

Week 2:

IF YOUR SPOUSE IS HAVING AN AFFAIR

SAVE MY MARRIAGE ONLINE COURSE



MarriageHelper

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If your spouse is having an affair, whether you suspect it strongly or you already know it, here are some suggestions for you. Sometimes people say, “Well, I need that absolute proof either because I suspect it strongly, but can’t prove it yet or I know it’s true and now I need to get the proof so I can have documentation in case we wind up in court”. Now, when people say, “I’m going to put a GPS in his or her car, I’m going to check his or her passwords and see what’s happening on Facebook and check behind the scenes with the e-mails and the text messages and etc.” You certainly can do those things, some people even go so far as to hiring a private investigator. But based on our experience, may I ask you to consider this, if you are bound and determined to get the truth, then probably you should be ready to get a divorce. Because, you see, if your spouse finds you spying on him or her, even if they’re doing the wrong thing, even if they are having the affair, if they discover you spying on them, it’s not going to be about their bad behaviour, it’s going to be about you violating their privacy and violating their rights.

Now, if you’re headed for divorce and that’s what you want, then go right ahead because it makes no difference. But if indeed, you are actually trying to save the marriage, then don’t do those things unless you already reached the point where your spouse says, “I’m willing to try to reconcile” and then you ask, “Well, can I do certain things just to give me security? Can I check your text messages, can I look at your e-mail, can I know where you are during the day”. In that case it’s okay because he or she has agreed. But if you’re really trying to save the marriage and he or she has not agreed, it’s probably only going to backfire if you try to do these sneaky things to catch them. So if you want out, do so. They’re great proof to have when it comes to court, if you really want to salvage the marriage, it’s probably going to work against you.

Now you’re sitting and you’re thinking, “but I need to know”. I get it. I understand. You’re in pain, you’re worried, you’re scared and you’re thinking, “well, at least if I can know, then I have something I can face rather than this big fear of wondering what in the world it is or who it might be” but would you please at least listen to my suggestion? Just by due time, wait a little while. Now, as you look at this, if you know or if you strongly believe that your spouse is having an affair, let me explain very briefly to you about the three kinds of extramarital affairs.

Short-Lined Affair

One is what we call the short-lined affair. It’s the proverbial ‘one night stand’. It might last just one night but it might last several months, it is primarily about sex. It may come from egos being stroked, it may come from vengeance like, “you hurt me and I want to hurt you”, it could be just being at the right place in the wrong time and you wind up doing the wrong thing.

It could be flirting that gets out of hand, it can be drinking that lures inhibitions and all of a sudden, you're doing something totally stupid. But short-lined affair, those extremely painful for you of the three is actually the easier one to fix. Now, I'm not saying it's easy and I'm not saying it doesn't hurt. But of all the three kinds of extramarital affairs, it's the one we typically have the best success with in getting people past rapidly. Because it's not about an emotional connection with another person, it's really about sex. It's bad. It's terribly bad, but that one can be dealt with in a different kind of way.

Allowed Affair

The second kind of affair is the one we call the 'allowed affair'. That's when you are in a marriage that some people call it an, "open marriage". Many, many years ago, it was called, "wife swapping" and now today, it's called "the lifestyle". Somewhere in the line it was also called "swinging". That's when you say, "well, we're in this relationship with each other, we're married to each other, but we can have other sexual partners as we go along". Interestingly, back in the middle of the 1980s, in an advice column in, of all things, Playboy Magazine, that was asked about. 'What if my husband and I or my wife and I', I don't remember, I actually read it that article itself, saw it many, many years ago. And it was, "if my spouse and I decide to go into this open marriage, if we participate in swinging or the lifestyle, wouldn't that be good for our marriage?". And the Playboy advisor was the one who responded, "it can be exciting and thrilling for awhile because of the newness to it but eventually, one of you is going to wind up emotionally connecting with another person and when that happens, your marriage is going to be in deep trouble and probably come to an end". Now I'm paraphrasing, not quoting that article directly, but I'm telling you, that's right. We have more and more couples who contact us about going to our workshops about marriages in crisis and they tell us, "well, we're in the lifestyle". Sometimes they even say, "help us get past this problem where my wife has now become emotionally involved with this other person and thinks she's in love with him" or "my husband is now in love with one of those women that we've involved ourselves with. Now, if you can help us save the marriage, we're going to stay in the lifestyle." And we'd respond, "Just save your money, don't come to the workshop. Because if you go right back into the lifestyle, you're going to put yourself right back into that same situation again." So you see, that becomes a more difficult situation to solve than just the proverbial "one night stand" kind of thing, the short-lined affairs. Because it indeed does involve an emotional connection which leads to the third and the most difficult one to work with. And may will be what your spouse is into if your spouse is having an affair.

Relationship Affair

We call it the "relationship affair". It typically starts as a friendship, boundaries and barriers begin to come down because they start sharing more and more about themselves with each other. And there's sharing these things with each other that begin to have this emotional connection because they accept each other.

Typically, people who do that are not evil people who are out looking for something. The tip would be people who feel a little lonely or little empty, who don't feel validated, who don't feel like they can communicate in their own marriage. And please, don't view me as beating you up if your spouse is in that. But in the sense that they feel bad, they have some degree of vulnerability. Then somebody comes along and that person is now in their lives and they start talking about things [06:10] at first. But as they accept each other, understand each other, they begin to develop a deeper and deeper emotional relationship. Sometimes it does not turn into sex that's what people say the proverbial 'emotional affair'. Most of the time, it does become sexual but is really not about the sex. It's about the affirmation, it's about the connection, it's about the emotional things going on there that ties them together. Now, if you understand that, then, there's some things you can look at here.

