

Affairs and Infidelity

Affairs and betrayals are often the symptom of longer-term problems in a relationship. Infidelity may come in many forms: financial secrets, threats to leave, gambling, drug or alcohol abuse, bonds with other friends or relatives. Any betrayal of trust rocks a relationship. Many couples first start to address their problems after the discovery. The majority do survive an affair and for many it is a chance to become more realistic and reach a deeper understanding. There are two main reasons for affairs: to end the current relationship, (quite rare), or to allow the current relationship to continue (more usual). Often a partner looks outside the relationship to find the "missing part of the jigsaw" which allows them to function within their first relationship. Many seek lost admiration and love.

For others affairs may be a compulsion to recreate an earlier family pattern or seek excitement. Many affairs begin around the birth of the first child or during another life change. It can be an attempt to regain the pole position. Anger and loss can be temporarily absorbed with an affair – with little thought of the long-term consequences. Relationship Counselling may help to contain the distress and shock of discovery. The couple may then be able to explore buried resentments and feelings more safely. Betrayal can be the result of being unable to deal with problems which have gradually snowballed. Some couples find it impossible to move forward and have to consider permanently ending their relationship. Counselling can help to make the break less bitter.

Why attend Relationship Counselling?

- If an affair or betrayal cannot be discussed
- If trust has broken down and cannot be rebuilt
- To understand an affair in a less blaming way
- If bitter attacks poison the relationship

Trust can be difficult to repair, especially if a partner has been let down in the past. But often, once the hurt has been acknowledged and the healing begins, a new more realistic relationship can be built. New skills and a fresh perspective can help.

Cyber Affairs arising from networking sites and chat rooms are a new form of betrayal fuelled by fear of intimacy. With or without sexual contact these can leave a partner feeling betrayed. The instant accessibility can mean very rapid developments.

How can Relationship Counselling help?

Unbearable and strong emotions can be heard

The problems can be more fully understood

Pain can be acknowledged and healing can begin

Blame, guilt and bitterness can be contained

A more realistic relationship may be negotiated

New skills of relating, dealing with conflict may be learned

Any betrayal of trust may need to examine what trust means to both partners to allow them to move forward.

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Content written/edited by Denise Pickup BACP (Accred) in 2008. The content is for general information only and may or may not relate to your individual situation; please contact a professional directly to discuss this issue.