

Questions to Help You Decide to Stay or Leave a Relationship after an Affair

No one, not even a professional in the field of marriage therapy or counseling should ever recommend that you leave or stay in a relationship affected by an affair. All anyone can do is provide their viewpoint and research so that you can make the best-informed decision on what makes most sense for you based on your ***circumstances, personality, resources*** and ***abilities***.

Please do not make a hasty decision ***without considering as many angles as you can*** get on your current situation. I highly recommend that you get your hands on as much material as you can so that you can get a wider perspective on how to positively recover from the turmoil you are suffering now.

Regardless of how long you have carried this emotional burden with you, it still makes sense to lift up every rock and turn over every leaf ***to find the golden pieces of nuggets that will help you recover your inner strength*** and return you to happiness.

Please take a look at the questions in this document that you should ask yourself as the hurt spouse to help you determine what your future will look like if you stay in the relationship.

Within this material I provide links to other readings, some lead to my blog and others go to other blogs or books. The links to books that I recommend on Amazon.com are some of the more thorough books you can find that cover many issues related to affair recovery. I believe they can help you become more knowledgeable of how to regain your inner power to survive the aftermath of the affair. Please know that these links are affiliate links and I earn a commission if you purchase which help me run my blog.

Onto the questions...

“Can We Get Along and Love Each Other After So Much Damage?”

According to Dr. Janis Springs in her book [“After the Affair”](#) the best indicator (but far from a guarantee) that you could love each other again depends on how you felt about each other in the past, specifically toward the beginning of the relationship. *Did you start strong? Did you work through arguments and spend a lot of time together?*

Just be mindful that you might feel jaded about your past together and look at it through a negative lens. Working together to save the marriage will take an open mind and willingness to act as a team. If the relationship was healthy and happy in the beginning then there is a chance for it to return to the way it was- but with an effort to introspect one’s own feelings to decide where the relationship needs work, why the cheating spouse strayed and how much each partner wants the marriage to be happy again.

“If I Take Him/Her Back Will They Cheat Again? Is It Worth the Risk?”

There is no way to guarantee that your partner will *NOT* cheat again now or in the distant future. This is part of the risk of taking them back.

On the other hand, you can look to signs and indicators that give you a sense of how likely they will cheat again.

One of the best resources that I’ve discovered to help you determine how likely your partner will stray from your relationship again is [Break from the Affair](#) The author and infidelity coach who is known as being an expert on how to survive an affair provides his **seven reasons** why people commit affairs.

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For each reason he provides the following information and recommendations:

- the possible **background history** that led to the offender's reason to cheat
- suggestions on **how to approach the straying spouse** to elicit a positive response to help open the communication lines between the partners and finally...
- he attaches a number on a **scale of 1 -10** which represents **the likelihood that you can save your marriage** after an affair based on the type of affair that afflicted your relationship.

==>[Click here](#) to read my **PROs and CONs** review of **Break Free from the Affair**.

At the same time, my opinion from experience of dealing with affairs directly and reading affair recovery books, is that you should start with the following indicators (some of them come from one of my most read posts [Serial Cheater Profile: 9 Personality Traits](#) that would lead to a higher likelihood of repeat cheating.

- **Lack of Empathy and Sympathy Towards Your Pain of Dealing with the Affair**

This indicates that your spouse most likely does NOT feel pain for hurting you. Therefore, what would stop them from prioritizing their own needs over yours.

However, on the flip side, be mindful that it may also stem from their initial shock of you discovering the affair or their shame of making a choice that could devastate their family. They may just not be ready to talk or express their feelings.

- **General Lack of Concern for Other's Well-Being**

I remember an event that alarmed me about my ex that raised a big red flag.

The sister of one of our high-respected elderly neighbors and "commemorative" neighborhood watchman informed us outside in the parking lot of our townhome that she had travelled across town to rescue him. He had fallen down in his home several hours previously overnight and could not get up.

