensitivity and compassion. Are you the conscientious one? The one who has

worked so hard to raise your family, keep things together and is typically aware of the others' pain and questions?

And now your body is crying out with pain because it is tired? It has personal needs that are being ignored? It is weary of carrying HIS (and perhaps those of your children) anxiety and fears? And all this, while he plays and tells you it's no big deal! ggggggrrrrrrrrrrrr!

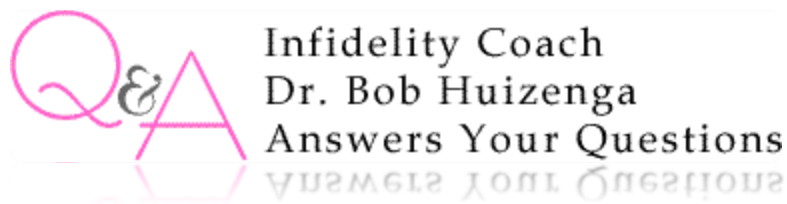
So, Maria, here are some possibilities for responding to "we're just friend."

Laugh hysterically and walk away. Or, Say, "Hmmm, that sure is weird. You have sex with all your friends? Tell me what other of your friends have you done? You think having sex with your friends is no big deal?" Or, I'm not as stupid or naive as you seem to be about this!"

Or, confront the underlying message: "You don't want me to bring this up? You didn't think this would bother me? You want me to condone and forget about what happened?"

I also suggest you begin to reflect on your personal needs and begin experimenting with ways to get them met. (Be prepared. He will notice and he may not like you caring for you!) Uncover the "true" Maria a little more, so she can breath with less stress and tension. I think you probably know what I mean.

And, Maria, remember, you have not lost your integrity or self. They have not destroyed you. They have injured themselves. This is your opportunity to redesign your life and relationship in ways that honor you and your family in greater ways.



Q&A #3: Is This Internet Cheating?

Dear Dr. Bob,

I recently found that my fiancé has been writing to several other women over the internet and I found the e-mails. They are all very suggestive and sexual and he talks to them about things that he and I have shared. He cannot understand why I am upset. I told him I have given him everything one woman can give a man, emotionally, sexually, spiritually, etc....and I don't know what else to do. I told him I didn't feel I was enough, and he SWEARS over and over again that I am enough woman for him, yet he has this need to write these women and discuss all this. They have even sent him photos of themselves and he kept them until recently, so he says. He says he doesn't feel like it is cheating at all since there is no physical contact and this is all just e-mail bull. I consider it every-bit cheating, especially when he is telling a woman what he would do to her if he was with her.....which what is worse, is that it is all the same stuff he says to me when we are together physically. What are your thoughts?

Is this Internet Cheating?

Dear Reader,

If you think it's cheating, if you come close to thinking it's cheating, IT IS CHEATING. If you have a problem with his internet escapades, it is a problem - for you, for him and the relationship. You have every right to voice your concern, so, don't hold back.

Before we look at his escapades, I want you to "get this" so it sinks deeply into every cell of your womanhood: you are not defective! There is nothing wrong with you as a sexual being! There is nothing else for you to do - for him or to him! Actually, he sounds like a real lucky guy!

Please understand, the reality of life and intimacy is that sometimes it's hot and sometimes it's not, and mostly it's between. Would you settle for 10% hot, 10% not and 80% between? That's probably pretty close, especially as relationships grow and mature.

It sounds like he is fairly immature or is grabbed by an addiction. I don't think it's an addiction, since he appears not to hide his activities. There may be seeds for an addiction, but considering your age (I'm assuming 20's or so?) I would think his fantasies (played out on the 'net) rule and/or he's fairly clueless about the next step

needed to develop a more mature relationship. (If you were in your late 30's, 40's or 50's I would see it differently.)

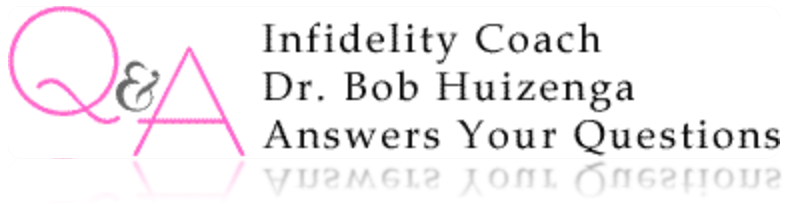
You can't compete with fantasies or addictions. Don't try. It won't work.

