



## Can You Recover from an Affair?

Greer J\*

Private Practice, USA

\*Corresponding author: Jane Greer, Private Practice, New York, USA, Tel: 212-688-7020;

E-mail: drjanegreer@me.com

Commentary

Volume 6 Issue 3

Received Date: August 18, 2021

Published Date: September 08, 2021

DOI: 10.23880/pprij-16000289

### Commentary

There is no question that infidelity in a marriage is devastating, it brings your world to a grinding halt. Everything that you thought you could count on has been smashed to pieces. But is it irreparable? Under the right circumstances, the answer is no. What may be even harder to believe, however, is that sometimes an affair can actually be a catalyst for rebooting and breathing new life into a marriage that might have already been in trouble, and eventually, with lots of hard work, take it to an even better place than where it was before the affair.

It is important to understand that there are many reasons one partner strays from a union. If you are not dealing with a sexual addiction of some sort, then the most typical reason is that one person strongly feels that his or her needs are not being met within the relationship. There are a few indicators of this. In my book *What About Me? Stop Selfishness From Ruining My Relationship* I talk about the never ending fight in which couples are unable to ever find resolution and therefore argue endlessly about whatever their issue might be. The flip side of this is when one partner completely stops fighting. It might seem like a good thing, but in reality the person has simply given up, knowing that no matter how hard he or she fights they will never be heard. It is a point of resignation. Very often someone might not go looking for an affair, but if they are in either of these situations they are then vulnerable to getting involved with another person because their sexual and emotional needs are not being met. In other words, even before the affair there was most likely some unhappiness in the marriage. The thing is, oftentimes the person who is cheated on doesn't realize how truly discontent their partner might be because they may have stopped complaining.

First and foremost, infidelity is a wake-up call for your marriage and, once it is discovered, can lead a couple in one of two directions. The first is when the anger and resentment are so great that the person who was cheated on sees no other

choice but to walk away and end the marriage. The second thing, however, that can happen is that both partners become committed to rebuilding the broken trust and continuing on as a couple. Basically you can either go or stay. I have worked with many couples over the years who have decided to stay and most of them would agree their commitment to each other, their level of intimacy, and their relationship in general is far better now than it was before. But to get to that point, you have to be willing to do the heavy lifting.

Initially the person who strayed feels terrible and wants to make amends, but then they are usually eager to get on with it. There is also an element of self-righteousness that can creep in when that person might feel they were pushed to the affair and might want to say things like *I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't done whatever*. There is absolutely no place for that as you begin to rebuild the marriage. There is really no room for the betrayer to begin to address his or her own needs being met until that foundation is under their feet again-and that can take time.

With this in mind, the following three steps can help you recover and carry on together. The first step is the apology. The person who had the affair must take ownership and responsibility for what they did. There has to be a real acknowledgment of the enormity of what took place. The second step is a move toward empathy. Remember the Tin Man from *The Wizard of Oz* and the importance of his constantly being oiled? When you empathize with your partner, you let them know that you understand the way they feel and the pain you've caused them. The partner who had the affair must be able to say over and over again, as often as is necessary, that they know how much anguish they have brought their husband or wife. This can never be sloughed off, rather it must always be attended to when the other spouse brings it up otherwise they are at risk for getting stuck in their anger and despair. Your ability to empathize

with your partner while they talk openly about what they've been through will enable them to move beyond the pain.

And the third step is constant steady doses of reassurance by the partner who cheated whereby they promise that this will not happen again because they are committed to rebuilding the trust. A major ingredient for doing this is that there can be no more secrets. There needs to be full accountability and full disclosure. All questions must be answered, as hard as that might be, keeping in mind that your spouse's imagination will be worse than the reality of what actually happened. This is no longer the time for "doing your own thing" and keeping things private. If your spouse wants to see your email, your laptop, your phone – that is all fair game now. The time for personal space that created so much distance has passed, instead it is a time to close the gap between you.

Once you have solidly established each person's willingness and ability to trust again, that is when you can begin to talk about what was missing in the marriage before

the affair. In my experience, the other person is then willing to listen and be open to your needs because they don't want to take a chance on losing you again. I encourage couples to seek counseling to help them through this. Once you are through the hardest part (which can take up to a year), and have talked it all out, your marriage will hopefully be in a better place than where it was before the affair.

Please tune in to "Let's Talk Sex" which streams live on HealthyLife.net every last Tuesday of the month at 2 PM EST, 11 AM Pacific. We look forward to listener call-in questions, dealing with relationships, intimacy, family, and friendships, at 1.800.555.5453.

Connect with Dr. Jane Greer on Facebook, at [www.facebook.com/DrJaneGreer](http://www.facebook.com/DrJaneGreer), and be sure to follow @DrJaneGreer on Twitter for her latest insights on love, relationships, sex, and intimacy.

For more on Dr. Greer, visit <http://www.drjanegreer.com>.