Me and several other neighbors were worried about his condition and eagerly awaited the paramedics.

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However, one person did not seem disturbed at all.

My wife.

She instead appeared emotionless.

She could care less.

Not even a smidgen of sympathy.

She fidgeted through her phone and hurried me to take her to work.

This event piled on top of several others as I reflected back on her history of apathy towards other people's needs illustrated her lack of concern for other people's well-being if it meant that she didn't get anything in return.

If your spouse routinely shows no concern for other people's needs, then he/she probably will not want to deprive themselves of fulfilling the fantasy that cheating gives them.

- **Taking Responsibility for Hurting You or Others**

Has your spouse shown a history of apologizing and asking for forgiveness for causing you or someone else pain or an inconvenience?

...Or do they typically point fingers at someone or something else as the cause of the problem?

Part of taking responsibility for fixing a relationship after an affair involves the cheating spouse accepting the fact that they chose to have an affair. They could have chosen to accept that something was missing in the relationship or bothered them enough that it caused internal turmoil and at least sought individual counseling.

Instead they chose the worse possible option which not only did not solve their inner turmoil, it created a series of other problems and caused pain to many people around them.

- **Discuss, Introspect or Attempt to Analyze their Own Feelings**

A healthy indicator that your spouse has the capability and desire to save the marriage is if they have shown a history of discussing their feelings with you or others.

Do they attempt to decipher why they feel a certain way? Do they conduct any research, show a desire to seek counseling or actually get it? What makes them fear certain things or desire others? What emotions influence their behaviors?

And especially now, after they committed an affair, *do they seek answers to what led them to risk destroying their relationship?*

Attempting to understand one's own feelings signals that they identify a correlation between their own feelings and their behavior, which in turn indicates the possibility that they believe they can influence their thoughts and change their behavior.

- **Attitude Towards Monogamy and Value of Remaining Faithful**

If during discussions with your spouse you discover that he/she does not believe in monogamy nor value committing to one partner sexually then what makes you think that they will not fall into temptation to cheat again?

Have they suggested an open marriage where it'd be permissible for either of you two to sleep with other partners?

Have they even suggested or insinuated having a threesome or swinging?

Or have they suggested that even good people fall into temptation, attempting to blame society for their decision to cross boundaries.

These are all indicators that they are not prepared to remain faithful.

They fish with the hope that you will fall into temptation to take the bait and profess your desire to sleep around which in turn gives them permission to do it.

[Life's Extremes: Monogamy vs. Polygamy](#)

- **History of Cheating**

Does your spouse have a history of cheating already during your marriage or even before you started to date?

Have you already given them second, third or even more chances?

Did they cheat with multiple partners during their previous relationships?

These are indications of a serial cheater.

Serial cheaters struggle with deep-seeded emotional issues with their own security and self-esteem which have gone untreated.

The likelihood of a serial cheater finally identifying that they have character issues which are destroying their own lives in addition those of people around them is very low.

Thus, it is very unlikely for them to seek diagnosis and therapy to stop and fix it.

[Can Serial Cheaters Change?](#)

- **History of Hiding Secrets or Lying**

My ex found it easier to avoid responsibility by hiding the truth.

I strongly believe now that she had a boyfriend when we first met, but didn't tell me. Instead I have reason to believe that she may have justified an excuse why to leave him.

According to the man she left me for, she told him I was gay.

Then she left him for another man.

She quit the first job she had after moving in with me without telling the owners that she no longer was coming back. Her excuse to me was that they stopped giving her hours.

Instead she just stopped showing up.

The same thing happened again with another job.

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There are plenty more secrets that she hid which I don't list here.

The point is that she turned into a pathological liar through hiding her numerous secrets.

A chronic history of deception and cheating does not suddenly cease and desist.

[How Secrets and Lies Destroy Relationships](#)

- **History of Promiscuity**

Someone who sleeps with multiple partners prior to meeting you and struggles with sexual compulsion will struggle to remain monogamous.

