

The Conditions For Healing After An Affair

The unthinkable has occurred. One spouse betrayed the other. It was an affair, a “fling,” and office romance, a one-night stand, or “just one of those things...”

In any case, it was unforgiveable. Or was it?

You might be surprised to learn how many couples try to repair their relationship after an affair. In fact, online studies show that according to dating site Ourtime.com 42 percent of adults polled would be willing to work on a relationship after finding out their partner had cheated.

<http://living.msn.com/love-relationships/love-sex/most-marriages-dont-survive-infidelity-2> In my experience, the woman is by far more likely than a man to take her partner back after infidelity, in both gay and straight relationships.

I’m not going to go into the particulars of all the work that needs to be done to heal a broken relationship, at least not in this post. What I want to show first is the groundwork that must be laid in order for that healing to actually stick. If you don’t have these three conditions met, it doesn’t matter how much time and effort you put in, the post-affair relationship is not going to work out.

Once you’ve decided to do the work to get your relationship back on track, there are three conditions that must be met with 100% transparency and full disclosure.

#1. Mutual effort

Both partners must agree to try. Now this is not an easy pitch for the one who’s been cheated on. Any work he or she puts in will feel at least a little bit, like a surplus of extra effort for something they did nothing to deserve. It’s not fair, they moan. I didn’t make the choice to stray, so why should I even lift a finger to save this marriage? The heavy lifting belongs to my partner, not me.

Unfortunately, the real answer is that the hardest work is probably falls to the cheated-on spouse. Forgiveness is never easy, especially in the case of infidelity. But it’s required on both sides to move the needle away from hurt and anger to trust and peace.

#2. End the affair cold turkey

The extramarital relationship must end instantly. No lingering and no excuses. The affair must be cut off immediately.

It amazes me how many times the one who cheats seems to want to buy a little more time. As if a relationship can handle two at a time, with understanding and work. I’m here to tell you, it cannot. Yes, there will need to be understanding and work, but only with that third player removed from the picture.

No stalling on this one. No follow-up phone calls or post game wrap up. The affair ends NOW.

The caveat: although the affair is over, both partners must recognize that the one who had the affair is probably going to be sad to see it go. There’s going to be a period of loss or mourning that is completely natural. I’m not saying it’s right or wrong, but I am saying it’s totally normal. Which brings us to the third condition...

#3 Say hello to the new normal

When your partner is lost in thought, well, yes, there’s a chance he or she is thinking of “what’s his name.” And by the way, both partners are prone to this thought pattern. Thoughts of the

dalliance are sticky and sharp. They pop up at any given moment for either partner, even those with the best intentions to move on.

There's really nothing you can do to stop it. The **behavior** can and must be stopped, but the mind has looser boundaries.

Maybe the one who had the affair felt validated, special, exciting, or needed. Those are strong emotions to overcome. When it's time to drop something that gives someone pleasure in an emotional, physical, or even spiritual way

Maybe a nice dinner out turns into a minefield of insecurities, as the "cheated on" spouse tries to imagine what dinner dates may have looked like during the partner's affair. The irony is that the one who cheated may really want to just drop it and move on. He or she may be thinking, "If only my spouse would just let it go, the healing could finally get some traction! I don't even think about that night anymore. Why is he/she rubbing my face in it every chance they get?"

If the memory of the extramarital relationship still lingers, it's because our brains must be put through the paces to forget the feelings the affair either satisfied or wounded.

With time and healing work inside the existing relationship, you can replace those feelings with powerful new emotions. If both partners accept that some mental lingering is normal, then you can focus on rebuilding what you've committed to rebuild. Admitting it's a process actually speeds up the process.

I know that sounds counter intuitive, but it's so true!

Now that you know the three conditions for healing, you may be wondering if it's even worth it to try to save the relationship. There's even a chance you'll do all the work to repair your heart and you recognize that the relationship is over anyway. Whether you decide to stick with your spouse or move on, the healing is a necessary journey to becoming a whole and healthy person.