He is giving you a clue about his internet activities: they are meeting a "need." What kind of need is this? Does he need excitement, to feel in control, be wanted and wanted more, feel powerful, competent, adequate or are there other personal needs driving and living in these fantasies?

Personal needs are typically powerful and our "neediness" can guide our lives until we identify them and transform them. I have a program in my coaching resources that lists over 200 personal needs and step by step shows you how to get them met in constructive ways. Want it? Click here, http://www.break-free-from-the-affair.com/Needless_program.pdf.

The good, open communication base in your relationship will enable you to talk about your personal needs. Pick apart his fantasies. What are the personal needs that weave through them? Are there patterns? What are they? Where do they fit with your personal needs? Are they different? Are there points of similarities?

Being able to talk at this level might take some time. It might feel strange and a little weird, but go for it. I think the two of you are ready. Eventually, as you explore your personal needs and mutually commit in very practical ways to meet some of those, your relationship will move to a deeper level of intimacy and the netcapades will fade into cyberspace.



Q&A #4: What to Do When There is a Child

My name is Dora. My husband and I have been married for 14 yrs. We have 3 children. My husband had an affair and there is now a child from the affair. I am still with him, and yes still love him. He now sees the child and his "ex-lover" almost daily. Should I be worried she's still trying to get him back into his life? My husband tells me he only see's her because of their daughter, but it worries me because the ex-lover gets upset when my husband won't change plans to see them. Their daughter will be 1 year old soon and his ex-lover is still in the big picture. What should I do as the wife?

My response:

Hello Dora,

Time! Yes, it does take time. From my experience it takes 2 - 4 years to adequately work through a relationship crisis with the magnitude of infidelity.

Dora, from the tone and tenor of your e-mail and the fact that the child is 1 year old, I would venture to say you are about half way there.

Worry? Nawwww, don't worry. It's not good for you! :) Where does worry come from? Worry bubbles up from self-doubt and feeling helpless, powerless and afraid.

I may be wrong, but it seems to me that your husband's "fling" with the OP is over. It served its purpose (whatever that was) and now he bears the responsibility for caring for a child the two created. As well, the demandingness of the OP is certainly not very attractive and will most likely push a deeper wedge into their relationship.

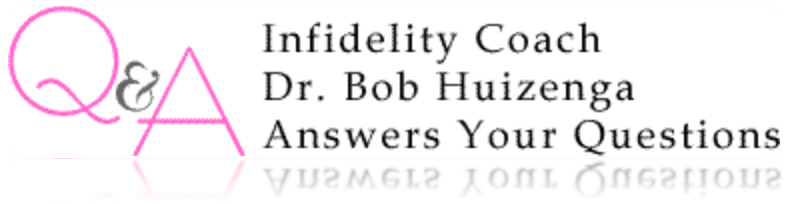
But, allow me to suggest a strategy that will help you with a couple things. First you need some "markers" or "signs" that indicate that his relationship with the OP no longer serves a threat to the stability of your marriage. And, you want to feel like you have some influence and power in this process that will erase your doubts and calm your fears.

As I read your letter I had at least a dozen questions about your future. Here are a few: Is the OP married? What financial obligations does your husband have for the child? Does he have a visitation schedule? What legal responsibilities does he have? Do your children know about the other child? Do you see the child? What kind of emotional and financial support will carry into the future? Will this child in any way be "part" of your family? What will you do about Holidays? Birthdays? Celebrations?

I suggest you write down on a legal pad as many questions, very practical questions, you can. Ask your husband to sit down and over time iron out and answer specifically these questions. Begin with the question of visitation. Let him know your opinions and needs. Set up a schedule if you don't have one. Stick with it.

You want and need clarity on the boundaries of these relationships, so everyone is on the same page.

If the two of you can sit down and over the next 3-6 months constructively address these questions, I bet your worry fades and you will find your marriage gaining stability and strength. It will be a great sign that he is deeply committed to you. If you can't do this, watch out. This is a red flag. Get some help.



