

Dealing With Your Partner's Infidelity? 6 Do's and Don'ts

These Do's and Don'ts may help you deal with infidelity in your relationship.

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Infidelity Hurts!

If you've ever learned about a spouse or partner's sexual infidelity, then you know how difficult this is to deal with. For one thing, it's not just the pain of any specific sexual betrayal that you must try to process and eventually overcome, it's the *loss of trust* in your spouse and your relationship.

Oftentimes, learning about a supposedly monogamous partner's extracurricular sexual activity leaves a betrayed spouse in a daze — stunned, hurt, uncertain, and unable to fully assimilate and accept what has happened.

Unsurprisingly, cheated-on partners sometimes find themselves struggling with even the simplest of actions and decisions regarding both their relationship and day-to-day life.

If you have recently learned about infidelity in your relationship and are experiencing any degree of the pain and uncertainty described above, the following lists of Do's and Don'ts may be helpful.

Six Things You SHOULD DO If You Are Being Cheated On

1. **DO get tested for STDs.** Men and women who engage in sexual infidelity are often careless about safer sex. As soon as you learn that your partner has been sexually unfaithful, you should visit your primary care physician, explaining the situation and asking for a full STD screen.
2. **DO investigate your legal rights, even if you plan to stay together.** Planning to stay together doesn't mean you will. Betrayed spouses should *always* find out their

rights in a potential separation, including financial and property concerns, and parenting issues if there are children.

3. **DO reach out to others for help.** Dealing with infidelity requires a level of emotional support that is beyond the life experience of most people, and the only healthy way to deal with this is to seek assistance from people who understand what you're going through — therapists, support groups, family and friends who've dealt with similar betrayal, etc. Whether you decide to remain in the relationship or not, you need (and deserve) care, love, and support, which can only be found by talking about what has happened with compassionate and empathetic others. You should not, however, be vindictive with this. It's one thing to enlist others for support; it's quite another to tell your partner's mother, boss, or best friend about his or her behavior out of spite. And keep in mind, anything you say to your kids cannot ever be taken back, so think twice about badmouthing your fellow parent.
4. **DO learn everything you can about sexual compulsivity.** This educational process helps you to better understand the cheater, and also to make healthier decisions in the future.
5. **DO trust your feelings and observations.** If you don't feel safe with your partner, trust your intuition. If you don't see your partner getting *ongoing help* with his or her sexual problems - attending therapy and/or going to 12-step support groups — then don't trust that things are getting better.
6. **DO expect to join your partner in therapy if you want to work things out.** In therapy you may be able to request and receive a full accounting of his or her infidelity. If you are like most betrayed spouses and you don't want any more secrets in your relationship, then your partner, if he or she is also committed to salvaging the relationship, will, with the therapist's assistance, disclose what you want to know. This disclosure process best occurs in a therapy room, as the amount and nature of the information can be overwhelming. If there is a therapist present to help you process the experience, you reduce the risk of further harm to both you and your relationship.

Things You SHOULD NOT DO If You Are Being Cheated On

1. **DON'T have unprotected sex with your partner.** No matter what a cheater tells you about his or her past sexual activity and/or recent STD tests, you absolutely should not have unprotected sex with that person until you feel confident that he or she has had a full (and clean) STD screen *and* that he or she has been faithful to you for at least a year.
2. **DON'T jump into long-term decisions early in the healing process.** This includes life-changing decisions such as whether to break-up, move out, file for divorce, leave with the kids, etc. The rule of thumb is *no major changes in the first six months of the recovery/healing process.*
3. **DON'T try to use sex as a way to “fix” the problem.** While sexual intensity may feel good and intimate in the moment, using sex in this way is actually a form of mutual denial that moves you and your partner away from the process of healing.
4. **DON'T go looking for sex or romance as a way to “get even.”** Getting even only feels good for the few moments you're doing it, and usually it brings disaster in the end. Seeking sex and love to manage hurt and resentment is a very poor choice, and it only makes things worse.
5. **DON'T make threats you don't intend to carry out.** If you tell your partner that any further cheating will cause you to leave, then you'd better pack your bags and go if/when he or she cheats again. Otherwise, you diminish your credibility. (It's usually best not to make threats at all.)
6. **DON'T stick your head in the sand or take blame for your partner's actions.** If you have an investment in your relationship, you can't avoid the hard facts of your partner's infidelity. Pretending the problem will go away will *definitely not* make it go away, nor will blaming yourself. Nothing that you did or did not do caused the infidelity. Your partner had a choice. It doesn't matter how you've aged, how much weight you've gained or lost, or how involved you are with work (and not him/her). There are many, much healthier ways that your partner could have expressed his or her unhappiness with you and/or aspects of your relationship.

No matter what, relationship infidelity is difficult to deal with. And usually the worst thing you can do is bottle things up and hope they'll just magically resolve. That just doesn't work at all. Instead, you should reach out for support, information, and advice. If you're unsure where to turn, you may want to look at the [It's Cheating](#)(link is external) website, or you could visit the [Sexual Recovery Institute](#)(link is external) website, which has a great deal of information about compulsive sexuality, infidelity (especially serial infidelity), and the healing process for both the cheating and the betrayed partner.

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