

## Transcript for webinar, "How to Cope with a Cheating Spouse"

**Doug:** Alright, hello everyone. This is Doug with Emotional Affair Journey and my wife Linda is here.

**Linda:** Hello.

**Doug:** And we're very happy to be doing this webinar tonight and we wanted to thank you all of you for attending. Tonight we're very happy to have as our guest Jeff Murrah. Jeff is a frequent contributor to our blog and is a marriage and family counselor in Texas with over 25 years of experience and he's been in private practice since 1994 and has worked in various hospital settings since 1981. He also taught psychology courses at San Jacinto Junior College for six years and he has a website at <http://restorethefamily.com/> and a blog at [surviveyourpartnersaffair.com/blog](http://surviveyourpartnersaffair.com/blog).

Jeff is also an author of *How to Cope with a Cheating Spouse* and tonight we're going to be discussing some of the points of that book, and after our interview with Jeff we'll open up the lines for a few questions and then Jeff can talk about a special program that he's going to be offering you tonight. So without further ado, Jeff, are you there?

**Jeff Murrah:** Yes. Thanks for welcoming me here.

**Doug:** Hey, no problem. How are you doing tonight?

**Jeff:** I'm doing great. Yourself?

**Doug:** Oh, not too bad. Not too bad at all. Thank you. I'd like to thank you first of all just for joining us and also for all the great input and advice that you've been adding to our blog. We do appreciate it very much and I think many of our readers do as well.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay, I'm glad to hear that because I know anything that we can do to improve marriages and families and make them stronger, it helps everyone.

**Doug:** Absolutely. Well, without further ado, let's jump into this a little bit. I know we don't have a lot of time so let's getting rolling here.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay.

**Doug:** Both Linda and I read your book and we found it's very to the point and very interesting. I liked that there is really no fluff to it and there's a lot of great advice. Your workbook that goes with it is also very excellent. We worked through that and there's a lot of good stuff with that as well.

I know one of the first things when Linda found out about my emotional affair, she felt very much out of control and I know that many of our readers are feeling that same way after they discover their spouse's affair. Just what are some things that they can do to maybe regain some sort of control in their life?

**Jeff Murrah:** That's a common problem because it hits so hard. I know when my father had to deal with those issues he referred to it as Hiroshima, and so you'll find many times people will use these destructive terms as a way to describe it.

**Doug:** Hiroshima, I have not heard that one before.

**Jeff Murrah:** I think that may be something unique to us. A lot of people refer to it as D-day or Armageddon and things such as that, these vivid images to describe how your world goes upside down and it's so alien from what it once was.

**Doug:** I got you.

**Jeff Murrah:** Usually I recommend five things. The first is for people to make a conscious change in their thinking to go from assuming that it's a crisis to looking at it like it's a problem.

There is something about the way that we think that when we're in crisis, we feel like we are out of control, we can't deal with it and we're helpless. Yet when we start looking at problems as if they are problems, our mind starts trying to find solutions to the problems. So one of the first things to do is mentally change this whole affair situation from looking at it as if it's a crisis to one where it's a problem.

Number two, focus on what you need to do. Many times what happens with that sense of being out of control, part of it is that people have lost their sense of focus. They're either looking too far into the future or they're looking into the past and they're not taking care of what they need to do right now. If you've ever been on a boat, one of the main things that sailors do is take a bearing and find out exactly where they are. Once they know where they're at and what they need to focus on, it's easier for them to set a course to get to their destination.

**Doug:** Sure.

**Jeff Murrah:** Number three, is to let go of unrealistic expectations. Many times we still have this magical thinking that we want somebody or something to come along, wave a magic wand and all of a sudden we'll be back in love again like Prince Charming or Sleeping Beauty and so forth. I mean I like the Disney Movies but the Disney mindset is something that gets in the way when it comes to counseling.

Number four, it's important to find a good support group, and by good support group... this is an area where I often step on people's toes because good support is not the people that keep you out of pain. Good support is going to be the people that are going to be by your side going through the pain, people that are willing to tell you the truth. Many times when we're hurting we automatically assume that the best people for us are those that will get us out of the pain. Those may be some of the worst ones for us.

**Doug:** They're just basically telling you what you want to hear, is that kind of what they're doing usually?

**Jeff Murrah:** That's part of it and part of it... pain is a powerful motivator. There was this one situation that I found myself dealing with. The husband had to leave the home for an extended period of time for his job and while he was gone, some friends in a local community support group came along and they started giving the wife all kinds of activities and so she got her mind off her husband and didn't feel like she needed him. When he came back, he was blown away to find out that his wife wasn't interested in him anymore and she was going to divorce him.

Many times with your support group they can get you so much out of pain, you lose any motivation to want to turn around and fix your marriage.