For example, if it's the proverbial 'one night stand' and if it happened not just once, but has happened on several occasions, maybe not just with one person but with several people. As a matter of fact, just the other day, I was talking to a couple where the man has had multiple affairs. If your spouse has done that and if your spouse is willing to take a suggestion from you, you might want to check for whether or not they have what is in this day and time refers to as a sex addiction. There's a website that's called www.sexhelp.com and if you go there, there is actually a sex addiction screening. Now, this is a site connected with Patrick Carnes, who is like the grandfather of helping people overcome sex addiction. And he has trained and certified counselors and therapists all across America. So, in sexhelp.com not only can you find that profile to help your spouse or even you for that matter, discover if you have some kind of sexual addiction. You can also find there links to various therapists and counselors in America that can help with that. If your spouse is willing to take the test, if your spouse is willing to admit that you or he or she has that problem.

Now, if it's the emotional affair, if it's what we call the relationship affair, if they're really connected to each other that way, then there's some things that you need to understand that we cannot really deal with in this series because it's a series in another self. There's a thing called 'limerence'. That's a word that refers to somebody who feels that he or she is madly in love with another person. Now, you can read about limerence on our website at marriagehelper.com. There are many articles about limerence there (L-I-M-E-R-E-N-C-E), there are also some e-books there about it and there's some podcast there about it which are absolutely free.

Also, there is a course like this one, shorter and not as complex as this one that we call, "Marriage Recovery". And in marriage recovery, I explain for about an hour or fifteen or twenty minutes in short segments so you don't have to watch it all at one time. Where you can understand the limerence, how your spouse got into it, what's going on and giving you specific guidelines about what to do to get past that situation.

We have a short link to it, I'll just tell you what it is now if you want to go look at that product, that one does have a fee to it. Most of the things in marriagehelper.com are free, but that one is bit.ly/marriagerecovery, all one word, all small letters – so, bit.ly/marriagerecovery. If you go to that link, you can find that product to help you understand more about limerence that I don't have time to explain in this one. But it helps you get what's going on. Now, if it's not a lined affair, if your husband or wife got into this emotional connection because the two of you have been in this open marriage in the lifestyle, I need to ask you a question. Are you ready to stop that? Oh, I know it can be sexually exhilarating, but you've already seen the great damage it can do to your relationship. If you really want to salvage your marriage, I strongly urge you to stop the lifestyle. That when you put this thing back together and save your marriage that you do not participate in that anymore, ever. So you might want to say something to your spouse, such as "I'm aware that I agreed to the lifestyle but my heart now tells me that I cannot do this any longer. I need you to know that I love you and I want only you. Can you love me enough to stop the lifestyle and be only with me?"

Now, I mentioned earlier, what if you don't know for a fact that your spouse is having an affair but you think so. Well, accusation rarely helps. I'm pretty sure you're having an affair, I don't have the proof, but let me tell you this, once you start accusing or attacking, the other person typically becomes very defensive and they wind up lying and it just makes things worse. So, if you think your spouse is having an affair and you want to confront that, do it by showing your concern from your point of view. In other words, speak from the heart. "Honey, I think that you're having an affair and because I do, it is tearing me apart inside. I love you, I hate to think that I'm not the most important person in your life. I hate to think that something else has come into, someone else come into our life that can rip not only our marriage apart but our entire family apart. Can you please still hear my heart even if you're involved with him or her?" Now, here, she may still lie terribly. You got a better chance of getting them to confess if you approach it from your heart, your pain, your hurt as opposed to, "I can't believe you're doing this you dirty blank and blank and so and so".

So, how do you respond to your spouse when you know? If you now know that it's going on, well, try not to attack even though everything going in your emotions say that you should because the emotions are so intense. If you know that it is going on then, tell what you know and then tell how you know. Be careful here to try not to not destroy other relationships in the process. For example, if you found out because his brother told you or her sister told you, then you may not want to reveal your source directly. Because you're just going to cause problems in that relationship too. Unless, of course, the brother or the sister whom ever said "sure, you tell him I'm the one that told you. I caught them and you let them know that." But you tell them what you know.

As a matter of fact, if you tell them what you know, don't tell every little detail or facet. Tell enough so that he or she knows that you know, but not so much that you give all the information away. Because believe it or not, they're wondering what else do you know, that can actually be your advantage to help get them to stop doing that. Then, ask him or her to stop the affair. Say, "I love you. I can forgive you, but there are some problems here that we have to solve for the sake of our marriage, for the sake of our children (if you have children), for the sake of our religious beliefs, if indeed that you have them. Please stop this and let's solve our marriage."

Now, as you do that, do not whine, do not beg, do not plead. Because whining and begging and pleading are not attractive. As a matter of fact, they'll actually push the other person away. So you do it as calmly as you possibly can. Really, that shows great strength and if you ask him or her to stop the affair, then you need to offer a definitive path forward. Not just "would you stop this" but "here's what I'm asking from you, will you let me see your texts? Will you let me see your e-mails? Will you let me have access to your Facebook page and will you do this for me?" and at that point, you need to offer something concrete such as "will you go to this counselor with me because I've already called and we can go and will you go with me?" or "will you go to a workshop with Joe Beam called 911 that helps save marriages" but whatever it is, if you offer a definitive path at the offset, the first time you confront to your pair calmly and rationally. You have a much better chance of getting them to go then.

Now, is that definitely going to fix things? No. But so far, what I'm telling you is something that helps you understand the principles behind what's happening. Now, there's more to talk about. We have more segments in this chapter.