

HEAL. RECLAIM. RISE.

THE FIRST 7 DAYS *After Betrayal*

What to Do When Your World Has Suddenly Changed

A FREE COMPANION GUIDE FOR WOMEN 50+



You do not have to decide the rest of your life today.

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*A companion resource to *After the Betrayal**

BETRAYAL CAN TAKE MANY FORMS

Betrayal in an intimate relationship is not limited to a physical affair. It may involve a sexual relationship outside the partnership, an **emotional affair**, secretive or compulsive pornography use accompanied by deception or broken agreements, or **financial betrayal**.

Financial betrayal may include hidden debt, secret spending, emptied accounts, transferred money or assets, secret accounts, or major financial decisions made without your knowledge or consent.

These experiences are different, but they can share a painful common denominator: **something important to the safety and trust of the relationship was happening outside your awareness.**

You may be grieving not only what happened, but also the reality you believed you were living in. Shock, anger, sadness, fear and confusion can arrive all at once.

For the next seven days, you do not have to decide the future of your relationship.

Your immediate task is to steady yourself enough to begin thinking clearly again. Eat something nourishing. Drink water. Rest when you can. Reduce unnecessary demands.

STABILIZE FIRST. DECIDE LATER.

DAY 1 - SHOULD I TELL MY PARTNER I KNOW - OR WAIT?

One of the first impulses after discovery may be to confront your partner immediately. Sometimes that is the right choice. But you do not necessarily have to disclose what you know the moment you discover it.

BEFORE YOU CONFRONT, ASK YOURSELF

What do I know - and what am I assuming? Is there information I need to preserve or understand before I disclose what I discovered?

What do I want from the first conversation? Truth? Clarification? Acknowledgment? Simply to let my partner know that I know?

Am I prepared for the response? You may encounter honesty, but you may also encounter denial, anger, blame, minimization, partial disclosure, or additional information.

IF FINANCES OR SAFETY ARE INVOLVED

If you are concerned that money or assets could be moved, consider understanding your financial situation and obtaining appropriate professional guidance before revealing everything you know. If you fear intimidation, retaliation, violence, destruction of evidence, or another threat to your safety or security, seek appropriate professional help before confronting your partner.

Waiting does not necessarily mean you are being dishonest. It may mean: "I am giving myself time to understand what I discovered and decide how I want to respond."

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY TOLD YOUR PARTNER

You may have already confronted your partner or disclosed what you discovered. **That is okay, too.** You responded with the information and emotions you had at the time. Moving forward, you do not have to immediately disclose everything else you learn, suspect, or are considering. You can give yourself time to process new information, gather facts you are legally entitled to access, seek appropriate guidance, and decide what you want to discuss - and when.

YOU CAN SLOW THE PROCESS DOWN NOW, EVEN IF THE FIRST CONVERSATION HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.

DAY 1-2 - SLOW THE INVESTIGATION AND CARE FOR YOUR BODY

After betrayal, your mind may become an investigator. You want details: When did it start? What else do I not know? Where did the money go? Is there more?

Some information will be necessary. But there is a difference between **getting the information you need** and becoming a **24-hour investigator**. Constantly checking phones, social media, locations, messages, timelines or financial activity may temporarily reduce uncertainty, but it can also keep your nervous system in a continuous state of alarm.

Ask yourself: What information do I actually need today?

If financial betrayal is involved, protecting your interests may require timely attention. Safely preserve information you are legally entitled to access, such as recent account statements and records of significant financial activity, and consider appropriate legal or financial guidance before signing documents or making major decisions.

CARE FOR YOUR BODY, NOT JUST YOUR THOUGHTS

Betrayal can affect sleep, appetite, digestion, muscle tension, concentration and your sense of being constantly "on alert." Sometimes the body needs help calming before the mind can follow.

Top-down strategies: journaling, prayer, talking with a trusted person, therapy, and challenging catastrophic thinking.

Bottom-up strategies: slow breathing, walking, stretching, massage, relaxation exercises and other calming sensory experiences.

Put both feet on the floor. Slow your breathing. Name five things you can see. Then ask: What do I need for the next hour - not for the rest of my life?

DAY 3 - CHOOSE CAREFULLY WHO YOU TELL

When you have been deeply hurt, it is natural to want someone to know. Support is important, but disclosure deserves care.

Keep your initial communication circle relatively small. Tell people who have a genuine need to know or who can provide meaningful support.

You might say: "We are going through a difficult situation in our relationship. I am not ready to make decisions yet, but I could really use your support."

WITH ADULT CHILDREN

Remember that they have their own relationship with each parent. They usually do not need intimate details or to become your confidant, investigator or messenger.

BEFORE TELLING SOMEONE, ASK

Why am I telling this person? Do I want comfort, practical help, advice or validation? Am I hoping they will become angry on my behalf?

When we are hurt, there can also be a temptation to disclose information as punishment. That response is understandable, but it seldom serves you well in the long run.

PROTECT YOUR FUTURE SELF WHILE CARING FOR YOUR PRESENT SELF.

DAYS 4-5 - DON'T FORCE THE BIG DECISION YET

One of the first questions after discovering betrayal is often: **Should I stay or should I leave?** Unless your immediate safety requires action, you may not need to answer that question today.

QUESTIONS THAT MAY COME FIRST

Is the outside relationship or behavior truly over?

Is your partner willing to be honest?

Is there genuine remorse - or simply regret about being discovered?

Is your partner willing to accept responsibility without blaming you?

Is there willingness to establish appropriate transparency?

What do **you** need in order to feel emotionally safe enough to decide what you want?

If pornography use is secretive, compulsive or difficult to control and is causing significant impairment or distress, professional assessment and treatment may be important. Repeated deception, addiction, abuse or other concerning patterns can also require specialized professional help.

If financial betrayal has occurred, you do not have to make a decision about the relationship in order to begin protecting your financial well-being.

Reconciliation and recovery are not the same thing. You can begin recovering before you know whether the relationship will survive.

YOUR HEALING DOES NOT HAVE TO WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S DECISION.

DAYS 6-7 - BEGIN RECLAIMING YOURSELF

Betrayal can make your entire world revolve around another person's behavior. Begin bringing some of your attention back to you. Ask: What did I enjoy before this crisis? Who helps me feel grounded? What parts of myself have I neglected? What is one thing I can do today that belongs entirely to me?

LOOKING FORWARD

Allow yourself a different goal: **clarity rather than certainty**. You may choose reconciliation. You may choose separation. You may not know yet. Begin shifting from **"Why did this happen to me?"** toward **"What do I want my life to look like from here?"**

**I do not have to decide my whole future today.
I can heal while I decide what comes next.**

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

This complimentary guide is an introduction to ***After the Betrayal*** - a compassionate roadmap to healing, clarity and your next chapter for women 50+.



ABOUT DONNA RUSSOW

Donna Russow, LCSW, ACSW, Certified Life Coach is a licensed mental health professional. She earned her master's degree from the University of Maryland and completed two years of postgraduate study at the Family Therapy Institute/Providence Counseling in St. Louis, Missouri. She is a former Clinical Fellow and Approved Supervisor for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and a past president of the Kentucky Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Her professional coaching training includes the Life Purpose Institute in San Diego, California.

Educational disclaimer: This guide provides general educational information and is not a substitute for individualized mental health, medical, legal, financial, or crisis services. Seek qualified professional guidance appropriate to your circumstances.