Some of my closest friends face this challenge.

Either married or in a committed relationship they still continue to seek multiple sexual partners.

There's no emotional switch that you can suddenly just flick off.

Once you get used to and lust for a variety of partners it becomes nearly impossible to resist the urge to pursue sexual variety.

Sexual compulsion becomes an addiction that makes you crave the hunt for sex with multiple partners.

[Nine Decades of Promiscuity](#)

[Think Casual Sex is Harmless. Think Again.](#)

[What the Number of Sexual Partners Says about You](#)

[The Lingering Psychological Effects of Multiple Sex Partners](#)

- **Fear of Confrontation/Poor Conflict Resolution Skills**

How would you expect your partner who struggles to deal with resolving even the smallest of disputes to openly confess and strive to effectively communicate with you to [repair the broken trust?](#)

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I would imagine that the fear of confrontation would coincide with hiding secrets (like the point mentioned above).

Some people just seek the path of least resistance. Once it becomes a part of your personality it will become difficult to change.

For them it's easier to hide your feelings than face an argument.

If you do not have the confidence nor the interpersonal skills to negotiate fairly so that both parties win then you would believe that more times than not that you will not get what you want.

So why bother creating waves when it's easier to just hold it in?

This is how a person with poor conflict resolution skills thinks.

In licensed psychologist Dr. Gunzburg's book [How to Survive an Affair](#), he discusses action steps on how to work together to effectively communicate your differences.

==>[Read my review here](#) of **How to Survive an Affair**.

Summary of Indicators of Future Behavior and Possible Repeat Cheating

Carefully consider these indicators of possible repeat cheating in the future, but also be mindful that your spouse may still not be ready to talk.

Imagine how shocked and embarrassed your spouse might feel to be caught doing something that puts their whole existence and character to shame.

They may need time to collect their thoughts and build up their courage to face you.

Dealing with affairs is a delicate matter and there are no easy ways to fix it, there are no magic pills.

And the feelings and raw emotions that led to the affair are very complicated.

Do not expect your husband or wife to untie a giant ball of emotions on your timeline because it just won't happen.

Believe me, I understand how unfair that sounds, but what have you learned about fairness through this experience so far?

There is none.

“Do We Both Want to Save The Relationship?”

Unless, or at least until you both want to save the relationship, you will anxiously wait and hold onto the hope that things will turn around. Your betraying spouse will remain in a state of confusion and continue to hide their feelings.

He or she may need time to ponder what they want to do next.

Yes, this sounds unfair to you, but the betraying spouse will also feel aimless and without a clear path.

The real question is how long can you wait until they figure out what they want?

And if and when they do arrive at a conclusion, then you must find the answer to this next question...

“Why Does Your Spouse Want to Stay?”

The decision alone to stay with you may not signal their intent to save the marriage and find happiness with you again.

It only means that they do not wish to separate from you and end it.

The more important question behind this one is “WHY do they want to stay?”

Their reasons may only serve their own needs rather than both your needs.

You will need these answers in order to decide if it makes sense for you to stay together too.

Here are some of the reasons that a cheating spouse may ***selfishly wish to stay in the relationship***:

- They want the **financial safety** that staying married provides. They would lose some preferential lifestyle perks and luxuries by leaving and living on their own.
- They **fear judgement of others** and feel that staying together as a family protects their image and reputation some.
- The **comfort and familiarity** of home.

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- **Being taken care of** during sickness and old age.
- **Companionship**- fear of loneliness.
- They have **no place to live**.
- They would like to leave but **do not make enough money to live on their own**.

“Why do you want to stay? How healthy and sustainable are my reasons?”

You will have to compare the short-term gain of remaining comfortable to the potential long-term hardships that you could face down the road should you stay and feel trapped in a loveless marriage.

Let’s look at the possible reasons you might want to remain in the relationship (rather than leave) that have nothing to do with working to rebuild your lost love with your partner.

