



### **Should I Try to Work It Out?**

Be specific about the changes you want to make in yourself and the changes you want your partner to make. Write down your thoughts here. If you can't imagine this scenario at all, then write down why this is the case:

Now think what steps you and your partner could take and changes in circumstances that could potentially turn your imaginings into reality. Write down your thoughts about this:

Think about what conflicts you might have if you divorce that would be the most difficult and cause you the most emotional pain. These may be some of the same conflicts you currently have. But they may be new ones due to changes from divorce:

How difficult do you think each might be?

Think about ways you could reduce this potential conflict:

Overall, how do you think a divorce would affect conflict with your ex-partner? List your thoughts here:

### **Hanging on or Moving on?**

A. What are some reasons for hanging on and trying to make things work? List them here:

B. Are there some reasons why it might not be wise to hang on and try to make things work? List them here:

C. What are the stresses on or within your marriage that are making things difficult? Consider both inside stresses (e.g., kids demand a lot of time) and outside stresses (e.g., demanding job, financial pressures):

Now think about whether those stresses are likely to change in a positive way over the next few years:

Are there things you could do to reduce those stresses?

What have you learned from thinking about these issues?

What do you think will happen if you hang on for the next few years and try to make things work? Write down your thoughts here:

### **Working Through Infidelity**

#### *Tasks and responsibilities of the involved partner to facilitate healing*

1. To rebuild trust and create emotional safety for the hurt partner by being completely transparent and giving no further reasons for doubts or suspicions regarding one's behavior.
2. To demonstrate to the hurt partner one's care, concern, and love by way of connecting with, accepting, and validating the hurt partner's emotional experience.
3. To actively work to demonstrate one's commitment to interpersonal healing and to rebuilding the relationship or marriage.

#### *Tasks and responsibilities of the hurt partner to facilitate healing*

1. To be open to and acknowledge the involved partner's effort to rebuild trust.
2. To work at developing compassion for the involved partner's imperfection as a human being by recognizing and having compassion for one's own imperfection as a human being.
3. To work toward forgiveness when the involved partner has demonstrated his or her commitment to interpersonal healing and to rebuilding the relationship or marriage.

## CONCRETE STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY EACH PARTNER TO FACILITATE THE PROCESS OF HEALING

(Items in bold are essential for genuine healing to occur)

### *Steps to be taken to facilitate healing if you are the involved partner*

- 1. All contact with the third-party must definitely be cut off. This includes a commitment to your partner that any further contact initiated by the third party will be reported to your partner and will not be responded to. Understand that for your partner, this is an issue of emotional safety and self-protection.**
2. If the third party is a coworker, then absolutely clear and mutually agreed-to boundaries are to be negotiated respecting the needs of your partners so as to promote emotional safety.
3. Make yourself accountable by maintaining complete transparency regarding your schedule, whereabouts, and expected arrival times. This is essential to prevent the arousal of new doubts or suspicions. When traveling, a detailed itinerary is to be provided to your partner, including all relevant contact information and phone numbers.
4. Access to phone records and e-mail accounts, including passwords, are to be provided to your partner if requested. To regard this as an invasion of privacy given your infidelity undermines the task of rebuilding trust since past secrecy was one essential factor facilitating your infidelity.
5. Depending on the nature of the infidelity, get tested for STDs and provide the results to your partner.
- 6. Assume and acknowledge complete and exclusive responsibility for your decision to engage in the infidelity or affair without seeking to justify the infidelity because of the relationship issues you have with your partner.**
7. Be prepared to answer all relevant questions posed by your partner regarding the circumstances, frequency of contact, and duration of infidelity or affair. (This does not include details of sexual acts engaged in.)
8. Learn to tolerate and do not respond defensively to the complex and unpredictable emotions that your partner will likely display during the healing process. Sometimes it will feel like your partner's emotions "came out from nowhere."
9. Periodically ask how your partner is feeling and how your partner is doing emotionally in the aftermath of the infidelity or affair, so your partner is not always the one having to bring up this emotionally difficult issue. Inquire how they would like this to be done.
- 10. Work hard to understand your personal vulnerabilities that indirectly may have contributed to your susceptibility to engage in infidelity or an affair. This is in no way to justify your infidelity but rather is an important step to help you and your partner understand how you allowed yourself to make the decision to engage in infidelity or an affair. It also will facilitate you developing a plan of action to prevent a recurrence of infidelity while building trust and confidence in your partner that infidelity is unlikely to recur.**
11. Work hard to understand and come to terms with any acts of self-deception that were involved in you allowing yourself to take the steps you took to engage in the infidelity or affair and share your self-understanding with your partner.

