

# **The Affair Recovery Group**

**Session 1:**

**“Managing and Coping With the Fantasy of Infidelity”**

## **Session 1: Managing and Coping With the Fantasy of Infidelity**

Hello, and welcome to the Affair Recovery Group. This is the first installment of the six month program to help you recover from infidelity. We're happy that you've taken this important step in healing from the affair and we're confident that we can be of assistance to you.

We know this course will benefit you if you stick with it. Linda and I are uniquely qualified, in a lot of ways, to help based on our own two-plus years experiences of overcoming my emotional affair.

On top of that, we have teamed up with marriage and family therapist, Jeff Murrah, who has over 30 years of professional experience, treating those who have suffered from infidelity and addictions. Together, we will give you successful, practical, and professional perspectives that will help guide you towards recovery from an affair.

I wanted to first just remind you a little bit about the membership and the course components, as far as the Affair Recovery Group is concerned. First of all, each month, you'll be invited to participate in a group tele-class call with myself, Linda, and Jeff. This is to gain insight, resources, and advice on all subjects that surround infidelity and affair recovery.

You'll also receive monthly access to recorded interviews with other experts, affair survivors, cheaters and/or the three of us that will provide you with insight into a variety of affair recovery techniques and mindsets.

You'll also get weekly educational articles, videos and/or audios that will be full of valuable information that will help you with your recovery. Many of them will be just like the ones we'll be providing for you here in just a minute or two.

There's also a private member-only support forum for you to communicate, support, and share with others who are in the same situation as you, and you also have email support with one or all of us to answer any of your personal questions

and guide you through tough times or address any other issues or questions that you might be having.

From time to time, we'll also offer unannounced, supplemental bonus materials that will always be helpful and will make a difference in your affair recovery process.

Our main process for distributing all this content to you will be via email, so make sure that you allow email from the Affair Recovery Group in your spam filters.

If you have any questions whatsoever, you can always contact us through [support@affairrecoverygroup.com](mailto:support@affairrecoverygroup.com) or you can just use the Contact page on the website at [AffairRecoveryGroup.com](http://AffairRecoveryGroup.com).

Let's jump into our discussion here on our first session.

**Doug:** Linda and Jeff are here with me tonight and we're going to talk about overcoming, or at least managing, the fantasies that are inherent with affairs. Linda, why don't you start things off.

**Linda:** Thanks. One of the things that most betrayed spouses suffer through is the immense pain that surfaces when dealing with the fantasies of the affair, both the fantasies that their spouses were living through during the affair as well as our own fantasies that lived in our heads with respect to how we envisioned our spouse's affair to be.

When I first found out about Doug's affair, some of the words that he used to describe his relationship with the other woman were soul mate, that they looked at everything the same way, they were connected, they had fun together. When he discussed the other person, he was always happy, always positive.

All those words are really hard to take, because up until this point, you really trusted and believed everything your spouse told you, so why wouldn't you be pulled into what they're telling you now?

A lot of what they were saying was based on the illusions of the affair. But unfortunately, when you believe that, then you really begin to make comparisons

between your relationship with your spouse and your own personal traits, and everything compared to what they're saying seems so much less exciting.

I think when you get pulled into the fantasies of the affair, you really stop focusing on what's important and that is the betrayal itself.

I want everyone to understand that I know what you're going through and I feel your pain, because we have gone through it as well. I want you to know that this pain is manageable and it's something that you can overcome. I'm hoping that Jeff can help us with that.

I'm going to start with my first question. Jeff, it's my opinion that most, if not all, affairs are based on fantasies. What is your opinion on that?

**Jeff:** In terms of it based on a fantasy, yes, without a doubt because all our fears start with a thought. Those thoughts typically have a fantasy element, because if a person is really dealing with reality in terms of cause and effect, they probably wouldn't chase after the affair in the first place.

A fantasy, sometimes it's based on things in their past, sometimes it's based on what they think they need. Typically, the fantasy is part of what adds the spice or adds some enhancements towards their thoughts, because people don't just go out and have one night stands. It typically starts in their head. They set themselves up and then things sort of happen.

**Linda:** For instance, if someone has seen someone they're working with, before they even begin having conversations with that person, do you think they start having fantasies in their head about what that person's like before the first encounter?

**Jeff:** Oh, yes. Let me use a story, and then I'll address that. There's a saying that when two people get married, there's actually four people at the altar. There's the person who you marry and there's the person who you think you marry and vice versa.