**Doug:** That's interesting.

**Jeff Murrah:** And number five, and this will go along with it, it's going to be important to focus on overcoming separateness rather than reducing the pain. With an affair, there is distance in the relationship between the husband and wife and it's going to be important to look at what's going to decrease that separateness as opposed to what's going to get you out of pain.

**Linda:** Can I ask you a question on that?

**Jeff Murrah:** Sure.

**Linda:** Sometimes when our spouse is having an affair, we want to cling to them and to move closer by becoming more emotional or asking questions. Is that a good thing or should we back off or pull further away?

**Jeff Murrah:** Oh boy, that's a good one. In dealing with that, it's almost like once there is an affair there needs to be a set amount of distance in the relationship and one of the weird dynamics that happens, it reminds me of junior high school romances where the boy will chase the girl for a while, then the girl will chase the guy for a while and it goes back and forth and back and forth, but they still have that same distance. That same kind of phenomena many times happens in couples where there has been an affair, where one party will chase the other one and then turn around and chase, but you still have that blasted amount of distance. When you do things like trying to talk to them and the clinginess, focus on things that will draw his heart into it and your heart as opposed to you just chasing after him. You're going to want to find ways of engaging him rather than just chasing him.

**Linda:** Can you give us an example of that, how would you engage your spouse?

**Jeff Murrah:** To engage a person, when we talk to people we're drawn to individuals that are full of life and full of energy. Nobody is drawn to somebody that is depressed and has nothing to give. We tend to not be drawn to those types

of things. And when you ask questions, if you can ask your spouse questions that will engage their heart. Many times the big challenge there is finding a way to get their attention to where they are listening to you with everything that is there. I think on your blog a lot of times you've talked about the affair fog and many times finding ways to cut through that is a challenge. The best rule of thumb I can give you on that, is to try to engage him but not lose yourself in the process because so many times the wife will chase after the husband to the point where she will totally change herself, change the foods that she would eat, change the music that she listens to, totally change the way that she dresses. That's going too far.

**Linda:** Right.

**Jeff Murrah:** And even if you did get him at those points, you lured him by the accoutrements and everything around you. He's becoming more interested in that than in you. When you want him interested in Linda, you want him interested in Linda, not Linda's high heels, not Linda's dress, Linda.

**Linda:** Or who Linda thought the other person was like. Yeah, okay.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay, next question?

**Linda:** You mentioned in your book that after discovering infidelity it's very important for the victim to ask the cheating spouse questions.

**Jeff Murrah:** Right.

**Linda:** Can you explain why and cite some examples?

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay. In my book a lot of times I'll make reference to asking the right questions. And let me go through and talk about that for a few moments. Some of the common mistakes people make... first of all, they will ask questions that don't have an answer, so it's going to be important that if you ask them a question that it's a question that they can come up with an answer to. Because right of the bat they'll (the betrayed) start asking, "Why this, why that?" and all kinds of things that the spouse usually have no answer to. It's almost like those questions come across as whining as opposed to looking for answers.

Number two, it's going to be important that the questions are honest. What I mean by honest questions...nobody likes to be ambushed and if you tend to be one of those spouses that you ask a series of questions where you lure the cheater into a trap and you're fixing on springing on him, that's not an honest question. You're not honestly looking for answers there.

Number three, use questions that focus on understanding because during that time it's going to be imperative that you look at understanding rather than them agreeing with you.

Number four, focus on how and what questions. Oftentimes you have to drill this into people. Let go of the why questions. Use how and what questions. And number five, assume responsibility for what you think, what you feel and what you do. So many times spouses will come out with statements like, "You made me feel this way. You made me feel that way," or, "How could you leave me feeling like that?" These kind of questions, they're great for starting fights but they're lousy for making some headway.

Some examples of these questions, when you sit down with your spouse, ask him, "What's missing from our marriage?" see, because that way with a question like that you're focused on the relationship. You're not blaming yourself. You're not blaming him. You're saying, "Okay, what's missing?" Another example, "What will it take to move past this?" Once again, you're getting into that problem solving way of thinking and you're assuming that the marriage is going to move on. "What's it going to take for us to get from point A to point B?" Another one, "How are you going to handle this with your parents? How are you going to handle this with the kids?" Once again, this is a question, it cuts to the heart of the matter but it also puts him in a problem-solving mindset without trying to put more guilt and more blame on him.

And then also, if you focus on the emotions, you're going to get much further than if you get into the whole idea of proving and disproving what was said and whether or not this happened or that happened because couples will dance around that for a long time.

Okay, the reason for asking questions this way, it's a little awkward because a lot of times when you find out about the affair you're overwhelmed, but questions

are important because they drive the communication. Depending on the questions you ask, the people's intention is going to either go into the past or it's going to move the marriage forward into the future and 'why' questions tend to push people into the past rather than 'how' and 'what' questions, which are more problem solving and push you more into the future, more into where you're going to want to go.

