

5 Steps to Healing Your Heart When Your Spouse Fails You

Your spouse cheated—emotionally or physically. You found pornography on their smartphone. Your spouse abuses alcohol or drugs, is physically or verbally abusive, spends money you don't have, flies into a rage or cuts you down verbally without warning. You cannot trust they will do what they say or be where they say they will be. Promises are not kept. There is no trust in your marriage.

How are you supposed to live with someone you cannot trust?

Love is to be given freely, unconditionally. You cannot earn true love, control it, or pay for it.

But trust is different. Trust must be earned. Trust that is given indiscriminately is foolish at best and often destructive. Trust is fragile and can be lost in a moment. Rebuilding trust is enormously difficult, and is much costlier than building it originally. Trust is priceless.

So what are you to do when trust has been broken? Is there any hope? Is it ever possible to move on?

Rebuilding trust in marriage can be done. It takes both partners' investment to make it work, and it takes time. But this article is especially about your own heart in the process. Here are five important steps to take when there is no trust in your marriage.

When someone shows you who they are, believe them.

You married a sinner. You married someone who has—and will—let you down. The details of your spouse's brokenness are as unique as they are, and you're in the most intimate position to see it and be hurt by it. Hoping and wishing for your

spouse to be different doesn't make it so. Ongoing addiction, abuse or unfaithfulness are too common in our world. It is neither useful nor godly to deny the reality of who your spouse is.

That may sound harsh, but it's not. Marriage as God intended it is a place where both partners have their deepest wounds exposed and experience healing and transformation through being loved in the process. We are each fallen, and marriage often exposes our fallenness at its worst. The question is not whether your spouse is a sinner; the question is what they are doing about it.

Own your own stuff.

Your spouse married a sinner too. You may have been blind to the truth, inflicted deep wounds on them, enabled bad behavior, refused to extend love, placed unrealistic expectations on your relationship and engaged in plenty of destructive behavior yourself. Every dysfunctional marriage includes two people.

This is not about assigning a percentage to how much blame your spouse gets and how much shame you carry yourself. Instead, it's about bringing it all into the light. God can do amazing things when brokenness is turned over to Him. Your role is to do that with your own stuff, and to be a safe enough place for your spouse to do the same.

Treasure the truth.

Some of your spouse's brokenness may be irritating, annoying, even painful. Some of it may be truly destructive. Only you can determine where your own marriage falls in that continuum. Unless your spouse has turned their life completely over to Satan they are a kaleidoscope of weakness and strength, childishness and maturity, bad and good, brokenness and healed-ness. As are you.

Being honest about the truth helps in making decisions. How destructive is your spouse's behavior? How willing are they to go through the process of change? Complaining about your circumstances won't help. What will help is getting honest about where you are and the choices you do have. Only you can wrestle with God about whether or not your marriage is too destructive to save. Don't be quick to write it off.

Keep an open heart.

You have a choice to make about the state of your heart. It's possible for your heart to be open to your spouse but still have necessary boundaries in place, such as limitations and controls on spending, internet filters on every device to lessen the ease of accessing pornography or an intervention requiring them to get help for an addiction. Lack of trust in one area does not necessarily mean the end of the relationship, or of intimacy and growth.

A closed heart, on the other hand, can magnify your spouse's irritating fault into a mountain, and your criticism becomes the defining problem in the relationship. By your words or attempts at control you can stifle any growth and maturity your spouse may have otherwise been open to.

Making the decision to have an open heart will allow you to see the truth, and give God the opportunity to both heal you and restore your marriage.

Trust the only truly trustworthy One.

No human being is completely trustworthy. Humans cannot be. Every person, including your spouse, will in some way let you down and leave you at some point. Maturing people strive to be as trustworthy as possible, but we always have limitations.

Only Jesus can truly say, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). Only He will never let you down. Learning to trust Him is a process; I encourage you to decide to go on

that journey. Bring your stuff to Him, and see what He does with it. Give Him the chance to show you Himself, to carry you, strengthen you, grow you and use you.

I pray for God's healing and restoration of trust in your marriage. It's within His power to do so. That depends on both your choice and your spouse's choice.

But regardless of the state of your marriage today or tomorrow, you can be assured that Jesus will always be there. Him, you *can* trust.

*Reprinted with permission from **Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley's** blog. Dr. Carol is an OB-GYN, doctor of ministry, author and speaker.*