That same phenomenon happens with other relationships as well, including affairs. In my mind, and in my experience, the cheater typically makes decisions

in their head before they start carrying them out. It's almost like they fantasize about them in terms of "It would be nice if..."

Then they start going into, what they call in the recovery community, the pink bubble where they start plotting and planning what's going to happen and then it's a matter of execution.

A lot of people have to replay the fantasy several times in their head to work up the nerve to be able to act on it, but I'm of the opinion it never just happens; it's been in the process for a while.

**Linda:** Does it help if the person who is starting this fantasy verbalizes it to someone?

**Jeff:** Yes, it does, much like a lot of times, you'll have a wonderful idea – you might share it with Doug or something. "Hey, I thought about this wonderful present for so-and-so." You start talking about it, and as you're talking about it, Doug or whoever you're talking to can probably see holes and flaws, and interjects their objective opinion about the present and if it's appropriate or not.

Often when people have fantasies and they start talking about them, the other person can oftentimes see the holes in there, assuming it's not somebody who's feeding into the fantasy, because there are some people who say, "Oh, man, that sounds great."

If the person shares an affair with a pastor, counselor, any type of helping person who can point out the flaws in their thinking and separate out the reality and the fantasy, it will help a lot. It's almost like it takes a lot of the potential poison out of the situation.

**Linda:** That's probably why affairs are so enticing, because they never have the closed bubble that no one can have an opportunity to discuss the feeling to anyone else, and it's just the two of them involved in this fantasy and no one is there to put holes in their story.

**Jeff:** That's true, because when you're dealing with a fantasy, it's a whole different groundwork of rules. See, you've got your real world and you have to operate with the rules of reality there.

And when you have the fantasy wife or fantasy husband, you've got a whole different set of rules. You don't have to worry about things like dirty laundry, cars that need to be washed, or feeding the pets or things such as that. It's all fun and games, and grins and giggles.

**Linda:** So how does the betrayed spouse attack the fantasy without causing further disconnection or resentment?

**Jeff:** In dealing with that question, there is no way that you can deal with the spouse and drag them out of their fantasies without some conflict. To go ahead and use a metaphor, in Joel Chandler Harris' stories of Uncle Remus, Br'er Rabbit talked about having his special place.

Literally, when the cheater is in their special place and living in their fantasy, they're not going to leave there without kicking and screaming. If you're one of those spouses who tends to want to have everybody happy and for there to be peace, it's not going to happen.

What you'll need to do is realize what's at stake. When you realize that your whole marriage is at stake, it will give you the courage to be willing to confront what's going on.

**Linda:** In the beginning, I tried to be everything that Doug said Tanya was – happy and positive. I was afraid to create conflict, afraid to show my anger. Do you agree that may be beneficial when you're trying to remove the fantasy from the affair?

**Jeff:** When it comes to bringing it into reality, yes, because I don't know of any other shortcut. If you allow the fantasies to continue, they're only going to get bigger and bigger. There tends to be both positive and negative fantasies. They've got positive fantasies about their lover and they get a lot of negative fantasies about their spouse. Both of those will need to be nipped in the bud.

In the case of Doug and Linda, the real Linda is not as bad as what he was picturing. He needs to realize who the real Linda is and talk to the real Linda as opposed to this fantasized picture they have created in their mind.

**Linda:** As a spouse, how do you do that? I think that's the hardest obstacle is to let them remember the kind of person that you were. It's pretty much they rewrite the history of your marriage. The most frustrating part for me was "Don't you remember how I took care of you or what I did?" They only remember the negative things.

**Jeff:** There's a selective memory. When they see their lover, all they see are the good things. Likewise, when they look at their spouse, many times, they just remember the negative things. In order to nip that in the bud, one of the things you're going to have to do is get them out of a passive mindset. Try to engage the head and the heart. Many times, the fantasies grow bigger when the cheater is able to just engage with their heart and not with their head. You want to get them out of that mindset.

If you have been in a very passive lifestyle, you're going to want to get them active, to go for walks with your spouse or find some ways to engage them in conversation. It's going to take more than just sitting down and watching movies or watching TV together because that's passive; that'll keep you going.