Q&A #5: He/She Won't Stop Seeing the OP: Needs "Patience"

My husband admitted to the affair, but yet he still continues to contact this person and has asked me to be patient. He said he will need to get her "out of his system" and to give him some time. How do you handle that?

My Response:

Ending the relationship with the OP is often a gradual process.

For example, in the 7th kind of affair I describe (I want to be close to someone...which means I can't stand intimacy), ending the affair often takes time. Yes! No! On again! Off again is the scenario.

Affairs also lollygag for those who are "in love"...and just love being "in love" or My Marriage Made me Do it.

So, in particular kinds of affairs, expect a roller coaster ride. You don't have to like it. But be prepared. Breaking off an affair relationship, as in no more contact, may take weeks.

So, let's assume this is your case. Here are a few things to do:

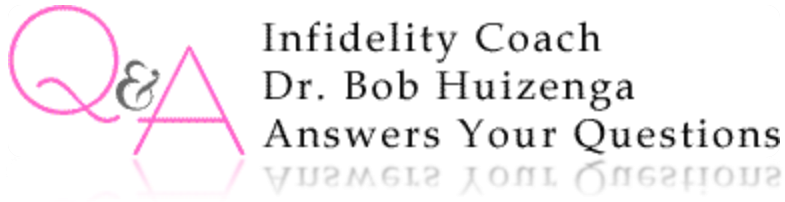
1. You are entitled to set some limits. Keep clarifying the limits, but don't make them ultimatums. You don't want to paint yourself into a corner, especially with this kind of affair. Experiment with phrases such as: "This is extremely difficult for me. I refuse to share you with another person. And, I know it is difficult for you. But, at some point I will draw a line in the sand."
2. "Get at" the specific issues. Ask, "What does it mean to "get it out of your system?" What are a couple or three things you need to "get it out of your system?" (If he/she is open to this exploration, the prognosis is good.)
3. If he/she is reluctant to go there, throw out suggestions. "Is he/she controlling you?" (very often the case). "Does it feel good to be wanted by two people?" "Waffling like this seems to be theme in your life?" "Are you afraid to face the hurt? Are you afraid to lose something?" Allow your voice to trail at the end. Do not be dogmatic. Open the door for discussion.

4. See this as his/her problem. (I know! I know! Easier said than done!) Define your standards. Get your personal needs met. Begin to design the future for you. And tell him/her, "I would like to make it with you, but if not, I will certainly create something wonderful for me."

5. Notice the changes in your relationship. Do you see a movement toward what you really want? Are patterns changing? Is their more effective, in-depth, heart-felt communication? Sometimes the larger picture is comforting.

6. Surround yourself with people who accept and listen to you. Friends/family often blurt out: Get rid of the #\$%#\$! They fail to understand the complexity and long-term process.

Remember, affairs are exceedingly complex and don't go away easily. You will never forget, although the pain and memories fade over time. As well, it takes, on the average, 2-4 years for most couples to work through effectively the trauma.



Q&A #6: The Price of a Secret

Dear Dr. Bob,

My husband seems on the up and up that he is not having an affair. I have had an affair before. could this be the reason i am feeling like he is cheating? All of his hours of work are accounted for and he is always home on time. He never goes anywhere without me. Do i just have a guilty conscience?

My response:

Dear Reader,

Decades ago it was called "projection" - putting on other people those things that are really stirring in ourselves. Maybe that is happening.

But, let's look at a couple other angles.

Maybe your husband IS having an affair. This may be your "intuition" picking up on something. Do you know when most people visit my website (on extramarital affairs)? It's 9-5 pm. That tells me that many many "working folk" are surfing. Chat rooms plus a desire for a fantasy life equals trouble for some - all without leaving your desk or telephone! A possibility? Note what stirs within when you read this.

Something tells me you don't know him very well or he you. Or, there is some barrier at some level getting in the way of you and he being on the same page - and enjoying it immensely?

