

Healing Your Relationship Following Infidelity

Objective

To identify and practice ways to rebuild your relationship after infidelity.

You Should Know

After a major betrayal such as infidelity, it might feel impossible to move on as a couple. If you and your partner decide to stay together, you should both acknowledge that healing your relationship will take time, effort, and an awareness of what it will take to rebuild trust and create a stronger bond.

Psychologists have found the process of healing a relationship damaged by infidelity begins with the restoration of trust. To repair trust, partners must be very honest about all aspects of their life. Communication is important in any relationship, but especially after trust has been broken. You should be able to honestly communicate with your partner, and it is important you feel your partner is being open and honest with you.

As you are rebuilding your relationship, remember the following:

- 1. Avoid assuming things will be like they once were.** Your relationship will not look the same after infidelity, but it is possible to build something new. Focus on building the new relationship together. This takes time, open communication, honesty with yourself and with your partner, and the ability to tolerate your uncomfortable feelings while acknowledging your partner's feelings.
- 2. Stay in the present.** One of the most difficult things about rebuilding trust after infidelity is staying in the present moment and building toward the future, rather than living in or worrying about the past. If you and your partner cannot let go of the painful feelings from the past and work toward a more positive, trusting future, it might be a sign the relationship is over.
- 3. Trust yourself.** You might be questioning your own instincts, but learning to trust yourself, your feelings, and your ability to move forward is key to rebuilding your relationship.
- 4. Each partner has the right to privacy.** What you share with each other is a decision for each of you to make, but it is not appropriate to constantly check your partner's cell phone or social media.
- 5. Take responsibility.** Own up to your behaviors and choices, and understand how they have impacted your partner.
- 6. Keep promises.** Follow through and do what you say you are going to do.
- 7. Give your relationship time to heal..** You and your partner have the right to feel and express difficult emotions throughout the rebuilding process. At times it might seem like you are taking one step forward and two steps back, but recognize this process takes time. A relationship damaged by infidelity cannot be rebuilt overnight.

8. Communicate openly. Really listen to your partner. Be honest with your partner about what you need and work to understand what they need.

9. Spend time together. Do fun activities together – attend a concert, plan a picnic in the park, take a walk on the beach.

10. Change your routine. Start doing something completely new, such as engaging in a hobby or taking up an activity together. Researchers have found this increases the release of ‘bonding’ hormones.

11. Address long-standing problems. If there are underlying, previously-avoided issues such as addiction, financial problems, or other issues that strain the relationship – address them now.

What to Do

Make a copy of this worksheet for each partner. After you have both completed it, share your responses without judging or criticizing. Answer the following questions.

Do you want to rebuild your relationship? _____

What is the biggest hurdle to mending your relationship? Be specific.

What are some ways you can take responsibility for your part in the relationship problems?

What are some ways you can be emotionally vulnerable with your partner?

Do you feel comfortable asking your partner for what you need and want in the relationship? Explain.

In what ways can you give your partner space if he/she needs it? Explain.

Do you treat your partner with kindness and respect? What are some ways you can be more kind and respectful?

What are some ways you can better communicate with your partner?

Are there long-standing problems or issues that should be addressed? Describe.

What are some ways you can spend time with your partner to strengthen your bond?

Choose at least one of the following actions to try over the next week.

___ **Schedule time to practice communicating honestly with each other.** Discuss important topics that impact your life together, such as finances. Listen to your partner, and unless your partner gives you a good reason to distrust them, believe you are hearing the truth. However, trust your intuition—if there are red flags, ask for clarification.

___ **Follow through on a promise.**

___ **Spend thirty seconds gazing into each other's eyes.** Practice being vulnerable by sharing a fear or secret with your partner.

___ **Schedule time together.** Spend time together doing a fun activity.

What else can you do in the next week to heal your relationship? List your own ideas:

What was most effective action you took in terms of building your relationship? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you learn from this exercise?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What else can you do to make progress in this area?