You want to have thought-provoking conversation and use a lot more of the open-ended questions, because when a person is in that fantasy state, it's almost like you're talking to a robot and they can answer the yes/no questions all day, but you're going to want to get them to answer questions that they can't get out of with just yes or no, that engage more of the mind. It's almost like you want to find questions that will engage the whole person so as to start to pull them out.

**Linda:** Can you give an example of one of those questions? Would you talk about the affair partner? Would you focus on that subject or would you talk about your marriage or your relationship?

**Jeff:** Not at first. At first, you want to go ahead and try to engage them.

**Linda:** Just with any conversation?

**Jeff:** Right. Get them out of automatic pilot, because that automatic pilot is your enemy. If you can get them to where they are engaging you, really talking with you, they're really with you, then eventually you can steer into the topic of the affair.

**Doug:** Basically, you're building rapport more or less, in essence?

**Jeff:** Building rapport, and also it's almost like waking up the parts of the mind. It's almost like she's going through all those closets in your head and knocking on the door. Knock, knock, knock: "Doug, is anything in there? Doug, come out. Engage with me."

**Linda:** I understand. They are very robotic, and their answers are that way and they are. It's not the person that you knew before the affair. Someone totally different has turned up and they aren't thinking about things. They're just in a trance almost. That's difficult to deal with.

**Jeff:** Right. It is a trance. In the research on hypnotic states, they talked about how when a person is in love, they're literally in a trance. In the case of an affair, they are.

Much like you see in the movies where they snap their fingers and do things to try to get the person out of the hypnotic states. Likewise with the cheater. You're trying to wake them up and engage more of their mind, because when a person is in that passive mind state, they are more suggestable, they are able to be manipulated much easier, and whether or not the lover is consciously doing it, literally they're calling the shots and the cheater is following along.

**Linda:** As I said, I think every betrayed spouse, these are the kind of behaviors in our spouses – the manipulation and not being able to really converse about what's happening. And even a year later, it's still difficult for Doug to recall details and information. I don't know if it's because it's selective or he really doesn't remember.

**Jeff:** Let me go ahead and narrow this to just the fantasy part today. With the fantasy part, literally the whole purpose of fantasy, much like some of that wavy glass, it bends and distorts reality and it keeps them not only from talking about certain things, but also remembering things very clearly.

If recalling those facts would be too painful for them, they may be choosing to bend it or block it out to where they're not totally aware of it. The fantasies are also part of what's behind a lot of the lying and delusions, because to keep doing what they were doing, there's got to be a delusion or a twisted thinking, if you want to go ahead and put it that way. The fantasy feeds into that, because they're not wanting to look at what's really there.

**Doug:** Is it really possible to take a person away from the affair fantasy in the first place? Should you? And then maybe follow up and say how someone does this.

**Jeff:** Well, it is possible. There are some positive aspects to fantasy, but in the case of affairs, there's more negatives than there are positives. You can do that, and this is not easy, some of the ways to do it – you're going to need to do four things that I'm aware of.

One, you're going to need to take them to a lower level of needs. Many times, cheaters go ahead and start engaging in the fantasies because everything at their basic level of needs – they've got food, they've got clothing, they've got all these basics so they start fantasizing about these things. If a person is suddenly threatened and it looks like that stuff is going to be cut off, that will force them to shift their thinking back to another level.

Hopefully, I didn't lose you there. Some of this stuff goes back to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Literally, in these situations, if you cut off the money, that's one way of waking people up. Somehow people have a lot of their reality tied into money. As long as they have a lot of money, they can live in the fantasy. But when they have to deal with the reality of limitations, they suddenly change their thinking.

Number two... to use questions that bring about accountability. This does lead into some of what I was talking with Linda about a while ago. Questions that

engage the whole mind, that bring together that 18-inch connection between the head and the heart. You want to engage as much of the person as you can. But you want to avoid machine-gunning questions where you hit one after another, after another. If you do that, that's going to take them right back into the fantasy.

Number three, if you're a spiritual person, you're going to want to engage in a lot of prayer during this time, because you're going to need a lot of strength and insight as to know where to engage them and what questions to use.

Number four, I know this sounds very much like deprogramming, but that's literally what it is. When they're caught up in the fantasy, they're living in another world that operates in another set of rules. It's almost like they are in a trance, so you're working at trying to pull them out of the trance.

**Linda:** Do you pull them out of the trance by trying to expose them to the reality of their lives? Most of the time, when a person is not there, they seem to withdraw from their family life. Do you bring them back into that, try to engage them in doing things with family activities?