**Doug:** That's a hard thing for people to do when you think about it. I think that especially Linda, she wanted to know all the why's and everything like that and it's just kind of a natural reaction for most people I think to want to know that. So that's good stuff that people should learn there, to try to change their thinking and change their mindset as far as that goes.

**Jeff Murrah:** It's hard to get out of that because we have our natural reactions and this is counter intuitive, I think is the term for it, because if we stick with the natural thing, "Why, why why?" well, first of all, the cheater many times does not know why at that time and with a lot of those why questions, it's almost like the person who was cheated on works them self up into a bubble that you can't communicate with them no matter what you say. It's almost like it's not going to cut through and it's not going to be good enough because they'll hit you with half a dozen other why questions.

**Linda:** I think it also enables us to become the victim.

**Jeff Murrah:** Yes.

**Linda:** And that's not a place we really want to be.

**Jeff Murrah:** No, it creates a whole new mess of problems that you don't want to head on into.

**Doug:** Well to kind of move further along... You make it pretty well known there in your book that effective communication is a key element to surviving an affair. Can you kind of go over some of the do's and don'ts with respect to communication?

**Jeff Murrah:** Sure, no problem. Let me go ahead and go through that. Well, I hate to start off on a negative foot so let me go ahead and give you one of the positive things to do first and then I'll head on into the things not to do. In terms of the communication, the best thing that you can do is listen, and when you can ask your spouse questions that will help you understand where they're coming from. Now I use the word understand. That does not mean you agree with what they're saying. It does not mean that you believe what they're saying. You're just trying to understand what they're saying.

And just with human nature, when someone is intently listening to us, we naturally feel drawn to them. We want to get closer to them, and so listening is one of the key things. Now I'm going to head into a list of some of the things not to do. Then I'll come back to some of the things to do to improve.

**Doug:** Okay.

**Jeff Murrah:** Some of these, once again, are counter intuitive but what not to do is being persistent in bringing up the affair. When you repeat a message over and over, that's a sure way to be ignored. The way that our brain operates, we tend to ignore things that are repeated. In fact, a fellow by the name of Jack Payton coined the term "MEGO", which stands for "My eyes glaze over". And if you're talking to your spouse and bringing it up and all of a sudden their eyes glaze over, they're not there.

**Doug:** I think Linda has seen me with MEGO.

**Linda:** Way too many times.

**Jeff Murrah:** Oh yes. Y'all have done that dance a few times.

**Doug:** Sure.

**Jeff Murrah:** Wanting all the details is a close cousin of that. The danger with the details is that they produce very vivid word pictures and when you know all of the details about what the other person looks like, what they were wearing, where you met, what you did, it begins to sound more like letters to the editor in a men's magazine than a couple talking about what they need to talk about. And



when you have all those details it's going to make it that much more difficult to forgive and to get that word picture out of your mind. If one of the places where they met was the Holiday Inn, after you know that every time you go by the Holiday Inn you're going to have these negative connotations of the Holiday Inn. That type of stuff happens.

It's also going to be important to avoid making demands. When you're in that fragile period after you find out about the affair, you want to get the two of you committed to one another before you start making demands of the other person. Now I draw a distinction between demands and between boundaries. People will need to have boundaries but the demands tend to lead to problems.

Another thing is to be closed-minded. If you want your spouse to sit down and talk with you, one way to make sure that they don't stay there is to be closed-minded. And that includes the whole idea that it's got to be my way and my version of the events is the only one that counts and my understanding as to what motivated you is the only thing that counts. That whole my way or the highway will get you in trouble.

Number five, not being self righteous. Now I know for people that are people of faith, this is a tough one, but this is one that is important because you want to be their spouse. You're not trying to be their pastor. You're not trying to be their holy spirit. You're not trying to do that. That's going to change the dynamics of the relationship. You want to be their spouse. If they're going to make changes, you want them to do it because of their own conscience, not because you guilt tripped them into doing it.

Number six, infringing on their time and space. You will need to allow them some time and space to get their thoughts together and many times what happens, the hurt spouse wants things to happen now. They want things to happen real fast. It's almost like you've got to give it time for everything to make changes. I like to use the picture of one of those giant super tankers. They can turn but it's a slow process and when you're talking about completely turning a marriage around, it's going to take a little bit of time. They don't turn on a dime.

It's going to be important that you do not have an affair for a payback, that you not punish your spouse, and not blow things out of proportion. Blowing things out

of proportion is a sure way, especially if you have any listeners that have teenagers, this applies to them, too. One sure way to make sure your teenager quit listening to you is to freak out and blow things out of proportion. The same things works with spouses. Well, think about it. When you're a teenager one of the reasons you don't do what your parent say is because they freak out.

