

# 5 Healing Steps You Can Take When Your Spouse Betrays You

Among all the possible sources of pain, a spouse's betrayal ranks as one of the worst. The person you expected to have your best interests at heart and stick with you through good and bad has let you down. Knowing or suspecting your spouse is cheating rocks your world.

Cheating comes in different flavors. The most obvious, of course, is when your spouse is having a sexual or emotionally intimate relationship with someone else. But similar feelings arise when you feel betrayed in other ways. Perhaps your spouse deceived you into believing something that wasn't true, hid significant amounts of money from you or is engaged in pornography or related indiscretions. Betrayal is agonizing.

You may have ignored the signs for some time, and now feel "stupid" for not paying attention sooner. Or you may find yourself lashing out with indiscriminate anger at your spouse—and anyone else close enough to catch your ire. Whatever your emotional response, your first feelings are not likely to provide a wise foundation for action.

The fire in your soul needs a chance to subside a little. The pain is real, but you *do* have choices in how you proceed. Here are some healthy steps to take next.

## **1. Look for the truth.**

Red flags are danger signs, but they are not where you should stop. It's possible to be either overly suspicious or to remain in denial; instead, choose to find and embrace the truth. As painful as the truth may be, living a lie will eventually eat you alive and destroy your relationship.

You will need to talk with your spouse (unless you're

concerned about a violent response). Your first conversation(s) should be calm and without emotion, simply seeking an explanation or more information. Once you display anger, the chance of your spouse sharing information goes down considerably. The longer you can keep your emotions in check, the more clarifying information you're likely to discover.

## **2. Seek God's perspective.**

Is your spouse's heart evil, or are they struggling and taking steps to make a change? Are they deeply repentant for whatever pain they have caused, or are they simply sorry they got caught? You will need God's perspective to truly know the difference. Seek His perspective intentionally and repeatedly. Betrayal is never OK, but your spouse's intentions do make a difference.

Understanding God's perspective does not remove your spouse's responsibility for their behavior, but it should help you come to some sense of compassion and more clarity about what to do next.

## **3. Care for your own heart.**

The pain you're experiencing is real. You need to be taken seriously—in your own heart, and by someone you can trust. Find a fellow believer with whom you can share—not to air your “dirty laundry” publicly, but to get some support and Christian loving care. And spend some intentional time in God's presence asking Him to minister to your heart.

Do things that you know will feed your soul. That may be time in nature, caring for your physical body and time with God in prayer and worship. You need that kind of care to give your heart the nourishment it needs so you can even think clearly enough to consider what to do next.

## **4. The matter of forgiveness.**

At some point, you will have to face the matter of forgiveness. Forgiving your spouse does not mean what they did was OK nor guarantee that the relationship can be healed. Forgiveness is not a one-time thing; it's a process, and it's hard. It means you give God the right to determine any punishment your spouse receives.

Forgiving your spouse is not for their benefit; it's for you. Whether or not you are ever able to trust your spouse in the future depends on *their* behavior going forward, but forgiveness is only dependent on your *own* choice. Forgiveness disinfects your soul from bitterness and makes it possible for you to go on living either with or without your spouse.

## **5. Take action.**

Doing nothing is allowing yourself to be victimized. Once you've come to some clarity on the truth and sought God's perspective, take action. That will look different depending on your spouse's response and your relationship as a whole. You may need to set some difficult boundaries, such as requiring your spouse to install Covenant Eyes and following up with his/her accountability partners. You may need some urgent individual or couples Christian counseling. You may need to investigate what legal action is appropriate or connect with an organization such as Affair Recovery.

Rebuilding trust after betrayal is a long and challenging process, but it is possible if both of you give God a chance to work. And you will most certainly need to stay on your knees, continuing to seek God's intervention.

**Your Turn:** *If you know or suspect your spouse is cheating, what are you doing to work through these steps? Which step do you need to take next? Leave a comment below.* {eoa}

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*This article originally appeared at .*