**Doug:** I would think that would be part of the engagement.

**Jeff:** That's part of engagement. To reengage them at the different levels of interaction, you're going to want to pose things that engage them in secondary thinking. In other words, problem solving type of thinking. You hit them with some of the questions and dilemmas that you have in everyday life.

For instance, the washing machine is not working. "Honey, what do you think we should do?" The brakes on the car aren't working. "Honey, which mechanic should we take it to?"

Now, that may sound silly, but what that does is it starts to engage the brain in the problem solving. The more ties to problem solving you can engage the brain, it pulls it out of that auto pilot to where they have to change their way of doing things.

**Linda:** That's funny, because I think when I was trying to pull Doug away from the affair, I was doing the opposite. I was trying to make our life like an affair. I made

everything run smoothly, I didn't bring any issues to the board, I tried everything to be lighthearted and fun where I was probably allowing the autopilot to continue.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I'll throw this one out. Let's say a wife is trying to engage her husband again. When she is helpless and can't handle something, that's when you see the husband come along. "Here, honey, let me help you with that." Many times, that's the man that you want back and that comes along when there are problems that you need his help with or vice versa, if the shoe is on the other foot.

**Linda:** Right. But I think, in a lot of ways, you try to be very competent and handle everything. You don't want to look weak, so I think you stop doing those things when you find out.

**Jeff:** But in those cases, you end up shooting yourself in the foot because the husband is not needed then. He's just there like some arm candy, and in the background saying, "Why am I here? They don't need me." And this other person who's got a kid that she's taking care of and who knows what else, "She needs me."

I've seen some affair situations where literally the cheating husband, he's got a good heart. In many ways, he's gone to try to help the maiden in distress. Some of the lovers who will play the maiden in distress card to hook him.

**Linda:** Right. I think it's so difficult when the betrayed spouse won't communicate what they're receiving from the affair to really know what role you should take, but I don't think we really need to take a role. We just need to be ourselves. But in our mind, that wasn't good enough, so we try to be something that the other person was. I think we're drawn into the fantasy also.

**Jeff:** Oh, yeah. You're definitely drawn into the fantasy, because you have fantasies not only about the affair, but also about yourself. To get the affair past you totally, everyone is going to have to eventually deal with the fantasies versus the reality.

If you had the fantasy, “Oh, we’ve got the perfect marriage,” well you may have to deal with the reality, “Well, we’ve got some flaws. We weren’t as perfect as we thought.”

But when everybody goes into their own fantasy, that creates the environment that’s right for an affair. Yes, it will take work to keep people engaged, but that is your best insurance to cut down on the risk of affairs and also to get past them.

**Linda:** Your four points were very good and I think it’s very helpful for people to know some of the things that they try to do are really allowing the fantasy to continue. I think engaging the other person and problem solving and for the spouse to look at is as if your cheating spouse is in a trance, rather than looking at it romantically and finding ways to reprogram their thoughts.

**Jeff:** Right. It is counterintuitive, because you want to think, “Well, if he feels like he’s got problems in our marriage, let me make sure everything runs smooth.” I can understand where that mindset comes from. But to get them out, as counterintuitive as it is, that’s the way to reengage them.

**Linda:** Here’s the next question. Typically, most people in affairs know that it’s wrong and that the affair probably won’t lead to anything more seriously, yet they don’t stop. How can they let go of the fantasy, and is it possible for the betrayed spouse to get them to stop?

**Jeff:** That’s several questions in one. Let’s break it down a little bit. What was the first part of the question?

**Linda:** People in affairs, when they enter the affair, they probably know it won’t lead to anything serious, yet they won’t stop. How can they let go of the fantasy?

**Jeff:** I know what you’re saying there. If you let an affair run its course and they choose to do nothing, in most cases, and I’ll go so far as to say 70-75% of the cases, the affair will go on for about 12-18 months and the cheater will return to their spouse.

That does put the odds in your favor, but that's a big gamble. You're talking about possibly, even though it might be a 25-30% chance, there's still a possibility you could lose it all, and that's not a chance most people are willing to take.

Now, if you do nothing and you let that happen, although the odds are in your favor, one of the dangers you run into is although the affair may be over, the affair changes the mind of the cheater, because once they start having those relationships, they are a different person.

