

Infidelity

Some up-front advice: If it was a sexual relationship, do not ask for, or share, explicit, sexual X-rated details. It burns a movie image into the brain and can be very difficult to remove. If you've already heard the details and are stuck with disturbing images, it may make sense to try some Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy... Also, you need to have a conversation about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) right away...

We can spend time analyzing, being angry or in pain about the type of affair: emotional, physical (or about how physical it was).

Or we can look at the meaning or symbolism. Why did this happen? How did this happen? Why didn't I see it coming? What led up to it? What caused it? Was this a way of getting out of a relationship with me?

Or we can look at the effect: betrayal, broken trust, breaking up a family. Why me? Can I ever trust again? All of these are about me, the "victim."

Or, we can look at discovering why a person would leave the relationship and start a new one without moving out of the house first...

Many people think an affair is about sex. It usually isn't. Affairs don't often happen because of sexual boredom. They sometimes happen because people are no longer attached/bonded to their partner. They don't feel special anymore. When someone comes into their life and makes them feel special, it wakes up a deep desire and memory of "that" feeling. People can feel lonely in their current relationship. It may be hard to grasp that a person in a relationship can be lonely, but without a solid emotional attachment to a partner, it becomes easier to wander. All it takes is a smile from someone at the office and you feel good; like you haven't in a long time. You imagine what it would be like to matter to someone again and you're off and running toward an infidelity.

We are a species that needs attachment/connection/bonding. For years, we've had scientific evidence that infants need it (Bowlby). It turns out that adults do to. Our need for attachment is why we pursue relationships at all. It's when the attachment becomes damaged that we may go find it somewhere else...

I've heard many people argue that men are not meant for monogamy because they stray, and they are biologically built to spread their seed. The truth is that more women wander than is believed, but men can wander for "reasons" related to sex.

Men tend to get their attachment needs met through sex. Women get a fair amount of their attachment needs met from girlfriends and family. Most men I've worked with have the aspects involved in attachment all twisted up and fused together; mainly because they aren't taught very well about emotions and connections. When a man fuses 1) attachment, 2) love, 3) sex and 4) intimacy together and then one of those is off a bit, he will typically think the entire relationship is dying.

So, one goal of therapy is to work toward separation of those four things above, on both emotional and intellectual levels, and learn that one of the four can be low, and that the others are fine, and the relationship is not dead, and improvement is possible.

Talking about an infidelity must be done carefully. The speaker needs to talk slowly, be kind, empathetic and compassionate about the effect on the listener. The listener must be curious, and listen carefully, without getting highly emotionally reactive. If one person gets heated, that person needs to take a time-out. You need to breathe, slow down, and express emotion gently.

Why can't a person speak the unhappiness or disconnect when it's first noticed? A person could just say, "I wanted you to know that I fantasized about someone else today. I think that means something about our lack of connection or something, and I think we need to talk about this.."

That is precisely how communication should be.

We need to be fearless when we are communicating in our most intimate relationships.

Many couples therapy sessions begin right here...

"Not every infidelity is a symptom of a problem in a relationship. Sometimes it has to do with other longings that are much more existential. Sometimes you go elsewhere not because you are not liking the one you are with; you are not liking the person you have become."

--Esther Perel, author of *Mating in Captivity*

A brief list of other infidelities taken from "The Free Online Articles, Brochures and Guidelines" are at <http://www.ZurInstitute.com/> OFER ZUR, PH.D. Director, ZUR INSTITUTE E-Mail: info@ZurInstitute.com © 2012 Zur Institute:

1. Conflict Avoidance: People who go to any length to avoid any and all marital conflict may resort to affairs.
2. Intimacy Avoidance: "Intimacy avoiders" are reluctant to be intimately close and use the affair to keep themselves at an emotional distance from their spouse.
3. Individual (Existential or Developmental): Mid-life crisis, fear of growing old, the empty nest, depression and a sense of emptiness or a void are factors that can fuel an affair.

4. Sexual Addiction: Sex addicts compulsively display poor impulse control. They use sex over and over again to numb inner pain and/or a sense of emptiness.
5. Accidental-Brief Affairs: This type of one-night stand affair "just happens," when a person is in the right (wrong) place at the right time. Curiosity, pity, drunkenness and even politeness may lead to such affairs.
6. Philandering: Some individuals are insecure and constantly need to "score," conquer or receive affirmation about themselves. Narcissistic and impulsive individuals may be especially prone to marital infidelity.
7. Retribution: Sometimes one partner wants to "get back" at the other partner by having an affair. This may be payback for withholding money, love, emotion or any other perceived wrongdoing.
8. Unsatisfactory Marriage: This kind of affair is the result of a bad relationship in regard to communication, intimacy, support or sexuality.
9. Exit Affairs: "Affair exiters" use the affair as a jumping off point to end a marriage.
10. Parallel Lives: These are long-term extramarital relationships, which coincide with the original marital dyad. Affairs of this kind do not necessarily hurt the marriage and many claim may sometimes even support it by increasing the development and sense of well-being of all involved. Examples of these are Spencer Tracy & Katharine Hepburn's life-long affair or Prince Charles & Camilla Parker Bowles' affair. Such extramarital relationships are sometimes known, accepted or tolerated by the spouse and others.
11. Online: Online affairs have become extremely prevalent since the inception of the Internet and the propagation of pornography and online dating. Some view online affairs as one of the biggest threats to marriage. With the "Quadruple A engine" of accessibility, affordability, anonymity and addiction, the Internet population seems to be exploring sexuality in ways that are unprecedented.
12. Consensual Extramarital Sexual Relationships: Sometimes extramarital relationships are explicitly incorporated into the marriage, as in open marriages, polyamorous, or other arrangements.

Courtesy of:



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