12. **Genuinely connect with and feel the pain and hurt of your partner and demonstrate this to your partner through verbal empathy so that your partner can *feel* understood by you regarding his or her pain over the infidelity.**
13. **Feel genuine remorse for the pain and hurt caused to your partner and convey genuine remorse for having inflicted such pain.**
14. **Apologize to your partner for your infidelity and ask for forgiveness, expecting that the latter will unfold gradually in stages as part of the healing process.**

*Steps to be taken to facilitate healing if you are the hurt partner*

1. Definitely be clear with your partner that further contact with the third party will not be tolerated. If the third party is a coworker of your partner, work to negotiate clear and mutually agreed-to boundaries. Explain that for you this is an issue of emotional safety and self-protection.
2. Be clear for yourself and clearly articulate what boundaries you need to be in place around the relationship or marriage with regard to outside relationships to preserve the emotional and sexual integrity of your relationship. Once again, stress that this is for your emotional safety and self-protection.
3. Be clear for yourself and clearly articulate what you need by way of transparency regarding your partner's schedule and whereabouts, as well as any travel itineraries and how access and contact are to be maintained.
4. Decide what you need by way of access to phone records and email accounts to help establish emotional safety for yourself, by accepting that under certain circumstances this is designed to be a time-limited measure until a sufficient level of trust has been restored. Also, having such access does not automatically translate into you actually choosing to access those records.
5. Depending on the nature of the infidelity, request that your partner get tested for STDs and provide you the results.
6. When you wish to talk with your partner about the infidelity, focus on communicating your experience, your feelings, your concerns, and your desires as subjectively and respectfully as possible.
7. **When communicating your emotions to your partner, avoid engaging in personal attacks that would induce defensiveness and resentment in your partner, leading your partner either to shut down and withdraw emotionally or to get drawn into counterproductive counterattacks and arguments.**
8. When referring to your partner's behavior, avoid saying or implying that there is something wrong with your partner. Instead, describe the behavior and the impact it has had or is having on you.
9. When asking questions about your partner's infidelity or affair, be careful how much detail you ask for. There is a risk you could deepen your sense of trauma if you were to fixate on any new sexual details as opposed to questions regarding the circumstances, frequency of contact, and duration of the infidelity or affair. Seek extra help if you find yourself obsessing about the details of the infidelity or affair.
10. **Attempt to understand your partner's vulnerabilities that may have indirectly contributed to his or her susceptibility to engage in infidelity or an affair. This is not asking you to accept any justification for your partner's choices or actions. This is**

simply a way of helping you make sense of how your partner came to allow himself or herself to make such a decision, often contrary to their better nature.

11. **As relevant, acknowledge and be open to addressing issues that your partner may have about you and the relationship. This is not to accept blame for your partner's infidelity or affair. Openly addressing issues that may be longstanding in the relationship is intended to balance the scales by acknowledging that your partner also has the right to have certain feelings, concerns, and desires, as well as the right to have those issues addressed.**
12. **Acknowledge and appreciate your partner's efforts to return your trust as well as your partner's efforts to understand the pain and hurt you suffered as a result of their infidelity.**
13. **Be willing to forgive your partner for their infidelity when they have demonstrated their commitment to interpersonal healing and the rebuilding of the relationship or marriage.**
14. **Apologize to your partner and ask for forgiveness of actions on your part that were not beneficial to the relationship.**

#### *Steps to be taken to facilitate healing by both partners together*

1. Accept that healing is a process that takes time as well as genuine commitment in effort by both of you.
2. Be kind to one another, especially under these very difficult circumstances.
3. Hold on to hope even when at times it feels hopeless.
4. Learn good relationship and communication skills, either through therapy or by attempting a weekend workshop for couples that focuses on skills training. (Not all workshops for couples do that.)
5. Be patient in listening to one another. Take turns expressing; express yourself in a subjective and respectful manner without attacking or criticizing one another. Be patient in listening; do not interrupt or talk over one another. Listen empathically to understand your partner on his or her terms, most especially when it differs from your perspective, and verbally empathize with your partner's perspective so that he or she feels understood by you. Wait to be invited to become the expresser before you express your point of view.
6. **Be open to receiving difficult to hear feedback, and never respond dismissively to your partner's feelings, concerns, or desires.**
7. Be willing to talk through all of the feelings and concerns of both partners about everything related to the infidelity as well as other issues in the relationship.
8. Negotiate mutually acceptable boundaries with regard to outside relationships, including extended family and friends. This includes balancing his or her need for privacy regarding issues internal to the marriage. There may be a legitimate need to be able to talk in confidence with a trusted friend or family member about concerns related to the relationship. In the latter case, it is crucial that any such confidence be someone who genuinely is *a friend of the marriage* or relationship.
9. Develop an action plan to nurture your relationship by strengthening its positive aspects and aim to meet your partner's needs and desires.

10. Attend to sexual intimacy in the relationship. Request assistance in therapy if there are issues related to sexual intimacy that need to be addressed.
- 11. Work together toward mutual forgiveness and reconciliation and understand that forgiveness is not a single act that happens once, but instead is a process that happens gradually over time.**
12. For the involved partner, the process of forgiveness and reconciliation involves empathic understanding of and compassion for the pain experienced by your partner; genuine remorse and contributions; concerted efforts to re-earn trust by respecting your partner's needs for emotional safety; apologizing for your act of betrayal; making amends for your infidelity; and asking for forgiveness.
- 13. For the hurt partner, the process of forgiveness and reconciliation involves acknowledgment of your partner's efforts at healing and reconciliation; surrendering a stance of superiority or self-righteousness; having compassion for your partner's (as well as your own) imperfection as a human being; forgiving your partner for the hurt you have experienced; accepting your own potential need to be forgiven for your choices and actions that may have contributed to difficulties in the relationship; and apologizing and asking for forgiveness in return (Scuka, 2015).**

### **Questions for the Partner Who Had an Affair**

1. What did it mean for you?
  
2. What were you able to express that you couldn't with your partner?
  
3. What was it like for you when you came home?
  
4. What is it about your partner that you value?

5. Are you glad that the affair is over?