



Counseling Couples After Affairs

I. Characteristics of Marriage

A. Volatile Emotions

Couple of 18 years of hidden affairs. Wife angry, 20 questions, violent. Couple one affair, one night stand. Husband repentant, wife angry, unforgiving, blaming.

B. Ambiguous Commitment

I'm back. I don't plan to leave. Isn't that enough.

C. Multiple Problem Issues

Finances. Separation. Both working. Alienated friendships or family members.

D. Negative Attitudes

1. Martyr

Linda's martyrdom:

"Carl hurt me?"

"How could he treat me this way?"

"He doesn't really appreciate my pain!"

"I'm the one making all of the sacrifices!" "I didn't deserve this!"

2. Justification

Carl's justified attitude:

"Yes, I did wrong, but it wasn't all my fault!"

"Linda never gave me the attention I deserved!"

"If she' been a better wife to me, maybe I wouldn't have strayed."

"I recognize my errancy, but I don't see me as dastardly as Linda does."

"What's it going to take for her to just let this thing go!"

Problem with these attitudes: emotionally distance, no intimacy or restoration.

II. Communicating Hope

A. God restores what locusts eat away. (Joel 2:25)

B. Trust can be rebuilt.

C. We will face affair so we can let it go and begin to make changes in our marriage.



III. Recognize Roadblocks

1. Let's forget it. Avoiding conflict and discontent.

"Let's just forget it."

"It's behind us now."

"God has forgiven me and that's all that is necessary."

"Why bring something up that is in the past?"

"Talking about it will only bring needless pain."

2. Let's obsess over affair. Dwelling on pain.

"He really hurt me."

"How can I ever get over all of this pain?"

"I didn't deserve this!"

"She was despicable!"

3. I won't jump through hoops. Power struggle.

Question: Who is in control?

4. But I was hurt too. Bitterness and resentment

5. I can't let her go. Emotional Attachment to affair.

Need to break soul tie. (scripture)

IV. Treatment Guidelines

A. Establish therapeutic relationship

1. Care, concern, and respect.
2. Listen, and ask questions (don't instruct or confront initially)
3. Don't judge or criticize
4. Use first session for assessment and rapport building only.
5. Healing emotional wounds is usually a process.
6. Successful couples face and resolve each issue.

B. Assessment

1. Has the overall marriage been healthy or unhealthy?
2. What interferences have operated in the relationship?
3. What did each spouse contribute to deterioration of the marriage?
(In some cases individual work is necessary before marriage work can be successful - i.e. Severe personality disorder, major depression, anxiety disorder, or major addiction.)

C. Prerequisites to dealing with affair

D. Reconciliation Session

E. Restoring the Marriage