- **Fear of financial obligations** on your own.
- For **religious principles**.
- The **challenges of** the legalities of **divorce** and separating finances.
- Desire to **protect your children’s emotional well-being**. (We will discuss this in detail later).
- **Fear of leaving too early** before saving the marriage.
- **Your cheating spouse depends on you** to take care of them.

The challenge of making the decision to stay in a relationship for reasons not related to love is that in the future you may wish you had left.

How you feel today may not be how you feel in the future.

Right now, you may want to cling to safety and comfort, but if you cannot save your marriage and make it stronger than it is now you will put off feeling unsafe and uncomfortable for later anyway.

Consider how you may feel in the future and make your decision for today based on what you predict will happen down the road.

“Did You Get Married for Unustainable Reasons?”

Just because you married does not mean that you should have. I can honestly confess to making that mistake twice.

It's easy to fall in love with the idea falling in love and whisking ourselves into marriage before we carefully consider the long-term effects.

Then we discover that we should have waited longer to make one of the most important decisions we can make in our lifetimes.

Our reasons for marrying may just not have been sustainable for the long-run.

Here are some of the **risky reasons or conditions for marrying** that I list in my blog post [“Best and Worst Reasons to Marry: Are You Sure You're Ready?”](#)

- You **ignore cheating signs or a history of cheating** and just hope for the best.
- Your partner had a **long history of a variety of sexual partners**.
- A desire to gain access to “endless” sex
- To **avoid loneliness**
- Take a chance on an exciting, yet “up-and-down” relationship to see how it goes, knowing that you could get divorced if it does not work out.
- To be **taken care of financially**
- You face the pressure that “everyone else got married”
- To make someone citizen of your country (so that you can marry *BUT* you do not know them well)
- To please your parents

These conditions and reasons for marrying may increase the challenge fixing your relationship even when you have the best intentions of getting along and saving it.

This doesn't mean that I recommend you leave or separate because you married under these circumstances or for these reasons, but **I do however, recommend that you be mindful of your past.**

Your past decisions affect your present situation today.

And before you head to the next section of this document please check out an insightful article from licensed psychologist Shauna Springer.

According to her the [wrongful reasons to marry](#) consist of **three unwise motivations**: fear-based, feelings of inadequacy or shallow pragmatics (without long-term scope).

But either way, you did marry, and now things feel rocky and uncertain, have you ever asked yourself the question...

“...How Realistic Are Your Expectations of Love and Marriage?”

If either of you married under the **unrealistic notions of what you would receive in marriage** than you may need to manage these lofty expectations or face the emotional consequences of not being able to reach them.

These expectations could be based on what you believe your spouse should bring to the relationship or they could be the needs that you believe love, in general, should fulfill.

Do any of these sound familiar?

- My partner should **anticipate my needs** without me having to ask or state what I want.
- I expect them **to come to me when they have an issue**. (Most people fear confrontation and will not proactively bring their concerns to your attention. This failure to bring to light their frustrations or unmet needs led to hiding their feelings and confiding in someone else to fulfill them).
- Building trust and **working out disputes should happen automatically**.
- My spouse should be prepared to **give me attention whenever I need it**.
- My partner should **perform certain deeds** or **fulfill certain roles** to prove that they love me. (My first wife asked me to make an effort to memorize many of her family and friends' names and birthdays which she believed showed a genuine interest in her).
- Spouses do not argue.
- Both spouses should want and provide sex at all times.
- **Love is a feeling that requires no work**, you either feel it or you don't. When the feeling goes away the relationship is over.
- You lose personal space and alone time after you get married.

- Expect your partner **to understand your needs in the way you explain it** and after only explaining it once.
- Want your spouse to accept your imperfections. (But how forgiving and open-minded are you of their imperfections?)
- Believing that people do not change, that their preferences and personality remain completely the same through their journey in life.
- Believing that **spouses should always agree**.

