

## ***AFFAIR Rx.***

### ***“Prescription to Keep on Track After an Affair”***

Here is some information you will find very useful.

#### **Recovering after Infidelity**

When an affair is first discovered, both partners can feel as if their whole world has collapsed and saving a relationship from the effects of an affair can be a huge challenge.

Apart from physical abuse, few relationship problems cause as much grief and pain as infidelity. Although financial difficulties, illness or accidents can strain a relationship, infidelity undermines the foundation of relationship itself. An affair, once discovered, is far more likely to lead to break-up than any other issue.

Nearly one in 4 married men and more than one in 10 married women admit to having had extramarital affairs, ranging from one-off flings to long-term relationships with deep emotional attachments. Most people agree that it is the ongoing emotional and physical relationships that affect a relationship most profoundly.

Despite these scenarios, break-up doesn't have to be the inevitable outcome of an affair. Relationships can survive infidelity. With relationship counselling, time and a willingness to heal, many couples emerge from infidelity with a stronger and more honest relationship than they had before.

The initial discovery of an affair usually triggers a range of emotional extremes for both partners: shame, depression, shock, rage, guilt and remorse are all a part of the emotional turmoil which most partners in a relationship experience at such a time. It is not uncommon to cycle through all of these emotions many times in a single day; one minute vowing to leave the relationship and the next wanting desperately to save it. At this point, it is important to take things slowly, get help and move calmly, one step at a time.

#### **Dealing With The Situation**

In the first instance, it is always a good idea to get some support, get some space from each other and take some time to regroup emotionally before trying to resolve the situation completely:

- \* Get support. The first thing to do is seek support from family, friends, or a qualified counsellor: someone you feel comfortable with. Whilst talking about your feelings with those you love can help you cope with the intensity of the situation, objective support can help you clarify what you're feeling and put the affair into perspective. Confiding in people you know will bring you comfort and support, but it is unlikely that you will receive unbiased relationship advice from your friends or family. When you are ready to take a look at the issues in your relationship, it may be of great benefit to see a counsellor.

- \* Give yourself some space. The discovery of an affair is an event that is bound to release a tremendous amount of emotional energy. Although it may seem difficult, it is generally impossible to resolve a situation as complicated as the discovery of an affair whilst tempers are flaring. Saving a relationship will require both partners to come together with honesty and goodwill. The best way to get into that zone is to take some time out, get your own space, support and advice and sort out your own emotions.

- \* Take some time. Avoid getting into the intimate details of the affair with your partner at first. It's best to postpone such discussions until you can talk without being overly accusatory or destructive. A counsellor may be able to help with this at a later stage, but the first priority should be to take the time to heal your own emotions and absorb the situation.

### **Why Do People Have Affairs? (What Causes Infidelity?)**

Infidelity isn't a single, clearly defined action or situation: there are different kinds of infidelity. What constitutes infidelity varies among couples and even between partners in a relationship. Actions which may be unacceptable for some couples (or one partner) may be tolerated, or even acceptable, for the other and affairs don't always involve sex. For instance, is it infidelity if your partner flirts with someone outside the relationship, but never takes things any further? Is an emotional connection with a person infidelity if there is no physical intimacy? Although the details and interpretations of these situations may vary, an affair usually involves:

- \* Sexual attraction
- \* Secrecy and deception
- \* Emotional intimacy which exceeds the intimacy within the primary relationship.

### **Recovering Your Relationship After an Affair**

Recovering from an affair is a difficult and an ongoing process for both partners in a relationship, but it is possible for a relationship to survive an affair. Counselling can help you put the affair into perspective, explore underlying relationship problems, learn how to rebuild and strengthen your relationship, and avoid break-up - if that's the mutual goal of both partners.

Understanding why an affair occurred in the first place is crucial to moving on with your relationship. Affairs can happen in happy relationships as well as troubled ones. The reasons why affairs happen vary. The involved partner may be affected by any or several of the following motivations:

- \* Not getting their emotional and/or sexual needs met from the relationship
- \* Feeling inadequate/unable to contribute to the relationship emotionally, socially or sexually
- \* A major life transition, such as the birth of a child or an "empty nest"
- \* Low self-esteem
- \* An addiction to sex, love or romance
- \* Fear of intimacy
- \* Acting on impulse while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
- \* Looking for a way to end an unhappy relationship.

Not every relationship affected by infidelity can be saved. Sometimes too much damage has been done or both partners aren't interested in continuing the relationship. Other relationships may have been abusive in ways that only emerge when an affair is discovered. As painful as it may be, it is important to acknowledge when this is the case. But if both of you are committed to rebuilding your relationship and you have the strength and goodwill required for the task, the rewards can be great: a partnership that keeps growing in depth, honesty and intimacy.

### **Taking Action: Steps to Help Recover Your Relationship**

Every relationship is different and there is no one correct way to proceed with recovering a relationship. Below are some suggested steps you may wish to contemplate in order to help mend a broken relationship:

\* End the affair. The first, non-negotiable step is to end the affair. This includes absolutely all interaction and communication with the other person. It is pointless trying to save your relationship without this basic step.

\* Be accountable. Both partners need to examine their role in the affair. If you've had an affair, take responsibility for your actions. If you were cheated on, consider the role you may have played in your spouse's unhappiness and reasons for infidelity.

\* Determine your common goal. Be sure that you both agree that you want to mend your relationship. It may take some time to sort out what's happened and to see if you can and want to restore your relationship. If you both arrive at the goal of reconciliation, it's important to realise that recovering the relationship will take time, goodwill and strength.

\* See a relationship counsellor. Find a counsellor who will help you restore your relationship and keep the process objective. Seek help from a counsellor who is trained in relationship therapy and experienced in dealing with infidelity. A skilled relationship counsellor will be able to steer you through your issues while giving you a neutral and unbiased perspective on the issues involved.

\* Identify the issues. Infidelity often points to underlying problems in your relationship. Your counsellor will help you examine your relationship to understand what has contributed to the affair, and what you need to do to move on from here.

\* Restore trust. Make a serious commitment to rebuilding your relationship. Go to counselling together to restore communication and to prevent secrecy from continuing to erode your relationship.

\* Talk about it. Once the initial shock is over, discuss what happened openly and honestly, no matter how difficult talking or hearing about this may be. This doesn't mean trawling through the gory details to bring up pain, but learning to share the truth with each other. You may well need the help of the counsellor to be able to talk constructively about it.

\* Take your time. Usually it will be the partner who was cheated on, who will set the timetable for recovery. Often the person who's been unfaithful is anxious to put the past behind them to try and bury their guilt. It is imperative to allow each other enough time to understand and heal.

\* Forgive. For many people, this is the hardest part of recovering from an affair. Forgiveness probably won't come quickly or easily; it may be a long process. But if you're committed to your partner and your relationship, forgiveness tends to become easier with time.

\* Recommit to your future. What you're going through can be emotionally devastating. Try to trust that resolving a situation like this can make people and relationships stronger than ever before.

*(Reference: Associated Relationship & Marriage Counsellors)*

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