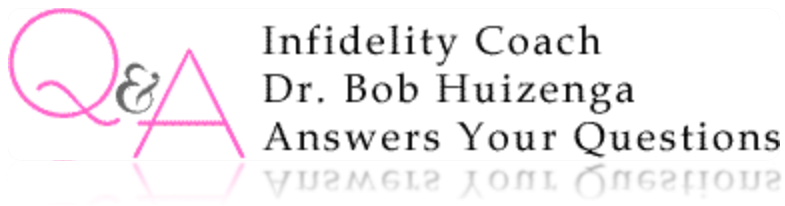
I gather from your question that your affair is a secret? If so, such secrets can take tremendous energy to maintain and often "get in the way" of a couple developing the earth shaking intimacy they crave. Do these memories rear their head? They obviously are right now?

Please, I'm not recommending that you let him know of the affair! At some point it MAY be important to do so, but not right now.

First, I want you to take the affair, which you may perceive as a huge mistake, ugly and a huge blemish on your character and look at it. I want for you to reframe it so it no longer illicit guilt or shame. The freedom you experience from this may awaken new channels of intimacy and trust between you and your spouse.

You begin reframing your affair by asking these questions: What was the purpose of this affair for me? What personal needs were in my way? Where did it fit in my development as a person (we never arrive, you know!)? What did I learn? What was I really looking for? How can I care for her and forgive her - the part of you who had the affair? (This "splitting" is often very powerful in the healing process.)

Give this introspection a try and see what happens with your fears and the trust you have for your husband. You might want the help of a professional. But, let this person know exactly what you want. Focus only on this issue. This should only take a few sessions.



Q&A #7: Say Good-bye

Hi Dr. Bob,

I'm writing to you in regards to being involved with a married man. Our relationship is more than meant to be and we are aware of this, the only thing that is stopping his divorce is the money. Apparently it will cost alot to get out of his crappy relationship and I find this a poor excuse. We have been together for more than 4 yrs and his wife is clueless. But I'm getting to the point where its always going to be "HER" and not me. What should I do?

My response:

Hello,

In this country, if someone wants something badly enough, money is not an object. A huge part of you knows that his reason is as flimsy as a tent in a hurricane, doesn't it? It IS an excuse.

It sounds as if he has been dancing on the surface of relationships. I think: "His wife is clueless?" Not much must be happening there! And, even though it may "feel" as if your relationship with him was made in heaven, you know you only get so much and you will NEVER experience the richness and power of a relationship facing the slings and arrows of a life lived in the "real" world.

What do do?

Say good-bye. I sense you are ready to move on and discover a relationship without limits to intimacy.

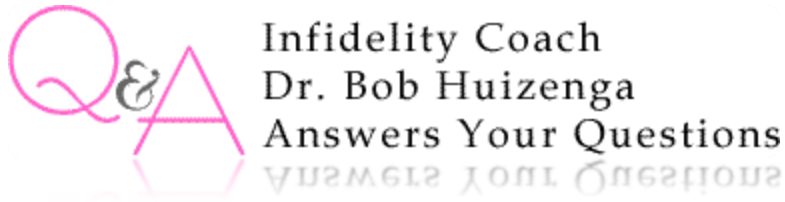
Don't hurry saying good-bye. Very seldom do I find someone stopping a relationship cold turkey. Put closure on the relationship. Talk about saying good-bye. Begin setting limits on when you see him. Limits on sex. Limits on calls, e-mails, etc. Firmly say no. "Charge neutral" - a favorite tactic of mine - and let him know it is over.

He may not like it. He may plead. He may manipulate. (From his limited point of view, he thinks he has a pretty good thing going.) Be kindly firm. You may need to say good-bye a number of times.

Grieve. Cry. Feel the loss. Welcome your pain. Allow it to flow through every cell of your body, so you may become free.

Learn. Reflect and ask yourself: "What about me - what personal needs - pulled me into this relationship? Am I comfortable with intimacy? What do I think intimacy truly is? What was I willing to tolerate? Why was I willing to tolerate so much? What are my standards for a truly loving relationship? What did I discover about myself in this relationship? What do I want to learn, try, and experiment with in other relationships? How do I feel about myself being in a relationship bound by secrets and limits? And then, jot down a half dozen other questions you want to ask.

Use this a springboard into a new chapter in your life. Wishing you the best....



Q&A #8: He/she had the Affair - Why do I Need to Change?

My husband had an affair, but from what I read and hear, I'm the one who must change. I supposedly am not at fault for the affair, but I should be on the road to self-improvement to "win him back" or "make it on my own." So, must I become a "better, sexier, livelier, more fun, more agreeable woman for him?"