New connections are created in the mind, and the bonding that takes place in the mind with the lover, it does – this is one of the hard realities – it's a lifelong bond. Now, over time, the intensity of that bond goes down when they're out of contact. But it's still there.

And for that reason, I think it's important for the spouse to intervene and stop the affair before all the bonding in their head takes place.

**Linda:** How do you know if the bonding has taken place? Most affairs, it happens instantly. Would you consider that a lot of the affairs that you deal with, that the bonding has already been in place; that's why it's so difficult for them to stop and to move on?

By the time most spouses find out about affairs, that the bonding has already been in place with the lover and it's very difficult for them to break away from the affair. Is it because of the bonding or because of the addiction?

**Jeff:** Well, we may need to talk about that a little later, because that is something that it does take time, first of all, to understand, and second of all, to re-do.

To go ahead and put it in a nutshell, let's take Allen as an example. Allen has an affair with Susan, there's bonding and fantasies involved. The bonding that took place in his head is still there. That's what's going to take a little time to undo.

If Allen continues to go back to the fantasies of Susan, there's something about Susan that's meeting his needs that continues to draw him back. In terms of overcoming the affair, Allen's going to need to talk about what needs were met with Susan and do that objectively.

Now it's hard on a spouse to hear those things, because a lot of times you want to immediately attack Susan, but Susan in this case is not the big problem. The big problem is something is missing inside of Allen. You want to find a better way of meeting Allen's needs than Susan.

**Linda:** And by discussing that and verbalizing that with your spouse, then will help make the bond stronger between you and your spouse?

**Jeff:** Yes, because you want the bond to be stronger between you and your spouse and weaker between the spouse and whatever is in his head.

**Linda:** Which is so difficult, because a lot of what's in their head is based on fantasy.

**Jeff:** Right. There's a saying in counseling that the problem is not the problem; the problem is the solution. How that applies to affairs is the cheater is using the affair as a solution. That's their idea of fixing a problem.

When you come back to it and you look at what happened, you want to find a better way. If your spouse needs to feel like they want to be respected, do they need to be needed? Do they need to feel like they are strong? Do they need to feel like they're alive sexually? Whatever that need may be is what needs to be talked about.

Now, one of the tricky things, when you really start digging into this, it could very well be that the fantasy about the affair is that the spouse is hooked into an earlier version of their present-day spouse. Are you with me on that one?

**Linda:** Explain that a little further. The lover is who the person was when they were younger. Is that what you're saying?

**Jeff:** Right. Exactly. For instance, let's say I got married to a woman named Anita and we got married when we were 18. This is all hypothetical. My real wife's name is Peggy. Let's say as Anita and I get older, we get into our 40s and 50s, I start to stray in developing or feel attracted to these young women. Strangely enough, those young women look like Anita did when we got married. So I'm wanting, or part of me is desiring that connection that I had with Anita at 18.

**Linda:** So, as a spouse, you need to encourage that connection again by possibly doing things you used to do when you were younger and engaging in activities and things like that.

**Jeff:** Well, to start off talking about it, you can do some of the fun things that will bring some life, but you're also going to need to talk about. Strangely enough, none of us want to face the reality that we're getting older. Not only is Jeff getting older, Anita is getting older and I have to realize that the Anita I'm married to is the same Anita that was there when we were 18.

That doesn't happen in every case, but that's why it's important to decode. It could be the person that you're struggling with the affair is actually another version of yourself. In those cases, the spouse, when they say, "But I still love you," they really do. It's just they have not accepted where you're at right now.

**Linda:** Right. Because if I'm there, Doug is also there, which means that he's old.

**Jeff:** I shared that example. It takes work to talk about it. I know one of the hardest things is to hear about the needs and to hear about the affair objectively. The first thing you want to do is claw out the eyes of the other person. That's going to have to be put into check as you start talking about this stuff, to talk about what you were needing in the affair and also for the spouse, like in your case, to talk about what your fantasies were about what happened.

"I had this fantasy that y'all were doing A, B, C, X, Y, Z." The reality is going to be very different than what you assumed also.

**Doug:** That's been the case, hasn't it, dear?

**Linda:** It has. But what is it with fantasies, or the affair, that things are revealed over a long period of time? At the beginning, when we first found out, his fantasy level was still high, so everything was still perfect about the other person. But as time has gone on, little things come out. For a betrayed spouse, it's hard to really believe what they're saying because the story has changed so much.