**Doug:** Exactly.

**Jeff Murrah:** And if you're a spouse that will freak out, they're not going to tell you. Okay, that's on the negative side. Let me get on the positive side and good things.

**Doug:** Okay, finish up on the positive here.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay, to improve communication it's going to take activity and you taking initiative. Sitting back and being passive is what you want to avoid. By taking initiative you may have to learn some ways to start communication. You may have to be the one to pick up the phone and call. You may have to be the one to reach out.

Now another one, and this where I use the ACTION formula. A for activity, C for communication, and since communication is two way, you're going to need to talk and you're going to talk and you're going to let them talk. When one person is doing all the talking, it's nothing more than lecturing. And this is why I mentioned the listening is the key to removing distance. This is part of that communication. T, that stands for time. I, that stands for intimacy, and by intimacy I'm not talking about just being able to do things in the bedroom with each other. This deals more with rebuilding the emotional oneness and the relationship. A lot of times what happens, people confuse intensity for intimacy. Those are two separate entities and many times with affairs and that type of stuff, there is a lot excitement and a lot of intensity and the people who are caught up in that, they think, "Oh, that means we're intimate." No, it doesn't. It just means that you had an intense time. But in terms of improving the communication as a couple, it's going to be important that you be able to share emotions with one another, not just the anger but also when you're scared, when you're lonely, when you're happy, these type of things.

**Doug:** Sure.

**Jeff Murrah:** O stands for objectivity. This is one that's hard for a lot of people because when cheating happens we take it personally, and it's hard to get out of that personal mindset. But in overcoming it, objectivity is going to be important. It's almost like learning how to look at the events from different perspectives. Once again, it doesn't mean you agree with those perspectives but being able to develop the flexibility where you can be objective.

And the N, the final part is no museum trips. Many times when cheating happens, it's almost like it opens the door for them to dig through every past wrong doing that they have done to each other. I mean, they start bringing up how they raise the kids, what happened in their families of origin and people that they dated even before they were married, everything under the sun, and you need to avoid that. If you're going to heal the marriage, you need to look at what's going on now and what you need to do in the future. Those museum trips get you in trouble.

**Doug:** Museum trips, I like that analogy.

**Jeff Murrah:** I think I covered most of that there.

**Doug:** Okay, very good.

**Linda:** In your book you addressed the three types of affairs, mean, mythical, and puzzling.

**Jeff Murrah:** Yes.

**Linda:** Can you give us the characteristics of each one of those?

**Jeff Murrah:** Yes, okay. Now in my book, I was quoting an author, I believe his name was Jay Haley. Actually, he mentioned four but three main ones back in 1986, and they were the mean, the mythical, and the puzzling affair.

With the mean affair, this is where the cheater selects someone where the whole affair is nothing more than intentional meanness. This is like having an affair with someone's sister or someone's brother. The episode mentioned in the book,

there was a wife who to alienate the husband, she made it a point of having an affair with each of his friends. So who is he going to go to now?

**Doug:** So in your practice, do you find that type of affair very often?

**Jeff Murrah:** Not always to that degree. I have seen a milder degree of what I would call the mean affair. Of course when an affair happens to you, you're going to assume it's the meanest thing under the sun.

**Doug:** Right.

**Jeff Murrah:** But the mean affairs are those based on revenge or getting back at someone. One that I have seen like for instance if the wife grew up in a family... well, being down here in Texas, I'll just use an example that I've seen. They might have some strong feelings about Mexicans and so the husband purposely goes out and finds someone from that heritage and has an affair with them, knowing it is going to send the spouse over the top. That's the mean affair.

**Doug:** Looking for a way to end the marriage really probably is what they're looking for there, would you say?

**Jeff Murrah:** In many ways, it's almost like they don't want to man up and leave the marriage but by having an affair, the divorce becomes a default.

**Doug:** Gotcha.

**Jeff Murrah:** It's almost like it's an emergency exit out of the marriage.

**Doug:** Okay.

**Jeff Murrah:** Many times with the mean affairs you'll see that. Now with the puzzling affair, this type of affair is when the person chosen, it doesn't make sense. Like for instance, if you've got a wife that on the old Bo Derek 1 through 10 scale, she's up there a 9, 9 and a half, or maybe 8 and a half, and then you turn around and have an affair with a woman who's dumpy, maybe missing some of her teeth and not very attractive at all. People are scratching their head and that's an example of the puzzling affair, where it doesn't make sense.

**Doug:** Well our experience from stories that people have told us from the blog, it seems to be quite a common type of affair. We often hear that, "Boy, she was uglier than me or fatter than me," or whatever. It seems to be quite a common occurrence.

**Jeff Murrah:** And so when you see those, you know that the affair was not about the physical attractiveness. There were other issues at work. Meeting emotional needs or security needs or wanting to be admired or communicated with. There are other factors driving it as opposed to any kind of seduction that went on.