[5 Signs You Have Unrealistic Marriage Expectations That Stem from Your Childhood](#)

[Unrealistic Expectations About Love and Marriage](#)

“How Likely Are We to Change to Fulfill What Each Other Wants in The Relationship?”

For many, it is likely that you will assume that your partner is not right for you. You may feel this way because you fear being able to trust that he/she won't cheat again or that you conclude that you both must be incompatible since they chose to act unfaithful.

Either way you don't want to give up on your partner too soon without being certain.

In order for you both to arrive at a mutual understanding of each other you will both need to openly discuss what your needs are in the relationship.

You may need to initiate the exchange if your cheating spouse needs time to move past the shame of the discovery of the affair.

To make it more comfortable for you to share your thoughts you could even write them down, but make them concrete, non-combative and focus on specific details. Include the feelings you wish you gain from your requests.

Here are some examples:

- “I wish to have conversations to feel like I am closer to you but I feel ignored sometimes. When we eat dinner together speak with me and do not look at your phone.”

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- “I want to prepare at least 3 dinners a week with you. It allows us to create something together which feels special and unique-alone time for just us to share.”
- “Take me out on at least one date night per weekend so that we can dedicate time together.”
- “Share details about your interests, hobbies and passions. Perhaps new ones you would like to try. I want to support you more in what matters to you.”
- “Allow me to spend at least one hour alone on week nights. It lets me recharge my batteries.”
- “Take at least one vacation a year together as a family of at least seven days. Vacations were always important to me and my family growing up. If we commit to going then we will make it happen.”
- “Allow me to try three new things sexually with you to spice things up and make sex more exciting. We can discuss after we try them how you feel.”

List out your needs that you feel need changed. Choose the ones that you feel you must have. Ask your spouse to read them over then ask later how they felt and then to create a list for you.

This exercise can easily turn lopsided if you seem to ask for more than the other wants to give or if they interpret what you ask for to strip them of their core values.

The want to avoid blaming each other for any unhappiness or bitterness you have felt in the relationship. Instead focus on the things that could instantly create a small change towards rekindling your love for each other. As small positive changes add up over the course of just a few weeks you will begin to look for ways to please one another in return for making you feel happy again.

To pull this off correctly I suggest that you read my post on [how to rebuild trust after an affair](#) which is based on the teachings of marriage counselor Dr. Frank Gunzburg.

“How Sustainable Are Permanent Changes that Will Help Strengthen Our Bond?”

Of course, even after you begin to witness substantial change in your relationship you may worry how sustainable they are.

After all, you fell in love before and then your partner ended up cheating anyway.

Not to mention you may wonder if they made the changes to stay in the relationship for one of the selfish reasons listed in one of the previous sections above.

You must give your partner an honest chance.

If you see the changes taking place then give them more time. You may consider seeking individual counseling in the mean time to ask for another person's opinion.

“Should We Stay for The Kids’ Sake?”

For couples who divorce, this issue causes more confusion and disturbance than any other concern regarding deciding to stay or leave a relationship after an affair.

But from what I've read in books and what a few have told me via **my Private Facebook Group “the IFAK Lounge”**, most believe that their children are better off not witnessing a poor model of love. Meaning, they are better off not living in a household where the couple fights or appears distant and loveless.

According to **“Parental Divorce and The Well-Being of Children”**, by Paul Amato and Keith Bruce (pages 26-46) it appears that the well-being of children is better suited in a divorced family in which there is less conflict than in a household where there is more.

And in a study of ninety-eight divorced families by sociologist and author of **[“The Good Divorce: Keeping Your Family Together When Your Marriage Comes Apart”](#)** Connie Ahrons, the majority determined that staying together for the sake of the family was a mistake and that they wish they had separated earlier- that the children were better off in a normal-functioning household, even if it had experienced divorce.

[Parental divorce and the well-being of children](#)