**Jeff:** Break that question down a little. You're asking a good question, but I need it broken down a little bit.

**Linda:** When the affair was first revealed, the spouse was still engaged with a lot of fantasy about the other person, about the affair. Everything was perfect. Then as time has gone on, little things are revealed. The reality of the situation was brought up. The other person wasn't as perfect as he had said in the beginning. Why does it take so long for that to happen? And for a betrayed spouse, it's hard to really believe what they're saying because the story has changed.

**Jeff:** Let me use the metaphor of an iceberg in this case. In understanding what's going on with the affair, much like the greater part of an iceberg, is under water, the greatest part of our personality and who we are many times is undiscovered.

It could very well be that the answers that you got four months after the affair was discovered and finally talked about it, may have been the truth in everything they were aware of at that point.

At the eight-month mark, they suddenly come up with some new insights and new details. In this case, it's mainly because the healing and the changes of the relationship are now going to an even deeper level, and they're able to recall more and put more pieces together.

As you move along and get to the twelve-month mark, there may be even more pieces that start coming out, are able to talk more.

In each of these situations, the four-month, the eight-month and twelve-month, the person took you as far as they could at that point, because they weren't even aware of what was going on at those deeper levels.

As they're able to talk more and they feel safer, they're able to understand more the depth of what happened and be able to share that with each other.

That's one reason why it seems that everything changes so much, because sometimes they really have told you all the truth that they know of at that point, because they haven't made all the connections that were actually there. Things happen on a deeper level than people realize with an affair, and sometimes it may take them a year or two before they realize how deep things were in their life.

**Linda:** A lot of experts say that you should stop talking about the affair and let it go in the past, but with most betrayed spouses, because they get this new information, they want to continue talking about it. They understand it a lot more the more you discuss it. What would you say to that? Is it okay to continue talking about it?

**Jeff:** It's a mixed bag. Let me go ahead and clarify it this way. The simple answer is yes it's okay to go ahead and talk about it, assuming both parties are okay with talking about it. I have seen some situations where the betrayed party wants to talk about it again, and again, and again and they never seem to let go. When that's happening, it's not healthy.

Now, if both of them are agreeing, "Let's take a look at what happened and what we can learn from that," and each time they talk about it, there are some new insights, in those situations, it is protective. It's good for them to talk about.

One of the things I tell couples many times is that when an affair happens, it's going to end in death. Something is going to die. Many times, it might be some of their old patterns, some of their old ways, but something has got to change.

As they talk about it, many times, couples have got to deal with this trade off. What did you lose and what did you gain as a result of the affair? Because there's always things that you gain and things that you lost. Talking about what you gained and what you lost in an honest way is the challenge.

Did I lose you with that or are you still with me?

**Linda:** I'm thinking about it. Yes, I understand that. As I said, I think there is productive talk about the affair and then there's nonproductive. I think, a lot of times, including myself, get into the pattern of wanting reassurances, and I bring the affair up and that's not the way I'm going to get the reassurance.

**Jeff:** You're needing reassurances, yet the spouse, when the affair gets brought up with the cheater, it's almost like it's another reminder of their failures. No one likes to have their failures brought up in their face over and over again. It just makes them feel worse and worse about themselves.

As a spouse, you're the one person who can build up or tear down the spouse in a way no one else can. So in bringing it up, it's going to be important if you need reassurance to approach it from that angle as opposed to just bringing it up like a reminder that you failed or you're a loser or you blew it, buster.

**Linda:** I think it's more for me, and I think a lot of people, is you're feeling insecure, you're feeling afraid, so you want to know that... You want them to make a comparison that the marriage is better or you are more beautiful or you're fun. You want those reassurances and you want comparisons, and that's when I bring up the affair, which is counterproductive.

**Jeff:** It's going to be important in the aftermath that you set some new markers. For instance, if a person is a loyal spouse, if the marker you're always comparing yourself to is the lover – or to go back to my example, Anita. Anita, if she compares herself to the lover, is never going to measure up, because the lover – there's that fantasy element that you can't do a real comparison. They're always going to beat you hands down, a lot of ways. That's why Anita is going to have to compare herself to what she's capable of and look in the future toward her markers in terms of "This is the kind of woman that I want to be. I want to lose ten pounds. I want to do this to change myself."