**Doug:** Maybe they just like the same restaurants or something.

**Jeff Murrah:** That could be. Then he also mentioned the mythical affair. The mythical affair, now keep in mind, this came out in '86. This is before the internet and that type of stuff, so virtual affairs is not a term he was familiar with. This is where the husband or the wife, depending on who is cheating, creates the impression that an affair is going on when one may not be going on.

**Linda:** You mean only in the mind of one person?

**Jeff Murrah:** Right, but they go ahead and they purposely plant seeds that essentially keeps the spouse guessing.

**Doug:** This is for like an attention-getting type of attempt or something?

**Jeff Murrah:** Well, the example he gave in the book, I'll use that one. The husband, he's been out of town. He comes home and he and his wife are in the process of getting ready to make love and he says, "Oh, by the way, when I was out of town I had lunch with a girl at a restaurant." And because he brought it up right when they're about to be intimate, it changed the mood number one, but it created the impression that an affair was going on. Now nothing was going on but because of the timing and the way he presented it...

**Linda:** Does he have a fear of intimacy?

**Jeff Murrah:** That happens many times with these types of puzzling situations because if you create that, there is usually some sort of secondary gain and what they're after is secondary.

Now a situation where I did have to deal with that, the cheater worked for a company and they wanted to make someone else in the company look bad so they purposely manufactured emails to create the impression that an affair was going on when none was going on and essentially did a character assassination in terms of their reputation.

Now in my own experience, I see more types of affair and I'll go through that list. It's a little bit longer. I have seen some affairs and this may sound strange but based on medical things. Many times after brain surgery or major traumas and changes in brain functioning, people lose self control in that area. This does not happen very much but I have seen it. Then I have the whole addiction mindset where I have seen love addicts and sex addicts. They go out and have compulsive affairs. Then there is the virtual affair, and I believe many times I'll use the term emotional affair. Now I've got several different labels for it because they're often the same thing. I like using the label, "The Elvis Affair," but this would be the "Nostalgic with a Family Tradition Affair." In some families, affairs have gone on for generations. It's something granddad did and dad did and then the husband does, and it's almost like they see nothing wrong with it. That's what's expected of them

**Doug:** It's gone on from generation to generation.

**Jeff Murrah:** Right. And so when you're trying to get your husband to turn around in that situation and it's that ingrained, it's going to be a different challenge than somebody who was seduced down at the local bar.

**Doug:** Right.

**Jeff Murrah:** And also I would add the accidental affair because those things have happened. Because I have seen people that have been trapped into affairs and although we don't want to think about it, there are some individuals out there who do look for unsuspecting people and trap them, whether for law suits, for money or for other types of gains. I have seen that happen.

**Doug:** Like with Pitino for instance, a recent newsworthy note there. Apparently that's what happened to him, but that's interesting.

**Jeff Murrah:** And each one has its own little quirks so it's hard to say one size fits all when it comes to affairs.

**Doug:** Right, interesting, okay. Well, thank you for hitting on those. I want to kind of switch gears just a little bit here. One of the main issues that we see on our blog almost every day from emails and comments and the like, is the subject of forgiveness. It's hard for a lot of people to forgive and move on. We know forgetting is difficult as well but some of them can't even bring themselves to forgive or even think about forgiving. So can you touch on just what forgiveness is and what it is not and then maybe also touch on some of the different stages of forgiveness, if you would?

**Jeff Murrah:** Oh, sure. In terms of forgiveness, what I mean whenever I use the term forgiveness I'm referring to them emotionally letting go of that desire to pay them back. It's not about saying that what they did was alright. It's not about pardoning them and letting them off the hook. It's more about you purposely letting go of the emotional burden so that you can get on with life. So let me go ahead and start with that and I think some of the pieces will start to come together as I talk about the different stages of forgiveness.

**Doug:** Okay, sounds good.

**Jeff Murrah:** When I'm in my counseling office, many times what I do... I have this wooden rhinoceros and I'll stick that rhinoceros in the middle of the table and we talk about how they see that rhinoceros and how I see the rhinoceros because some people are looking at the head, some people from the right side, the left side, the back side. I say okay, if we think of this rhinoceros as this affair or this issue, the first stage is realizing that there are different ways to look at it. You can look at this problem from different angles.

Now say that that's a stage of forgiveness because many times when people are hurt real bad, they aren't even open to the idea that there are other ways of looking at the situation. It's almost like they say, "You can only look at a rhino

from the head and that's it." There is no other perspective. They are so stuck in their mindset. If they can loosen up and realize there is more than one way to look at it, they are well on their way. That doesn't mean that...

**Doug:** That's not an easy thing to do and I'm sure it takes time as well.

**Jeff Murrah:** Oh, it does and that's many times why I use the rhino and use an object lesson because when you try to explain these ideas in abstract terms, people get lost.