Right now it seems impossible. The other woman gets everything - his time, attention, warmth, humor and excitement without "working on it." I hate being in competition with her.

I get the idea of being fit and happy for myself, but I hate playing games and it feels like I must do that to see any movement in the relationship. Do I need to be aloof - as if I don't care - before I have any chance of getting his attention?

My response:

Gosh, you hit the nail on the head! THE dilemma: Do I need to play the game better? Or, How do I extricate myself from the game and still care about him?

After all, an affair is a game, initiated usually by someone who is developmentally arrested (most did not "do" adolescence very well), has a character disorder (loves "the game"), struggles with addictions or suffers from feelings of inadequacy (needs to prove their adequacy or migrates to those familiar feelings of being inadequate).

Because he/she plays the game doesn't mean that you have to. It also means you can (eventually, perhaps) care and "connect" with him/her.

Yes, The affair is NOT your fault. Did you make mistakes? Well, I would assume so! Who doesn't? And really, you don't carry the power to control the behavior of others! :)

Yes, the "improvements" you list are subtly conveyed as those things we need to do win the game or get the guy. And, of course, they don't work, or if they work, we get the guy and say, "Hmmm, is this all there is!?" And, if we pursue these "improvements" to win him/her back we are merely playing the game, and feel this lack of personal integrity.

Not playing the game means standing back, learning about you, seeing the affair for what it REALLY is, and connecting to your partner by making comments "about" him/her, the situation and/or yourself.

For example, you assume this other person is getting something special - and our media does a number on us with their portrayal of "romantic love." It may appear so, but affair relationships have a terribly horrible track record. I get a number of emails from those involved in an affair who feel trapped or on a course of self-destruction. And, usually those relationships self-destruct in very messy ways.

Learning about yourself is very different from "making improvements" you described. You don't have to improve! You need not "get better!" You are ok. But, you do want to grow and create a richer more whole life for yourself and those you touch. This goes beyond a hard body, although a hard body might feel good and be what you want also. But, you want it for you, not to strut and seduce him (although sometimes that is fun!).

Here are some questions you may ask, to move you in the direction of self awareness and away from the game playing:

1. What am I tolerating? What am I willing to tolerate? How and what can I stop tolerating?
2. How can I simplify my life - getting rid of all the relational and physical clutter - so I live from a center of peace (well, sometimes at least)?
3. How do I clear my mind of all the thoughts of what I should've, could've or would've done? How do I throw off the baggage I carry?
4. How do I become a person of extreme integrity - doing that which is right/healthy FOR ME?
5. How do I speak my personal needs in a way that others naturally want to respond, "yes, let me know how I can help you." How do you get beyond your neediness?
6. What do I need to do right now to manage my life (finances, children, body, work, etc.) in a way that gives a sense of well being, where I can say, "This is good!"
7. What boundaries need to surround me to protect my soul, heart and mind from the slings and arrows of toxic people and situations?
8. What are the standards in my life? How can I double my standards to be more fully me?
9. How can I create reserves of time, space, money, energy, opportunity, love, information, wisdom, self and integrity in my life - getting beyond my neediness so I may live bound by purpose?
10. How can I live RIGHT NOW rather than regretting the past or fearing the future?
11. How can I surround me with people I want and who are good for me and me for them?
12. How do I protect what is vitally important for me?
13. How do I orient my life around my values so I feel truly fulfilled by the goals I set and met?

As you move through these questions (and you won't complete this in a couple days, or weeks, or months) declare your thoughts and findings to him/her. Act on tolerating less, let him/her know your boundaries, state your standards, live out your values in his/her presence.

And, feel free to make comments regarding what you observe, or don't observe in his/her life.

Don't compete. Don't try to measure up. Be you. And, be curious about him/her.

I know - easier said than done. But here is a game plan that puts you above the "game."

Dr Huizenga, the Infidelity Coach, offers infidelity help and relationship advice for coping with extramarital affairs and marital infidelity at: Break-free-from-the-affair.com and infidelity-help.com. Get articles and free downloads on [emotional infidelity](#), [coping with infidelity](#), [the cheating spouse](#), [signs of an affair](#), [surviving infidelity](#) and more.