You look at where you're at compared to what you could be. As long as you compare yourself to that other person, you're going to feel inadequate. It will keep your own fantasies going. It's almost going to have an effect of keeping the relationship bogged down in the mud.

**Linda:** Right. I can understand that. I think the most difficult part is your self-esteem. I think a lot of us even have a hard time finding markers. I think we have drug ourselves down so low that we don't even know that we're capable of obtaining anything better. I think it's something that's difficult to work on.

I think comparing it to the fantasy, it's sad to think that our spouses will never – I guess I'm reading this wrong – but our spouses will never look at us the same way because of the fantasy in our mind of the other person.

**Jeff:** Let me put it into bite-sized chunks. One of the dangers of always comparing yourself to the lover comes up when you're dealing with...When you've got a married couple, and for instance, let's say either the husband or the wife is a widower before they get married, the spouse who died is always going to be frozen in time in terms of their beauty, their abilities and all that stuff.

If you're always comparing yourself to the dead spouse, you're never going to measure up because you're getting older and they're still frozen in time. Are you with me on this one, Linda?

**Linda:** Yes.

**Jeff:** That same type of phenomena happens with the lover, because with those comparisons, many times in comparison, you're comparing yourself to your perception of the lover as opposed to the real person who has dirty clothes and their feet stink and they have all those human frailties.

Yes, it is tough to go ahead and talk about validation, how you need validation from your spouse. You need validation that they find you attractive, you need validation that your position in the marriage is secure, you need validation concerning your abilities and how they still find you attractive, how they still need you and how they are still drawn to you.

It is hard many times to ask for those things, because as humankind, we want to think that we're self-sufficient and we don't want to have to need or depend on anyone else. When we realize we can't validate ourselves, that's an uncomfortable feeling, but that is also one of the things that adds strength to a marriage and why it's important for us to be in a marriage.

Yes, it's uncomfortable when I go to my wife and say, "Honey, I'm feeling lousy right now. Can you give me a hug?" I can do that with my wife now pretty easily, but for some people, that's a hard thing for them to do, to say, "I need something. Will you please give it to me?"

**Linda:** A lot of the comments on our blog, they're asking for these things from their spouses, and their frustration is that the spouse isn't giving it to them after

their affair. We hear so many comments that, “I’m trying to do this, I’m trying to bring the excitement back to our marriage. I need this and they’re just not willing to reciprocate or meet my needs on these areas.” Do you have any advice for those people?

**Jeff:** I’d have to get some more specifics to go ahead and give you something solid that they could hang their hopes on. I don’t have any skeleton key that would fit all locks. In some cases, the spouse is not always real clear concerning their needs. You want to be able to tell your husband or your wife what your needs are without nagging.

In some cases, when the cheater is still caught up in the fantasies or still pulling away from the affair, they may choose to withhold their affection and withhold their validation as a way to gain power in the relationship. That kind of game playing will need to be nipped in the bud. That’s why it’s hard for me to give you a skeleton key, because I don't know if the person is not being clear as to what they need or if the other person is playing some power games and deliberately withholding.

**Linda:** Okay. Those are two very good reasons, though. As I said, I think it’s very frustrating, because after the affair, I really understood and I believed what Doug needed, what he was missing and I felt that I was really trying hard. It was difficult for him to reassure me or give me what I was needing. I couldn’t understand why the resistance or why the excuses and things like that.

It almost verifies to the person or validates that you don’t deserve to be told you’re beautiful. It’s pretty much what we learned because of the affair continued because our spouses weren’t able to make us feel that we’re beautiful or that we were capable of being a good wife or things like that.

**Jeff:** Let me go ahead and point something out there. I mention this in my book – the danger of the “Why?” question. A lot of those things that you just threw out there, there were a lot of whys that you were beating yourself up with.

With a why question, you’re looking into the past and you’re literally looking for a donkey to pin all the blame on. The way the good Lord made our minds, when we

sit there and we keep asking those why questions, it's going to try to find an answer. If you're not feeling good about yourself, the answer it's going to come up with is that you're going to get this printout of all the things that are wrong with you.

Why doesn't he love me? Why doesn't he do this? You ask that and your mind tells you, "This is why he doesn't. A, B, C, X, Y, Z." That's the danger of those questions. Our mind will give us answers. It's just that the answers that it gives can sometimes be negative when we focus on the why.

**Linda:** When you're trying to understand this or asking for certain things, then you should just go out and ask, "Could you please tell me so-and-so," at least once a week? Should you go that far to ask for those kinds of things?