Okay, the next stage after you realize that there is more than one way of looking at the rhino, you can look at where the head is in front, the head is in the back, whatever, is realizing that there is a logic behind what the person did. In this case, the cheater, they had some kind of thinking or some kind of logic behind what they did. They weren't totally crazy. Now you may not agree with their reasons for what they did. You may see them as being perverted in what they did or totally off base, but it's at least acknowledging that there was some reason and some thinking behind it.

Okay, and when a person gets through stage two, so we've gotten to the point where they realize there is more than one way of looking at the affair and the second stage they realize that the person had their reasons for doing what they did. Then at the third stage, you're at the point that's going to be a little more riskier because then you've got to open yourself up to allow the person to make things right.

Now this one gets a little trickier because so many times when we've been hurt, people will tell themselves there is no way I'm going to let that person ever make it up to me or there's no way they can ever make this right, and when statements like that are made, mentally it puts a wall up that there is no way that the cheater can ever get past the wall. And in terms of forgiveness that wall stops things both ways. So at this stage, stage three, the person has to make some conscious efforts to start letting the wall down.

I'm not saying that they have to do it all at once. This is one reason why I mentioned that forgiveness is a process. It is not one of these things that on Tuesday you choose to forgive and the slate is clean from then on. No, it's more



like on Tuesday you might let go of 2 ounces of pain and you forgive those 2 ounces and you still have 5 tons that you've got to deal with, and on Wednesday you let go of 2 ounces more. Thursday you let go of two ounces more. So it is a process.

**Linda:** It's also a two-way street. What if the cheater is not willing to make things better, then what would you do?

**Jeff Murrah:** When the cheater is not willing to make things better. Well, this gets back to the whole purpose of the forgiveness. The forgiveness is about you letting go of the grudge because to hold onto a grudge it takes a lot of energy and time. And they may not be ready and this is one reason why I usually advise people not to forgive too soon because if you let go of the pain too soon, it creates problems.

One of the things that people have to do is rethink pain and start to look at it rather than as something to be avoided, pain is actually protection of life and pain actually lets us know what the issues are that need our attention. For instance, when you go to the doctor, one of the questions asked, "Where does it hurt?" Now depending upon where it hurts, what kind of pain it is, whether it's an intermittent pain, a sharp pain, a throbbing pain, the doctor clues as to what needs to be done and likewise with emotional pains. Those will give you clues as to what you need to do and when people forgive too soon, it's almost like they take a pain killer and they've let go of this way to monitor whether or not the issues have been resolved and whether or not the needs have been taken care of, so you don't want to forgive too soon.

Now back to your question, since forgiveness is about you letting go of the grudge and about you letting go of all of the heavy burden that you're under, you can choose to go through the forgiveness process even if they're not asking for the forgiveness, because at this point you're at least making yourself available and that you're willing to sit down and talk and work things through if they're open to it. Does that clarify that or do I need go further?

**Linda:** Yeah, it does. I think that in a lot of our reader's situations, the spouses are ready to move on and forgive but they're not getting what they need from the cheater. They just want to move on and forget about it and I think a lot of times we feel that if we forgive then we'll be okay and they'll be okay and we'll be open

up to move on. I think you do need to let your spouse see your pain and understand what's upsetting you. I think Gardner said that in order for the cheater to realize the implications of what happened, they have to experience as much pain as you experienced and I think that takes a long time for them to realize how much pain they caused.

**Jeff Murrah:** Yeah, the pain... I often use the illustration of a seesaw because the pain will go back and forth between the two of you. When news of the affair comes out, the pain shifts from the cheater to the spouse who was loyal and it's going to go back and forth and back and forth. That's a natural phenomenon that happens when couples start dealing with it. They eventually will have to deal not only with the affair but also with the pain and where the pain is really coming from.

Okay, step four, the last step, is when you're willing to step back into a relationship with them. Now when you step back into a relationship with them, you want to do it with both eyes open. At the same time, you know that they have faults and you have faults and it does take a big risk to step back into the relationship and be willing to work. So the big difference between step three and step four, step three is where you're willing to open the door for them to make things right emotionally. Step four, you take it further because you were actually getting back into a relationship with them and taking the steps to change that.

**Linda:** I think that's the point where you top walking on eggshells and you have to show the real person.

**Jeff Murrah:** Yeah, because you're still going to see their faults, they're going to see yours and you will always know where you can cut the cord and bring some hurts to the relationship. There are times that even though you see where the faults are, you may choose not to react to them all the time.

**Doug:** Okay. Linda, did you have something?

**Linda:** No, I don't. Can I go on to my next question?

**Doug:** Sure.

**Linda:** This is what I find quite interesting. You said that there is a theory that the affair partner is selected and how that's the key to the meaning of the affair.

