



Distorted thinking can intensify pain, block healing, and damage connection.

Awareness creates choice. Choice creates healing.

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## FOR THE WIFE / BETRAYED PARTNER

Guard your mind from distortions that deepen pain, fear, and self-blame.



### 1 CATASTROPHIZING

"Everything was fake."  
"My whole life has been a lie."

Pain convinces you that nothing good was ever real.

#### HEALTHIER REFRAME

- Some things were real, and some were hidden.
- I do not yet fully understand the whole picture.
- This is devastating, but devastation is not the same as destruction.



### 2 PERSONALIZATION

"If I were prettier, more sexual, more attentive, this wouldn't have happened."

You internalize responsibility for their choices.

- I may have imperfections, but I did not cause someone else's choices.
- His behavior reflects his coping deficits, not my worth.



### 3 MIND READING

"He still doesn't really love me." "He's probably lying again."

Assuming motives without evidence keeps you stuck in fear.

- Trust must be rebuilt through patterns, not assumptions.
- I can observe behavior instead of assuming motives.



### 4 EMOTIONAL REASONING

"I feel unsafe, therefore I am unsafe."

Feelings are valid, but not always objective proof.

- My emotions are real and valid.
- I can slow down and evaluate facts alongside feelings.



### 5 ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING

"Either he becomes perfect immediately, or recovery is fake."

Recovery is usually uneven.

- Consistency matters more than perfection.
- I can look for direction and honesty, not instant flawlessness.

## FOR THE HUSBAND / PERSON IN RECOVERY

Guard your mind from distortions that fuel shame, defensiveness, and relapse.



### 1 SHAME-BASED LABELING

"I am disgusting."  
"I'm just a horrible husband."

Shame says: I AM the problem. This fuels hopelessness and relapse.

#### HEALTHIER REFRAME

- I am responsible for my behavior.
- My actions were destructive, but I am capable of change.



### 2 MINIMIZATION

"It wasn't that bad."  
"At least I never..."

Minimization protects the ego but blocks empathy and healing.

- I may not fully understand the depth of the impact yet.
- Pain does not need to meet my threshold to be real.



### 3 DEFENSIVENESS / VICTIM THINKING

"Nothing I do is ever enough."  
"I'm the only bad guy here."

Shifts attention away from accountability.

- Her pain is not an attack.
- I can listen without collapsing into defensiveness.



### 4 FORTUNE TELLING

"She'll never forgive me."  
"The marriage is doomed."

The mind tries to predict the future to escape uncertainty.

- I do not know the final outcome.
- Healing is built one day at a time.



### 5 BLACK-AND-WHITE RECOVERY THINKING

"If I struggle emotionally, I'm failing recovery."

Recovery is not linear. Discomfort is not failure.

- Growth often feels uncomfortable.
- Setbacks can become opportunities for honesty and deeper work.

## DISTORTIONS BOTH PARTNERS NEED TO WATCH FOR

### 1. NEGATIVE FILTERING



Only noticing evidence of failure while ignoring signs of growth.

Example: Focusing only on mistakes while dismissing months of honesty or effort.

#### HEALTHIER REFRAME

- I want to evaluate the full picture, not just the painful parts.

### 2. SCOREKEEPING



"Who hurt who more?"  
"Who is trying harder?"

Healing is not a competition.

#### HEALTHIER REFRAME

- We each have different work to do.
- Mutual healing matters more than comparison.

### 3. CONTROL THINKING



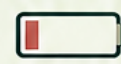
"If I monitor enough, I can guarantee safety."  
"If I say everything perfectly, I can force forgiveness."

Neither spouse can control the other's healing.

#### HEALTHIER REFRAME

- I can control my integrity, honesty, and boundaries.
- Healing requires surrendering outcomes.

### 4. HOPELESSNESS



"We'll never recover from this."

One of the most dangerous distortions—fuels withdrawal, relapse, resentment, and emotional paralysis.

#### HEALTHIER REFRAME

- This is painful and difficult, but many couples do heal.
- Healing is possible if both remain honest, humble, and engaged.

## A HELPFUL GUIDING PRINCIPLE



After disclosure, both spouses should ask:

**"What are the facts, and what story is my fear adding to the facts?"**

This single question can slow reactivity and create room for truth, empathy, accountability, and wisdom.



**REMEMBER**



Honesty



Humility



Emotional Regulation



Consistent Action



Healthy Boundaries



Refuse to let distorted thinking control the relationship.

*Healing after disclosure is not built on perfection. It is built on honesty, humility, and a daily choice to keep showing up.*