**Jeff:** To ask for the validation?

**Doug:** To basically be very specific in what needs you want to have met. Is that what you're saying?

**Linda:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Yeah. That's actually heading in the right direction. The hard part is getting it very clear, because it's one of those things that, at first, you just have vague feelings. You know that something is not right and you're not quite sure what it is. The more you talk to your spouse and work through it, it's almost like something that was originally fuzzy starts getting more and more in focus. You become clearer as to what you need, whether it is validation of your abilities, validation of your beauty, reassurances concerning the spouse's commitment to the marriage, things such as that.

While I'm on this topic, although people don't usually think about it with affairs, when it comes down to that feeling like you're important, feeling like you're taken care of, if husbands went ahead and did things like have their wills planned and talk about what will happen in the event there was an accident, that goes a lot way towards giving the spouse a lot of security.

**Linda:** I think talking about the future, knowing that when we get older, that you have plans in your head. I think all that was taken away. Or worrying, “What if I get sick and I’m not able to meet your needs or be the fun person that you want me to be; will you still be here?”

Before the affair, I believed for better or worse, and then all that was taken away. That’s an insecurity. That’s a fear to know that if things get worse, if things happen, are you still going to stick with me? Are you going to be here? I think talking about that helps.

**Jeff:** That’s definitely needed. Kind of like the old Beatles song “Will you still need me? Will you still feed me when I’m 64?” We need that reassurance that we’re not only attractive now, but that the commitment is there for the long run.

When an affair happens, one of the scary things is it redefines who you are. Part of the healing is going to be getting a new definition of who you are and where you fit in the aftermath.

Let me give you a hypothetical; it will make more sense. Let’s say a wife views herself as Mrs. John Smith. When John Smith has an affair, it’s not just a matter that she may lose her husband, she may lose her kids, she is potentially going to lose her whole sense of identity because she realizes all her past is a lie, she loses any security about the future. Everything is in a tailspin at that point.

Let’s say John Smith comes back to her and they get remarried. She’s going to need reassurances and to be redefined in each of those areas where he’s saying, “Yes, you have a definite place in my life now. You have a definite place in my life at 64, when we’re 64 and 70 and so forth. Here are our plans for the future. This is the direction I want us to go, and this is how we’re going to get there.” That goes a long way.

That will also nip a lot of her fearful fantasies, that she’s going to be thrown out on the curb, she’s no longer wanted or loved by him will nip all those fantasies in the bud.

**Linda:** I think the cheating spouse doesn't understand all of the implications of the affair and how it has affected every aspect of our lives, not only the past, the future, the insecurities. I'm sure Doug doesn't realize that I'm afraid to get sick. I'm afraid if I get hurt. Will he take care of me or will he run away?

**Jeff:** Those are outstanding questions, and those are the kind of questions, when you put it in terms of problem solving, that will force them to engage all of their mind. Are you with me there, Linda?

**Linda:** Yes, I am.

**Jeff:** To go ahead and put it back into context of the affair, when you're trying to reengage the husband asking him questions, "What will happen? What would you do if suddenly I was in a car wreck and couldn't walk anymore or if I suddenly came down with some type of cancer?" Those aren't pleasant things to think about, but it forces the husband to have to start doing some real problem solving and to engage more parts of his brain, rather than to be on autopilot.

**Linda:** And to bring them back to reality and back to the commitment. They think about the commitment that they made.

**Jeff:** We covered a lot of grounds here.

**Linda:** That's my fault. I start thinking about things and going in circles.

**Jeff:** That's fine, because the questions you are asking you speak for a lot of women and husbands; both in terms of what you're asking. People need answers. Sometimes the answers are counterintuitive. I've always been of the opinion if you give the people the right tools, they'll be able to work on their marriage and do things. By asking the right questions, you will get the kind of information and the tools you need to get your marriage back on track.

**Doug:** That's right. Jeff, Thank you very much. Linda, thank you. I kind of just sat back and listened, but I thought that was really good stuff.

We hope that you all were able to get some real value out of this session. Be looking in your emails for an invitation to our upcoming tele-class as well as your next session after that.

If you have any further questions about this session or any other issue, you can post them in the forum. If there's an urgency to the matter, you can certainly email any of us using the contact form on the site.

Please, everybody, take care. Goodbye for now.