**Jeff Murrah:** Oh boy. Yes. An affair partner is typically selected and who they select says a lot about their needs. Now being that I am a clinician, I have not gone out and done the research and I can't give you the numbers as to how often this happens, but one of the things that really [corks] a lot of people is that many times it is the spouse who selects who the affair is going to be with. Now let me walk you through this for you..

**Linda:** Okay.

**Jeff Murrah:** What happens, like for instance, they will be in the midst of a fight and one party will say to the other, "Don't go out and sleep with that sleazy blond at the office," or, "Don't go find you a stripper." The mind does not hear that "don't". Instead it hears, "Find the stripper." "Find the bimbo at the office," and it works in the back of the mind so we've got to be careful what we say.

**Linda:** What we wish for?

**Jeff Murrah:** Well, and think about it. You've got kids and when you tell the kids, "Don't do something," what do they do?

**Linda:** They do it.

**Jeff Murrah:** Exactly, and many times when we say, "Don't," and we give them that instruction, we don't realize that we're planting seeds. Okay, now let me come back to my caveat. That does not happen in every case, but when I have gone ahead and tested, it has surprised me and it happens with enough occurrence that I needed to go ahead and mention that because a lot of times we think, "Well, that's just somebody who he met." Well, many times the seeds are planted and we have to be careful with the seeds that we plant there.

I have also seen cases where a third party turns around and selects the affair partner. In this case let's say for instance the couple is just rocking along, doing their stuff, and let's say one of the mother-in-law's has it in for the husband and then she starts either starting rumors about the affair or trying to send one of her

seductive friends over to catch him alone. These types of things happen and we have to be aware of it, so the selection is an important thing and going back to the puzzling affair, when you have somebody that doesn't make sense, that ought to tell you that it's not about physical attractiveness in that case. There are some other needs being met, and when you can decode what those needs are, because if they are providing reassurances to the spouse, encouragement, making him feel good about himself, maybe they're not being know-it-all's with him, and he enjoys that.

**Linda:** Right.

**Jeff Murrah:** And if that's the case, that will give you clues as to what's needed in your marriage. Not that you become like her, but that will help you understand what your husband thinks he needs.

**Linda:** Right. And I think I read somewhere where they said when your spouse is telling you what they experienced during the affair, for example Doug said that it was fun and she was easy to talk to, I think those were the things that were missing and that's why he found it so attractive. And I think as the spouse you need to really clue in to what your husband or wife is saying about the affair so then you can understand what the attraction was.

**Jeff Murrah:** Right, and this is one reason why I try to emphasize the importance of understanding rather than always agreement. And I know Willard Harley in his book, *"His Needs, Her Needs,"* I believe he has a whole list how we need a spouse who is our best friend, who is a playmate, who is a confidante, many qualities all wrapped into one.

**Linda:** Right, right. So they said in that book that oftentimes what the spouse finds important, their needs are totally different so you really need to be aware. Just because you feel that you need this doesn't necessarily mean that your spouse needs that also.

**Jeff Murrah:** And those needs are going to change over time because of different ages.

**Linda:** Right.

**Jeff Murrah:** Somebody had asked about midlife crises and where that fits into affairs. The needs that the couple have will change from decade to decade and typically when people get near those decade markers, 30, 40, 50 and a year or two on either side, they're going to be more high risk for affairs than at other ages because at those ages we do a lot of squirrely things. And in order to get our needs met we are willing to consider some things that we wouldn't typically consider.

**Linda:** Right. So I guess that would be a great time to have a communication with your spouse, to talk about what's missing or what you need as you change during those years.

**Jeff Murrah:** Right. Okay, any other questions?

**Doug:** Well, we have a lot of other questions but I think we're getting to the point where we're kind of running out of time here and we wanted to give some of the people that are on the line an opportunity to maybe ask a few questions of you.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay.

**Doug:** I know we don't have a lot of time to answer a lot of questions so I apologize in advance if we can't get to them all.

**Jeff Murrah:** Well let me go through some of these that I'm aware of here. Okay, one person asked, "My anniversary is coming up next week. My husband and I live together. I want to give him a gift but is it wise to pursue such an occasion when he isn't sure he wants to stay married?"

Whether or not the two of you stay married or whether or not a couple stays married, they're going to find they're still going to have to deal with each other. In my book I point out that a divorce doesn't solve anything. It just changes the battlefield. And when you're talking about taking steps to improve the relationship, many times if this is the husband or the father or mother of your children, you're still going to have to be dealing with them. With that in mind, if you're planning on continuing in a relationship with him, the idea of the gift

would be good because you're still going to have to deal with him whether or not you stay together or not.

Okay, another one, "My husband was away for training and had an emotional affair with a woman he went through training with through hours of text every night. He is still not home and things have gotten worse. What can you recommend we do until he gets home? He makes promises and says he's going to make changes but he doesn't and says he doesn't know why. He's trying but he just knows that he wants to be with me."

