



Psychologists, Marriage or Couples
Counseling Specialists:
Chuck Gray, Ph.D. & Associates
Serving the Houston Area since 1987

Why Counseling for Your Spouse's Affair

Your spouse had an extramarital affair. Ouch. Affairs hurt. You are now at a crossroads in your life. Do you stay in the marriage? Do you divorce? Will your spouse leave you for the other person? Should you contact the other person's spouse? Should you contact family members, friends, or in-laws? Will your spouse have affairs in the future if you stay? Can you ever work through the feelings of anger, betrayal, resentment, and perhaps rage? The sad, rejected feelings associated with being ignored, rejected, or supplanted in such an intimate and personal way? The insecurities, doubts, fears, and perhaps despair? The embarrassment and humiliation? Can you ever open your heart to this person again? Is it wise to do so?

You are human: you have feelings, especially regarding the person you thought was your exclusively intimate mate. This hurts. Badly. How could your spouse do this? You can feel better with time, especially with enlightened focused efforts and plenty of emotional support. You can learn to help your spouse open up with you in an increasingly authentic way.

If your spouse is infatuated with the other person and wants to leave the marriage or is considering doing so, you can learn how to help your spouse make the wisest, clearest, best-educated, most enlightened decisions possible. When a spouse leaves a marriage for someone else, $\frac{3}{4}$ regret it within a couple of years. Almost all thought they were an exception to that trend. Help your spouse learn to assess his or her likelihood of creating a new love relationship that will last. Your spouse may be at his or her worst and about to make a mistake that will cause needless suffering for many people. Your spouse may need your help now, even if he or she does not know it. Affairs counseling with a specialized, experienced, marriage counseling psychologist can help either you or both of you.

Maybe your spouse voices regret for the affair and swears it will never happen again. How can you know whether to believe it? Especially if there has been a significant history of duplicity and/or lying? Healthy trust

is given only as trust is earned. Perhaps you want to determine if indeed your spouse can learn to earn your trust and thus empower you to make a wiser decision about the marriage. If so, there are ways your spouse may legitimately earn your trust. He or she may learn to take the initiative in giving you the emotional support you so deeply need and deserve. Your spouse may become totally transparent with all passwords, records, and GPS possibilities. Through counseling, your spouse can assess in an open way with you and the counselor the most significant factors that lead to the affair. Influential personal behaviors, attitudes, and feelings of the offending spouse can be identified, and your counselor can help your spouse make changes in all relevant areas while helping you clearly perceive what progress is or is not being made.

Your spouse had the affair. You did not cause it to happen. Your spouse, not you, made the choice to be unfaithful. Yet, if you want to maximize your chances for marital recovery, you can be an influential contributor. Work with your counselor to teach your spouse how to best give you emotional support. Learn what, when, and how to investigate, if necessary, to help the two of you deal with reality together. Learn how to create a warm, kind atmosphere that nurtures authentic self-disclosure while rejecting duplicity. Learn when and how to demand the truth and when and how to entice it.

If your spouse is blinded by infatuation, counseling can help you make wise decisions, sometimes including how to increasingly become your spouse's confidante and ally in helping your spouse to also make wise decisions.

When prudent, counseling can help you and your spouse together learn what you can make out of the marriage now. Learn to discuss any and all issues in kind, honest, collaborative, and constructive ways. Learn how to deeply know each other and whether you can safely love each other. Learn to know when and how to open your hearts to each other. Most couples I have worked with during or after an affair chose to better their marriages and reported when ending counseling that their marriage was stronger and better than ever. Learn more of what counseling can do to help you make the most of your marriage by reading "Why Marriage Counseling" on our website's menu of articles.

-Chuck Gray, Ph.D.

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