Let me parse this one down. Some of it I'll be able to deal with here and some of it is going to take a little longer. One of the things, many times when cheaters have affairs, they are not about consciously choosing to boot the other spouse out and replace it with someone else. Many times they want to have their marriage and they want to have the affair too, so when he says things that he wants to be with you, he probably is telling you the truth.

Now in terms of the promises where he says he's going to make changes and doesn't do them, this is one of the things that I do talk about in my book that when couples get back together, it's important to take a look at the promises and make sure you follow through on the promises. I know in his case he is not and you can talk to him about how disappointing it is to believe in him and then he lets you down. Many husbands want their wives to believe in them. They want their wives to respect them and when you let them know that you feel disappointed... once again, this gets back to dealing with that emotional piece. You let him know that you feel disappointed as opposed to attacking him by saying, "You never keep your promises. You're untrustworthy." Those are labels that are going to stir up fights as opposed to being able to work on things.

Let's see, another one, "My husband wants to work on our marriage but the other woman is still working with him. What can I do? He says he is sorry and then he says that he didn't do anything. Where does this put us?"

That's one of those situations where you need to get some boundaries in place and one of the things I talk about in the book, once there has been an affair, the foundation of the marriage needs to change. In the marriage before an affair happens, everything is based on trust. You can say, "Do this," or "Trust me," and

you trust them. Once an affair happens, whether it be an emotional affair or an actual affair, it's going to be important that you have communication. You can't just give a person a blank check because you trust them anymore. They've got to show that they are trustworthy, and one way to show that they are trustworthy is to make sure that he tells you when he has interactions with this woman. He stays in touch with you either by text or emails to let you know what happens when he has interactions with her, and over time as he continues communicating with you, that will give you more solid basis to have some trust develop.

I use this formula for trust where the components are communication + honesty + commitment + time. Each of those are important to reestablishing any kind of trust. You've got to have the openness and the ability to talk. You've got to have the honesty where you can believe what the person is telling you because there are some people, they can talk up a storm but you can't believe them. You've got to have a sense of commitment where they are committed to you, you are committed to them and given time, much like interest accrues at a bank, trust will begin to once again develop.

Okay, I've got time for one more here. "How do you handle an emotional affair? Nothing physical she says, just friends. She sees nothing wrong with the friendship with another man and is not willing to discuss it."

One of the things that's becoming a hot, hot topic these days is the emotional affairs and especially with Facebook. Facebook has opened a can of worms and it has single handedly brought back all kinds of dead boyfriends and girlfriends back to life and that is a danger that a lot of couples are finding themselves having to deal with. Because as you bring these people back into your life, the connections that you made in your brain years ago are reactivated and turned on. It's almost like the light switches, they still work.

She may not see anything wrong with it. This is one you can start by talking to her about your emotions, how it leaves you feeling insecure and that you're afraid that she may step over the line and that you need reassurance that you're still important to her and that as a husband it would mean a lot to you if she went ahead and saw to it that she didn't keep that friendship.

I have seen some couples that I've had to work with where like for instance the wife wants to have all kinds of friends on Facebook that they had to develop an agreement that she can only have the friends that the husband approved of, or in some cases it's vice versa, as a way to police each other. So you may have to do something kind of like that.

One of the crises that couples usually go through when they first get married, they go through a period of time where you have to weed out the friends that are not good for the two of you, and nowadays rather than just be a crisis that we only deal with when we first get married, with Facebook we're having to do it almost on a daily basis, so that is a very real threat.

Have any other questions come in? Okay, well thank you all for showing up. Thank you, Doug and Linda. It was a joy to finally meet y'all.

**Doug:** Yeah, thank you.

**Linda:** Thank you.

**Doug:** There's a 'y'all.' I haven't heard the Texas twang all day and I finally heard the y'all. So I appreciate everything you do, Jeff, and I appreciate you helping us out on the blog with some of the questions that people have. I know we deal more with it through experience and you've got maybe the reasons behind the experience with your professionalism and everything, so appreciate it a lot and thank you for all the listeners for attending and thanks for coming to our blog and I guess we'll talk to you soon.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay. Well, thank you and I thank you all for the work that you do because in tackling this problem, it takes everyone, those that have gone through it because no one can comfort us like somebody who can put their arm around us and say, "I've been there. I know what you're feeling."

**Doug:** Right.

**Jeff Murrah:** So what you two are doing is very important and one of the things that blows my mind is how big an outreach that y'all have. I've had a chance to interact with some of the folks from countries on the other side of the Pacific and



so forth. Whatever happened years ago in your home, it's bringing healing to people throughout the world, so thank you.

**Doug:** I appreciate that. Well, thank you very much again and we'll talk to you soon.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay.

**Doug:** Bye everybody.

**Jeff Murrah:** Okay, bye.