



Dr. Robert Huizenga – The Infidelity Coach

www.break-free-from-the-affair.com

www.infidelity-help.com

Bob@BobHuizenga.com

Introduction

To spy...or not to spy?

And...why in the world MUST I check, and keep checking, on what he/she is doing?

I run into these concerns and questions almost daily as I coach people and read emails from those who visit my site and are desperately looking for direction and relief from the constant internal bombardment of their fears and concerns.

- ▶ What IS he/she doing?
- ▶ Can I trust my intuition, which says that something IS going on?
- ▶ What do I do when I confront and he/she denies, or worse yet, turns it back on me, as if I'm some sicko for even asking the question?
- ▶ I'm tired of checking his phone records...every day. What do I do?
- ▶ I can't stand myself for mistrusting, for checking the mileage, voice mail, etc.
- ▶ How can I get this out of my mind?

This dilemma is compelling, especially in the beginning stages of the discovery of infidelity. It happens often, even to those who swore they would never stoop to such thoughts or actions.

I present two articles that offer insight and hopefully will enable you to “normalize” your feelings and needs. I want for you to know deep within that is truly OK for you to want to know. There are good reasons!

Should you spy?

Again, when your thinking was “normal” and not bound by the scenario of infidelity, not in your wildest imagination would you think of spying on your partner/spouse.

But, confrontation with an extramarital affair is not a normal time.

Now you are considering taking this action.

My third article offers a thorough look at the crucial facets of spying.

I hope you find these articles offering a measure of relief, direction and impetus for continuing the exploration of the dynamics of infidelity.

I wish you the best,

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Part 1: Infidelity: Why the Need to Know is So Strong

When you discover that your partner is immersed in infidelity, you may have a powerful need to know. You want to know the details. Maybe ALL the details? When? Where? How? How Often? What was it like?

No. there is nothing wrong with you. In working intimately with hundreds of people like you, facing the ravages of an extramarital affair, the need to know is very common.

Here are six reasons why you might want to know.

1. The need for validation. If you tend to be intuitive, that is, soak in the signals from others around you and try to make sense of them, you may have this powerful urge to go back and find out what really happened. Your partner says, "Yes, I was with him/her on that day." You think, "Oh yes, I remember having a feeling at that time. Now I know what that was about." Or, "I asked you if you were having an affair and you denied it...or turned it back on me with your anger. I thought I was going crazy. Now I know I wasn't.

2. You question your adequacy (and who doesn't when confronted with infidelity) and a part of you wants to heal/change those thoughts and feelings.

And so, you venture into the comparative game and ask/think: "What did they do? Was he/she better? What was he/she better at? What didn't I do or give? Where do I get stuck emotionally/sexually?"

Sexual interaction is a "window to the soul." Be kind to yourself when you compare. Learn. Often their sexual interaction leaves a lot to be desired. Know as well that your partner's inadequacies will shine just as brightly with the OP (other person) as with you.

3. How bad is it? You want to know what you are up against. What is the extent of the boundary violation? How deeply embedded is my partner in this web? Do I throw in the towel? Will it be possible for me to forgive? How long will this take? How long will I hang in there?

This question is important for the "I can't say no" and the "I don't want to say no" affairs. Infidelity behaviors worsen over time with these kinds of affairs. You want to know where in this process is your partner.

4. I get turned on. Yes, knowing the details for some is sexually arousing. Frequently, upon confession of the affair for a couple, there is a discharge of sexual energy.

I hear someone say, "This is weird, but sex for us is better, more frequent and more intense than it ever has been." Knowing the details of what happened with the OP may in some cases be very titillating and stir up hidden fantasies.

5. It's a connection - maybe one of few. There may be a great deal of distance between you and your spouse. Conversations may be minimal. The affair, however, is front and center and becomes a focal point.

You ask questions, probe and want to know because it is perhaps the only point of connection. Something is better than nothing. And your spouse may bring up the affair because it meets a need for drama. This is especially true of someone who "fell out of love...and just loves being in love."

Or, your spouse may encourage talk about the OP because in some rather unconscious way s/he carries a load of revenge and wants to "twist the knife."

6. You want to care for your self. You may have concern about STDs. You need to know the extent of the behavior and protection used, if there was sexual activity, for your own physical well-being.

Part 2: Infidelity Discovered: Why He/ She Won't Tell Me the Truth?

Upon discovery of infidelity there is often a strong need to know the details. What happened? When? Where? Why? etc. The reasons for these questions are examined in my first article on this subject: "Infidelity: Why the Need to Know is so Strong."

You have the need to know, but his/her lips are sealed or walks away, ignores or bypasses your questions, puts it back on you, denies or does other numbers on you to keep you away from knowing what really happened. There are predictable reasons why this happens. Here are some of them:

1. Your partner is involved in an "I don't want to say no" affair. Your partner/spouse probably is a person wrapped up in his/her own ego, personal needs, and life style. He/she can rationalize the behavior and actually come to the conclusion that he/she is entitled to get his/her needs met this way. After all, he/she is such a magnanimous person! Bottom line: your needs and concerns really don't matter! He/she doesn't want to talk about them and sees absolutely no reason to get "bogged down" in what is important to you.
2. Your partner is involved in an "I can't say no" affair. Your spouse/partner finds it painfully difficult to respond to your need to know out of shame and guilt. He/she sees, at one level, his/her actions becoming more and more destructive and degrading and believes, again at an unspoken level usually, that he/she has less and less control over his/her actions. Guilt and shame follow the infidelity with selfpromises to break off the behavior. However, these promises are usually broken. He/she is ashamed for you to know this struggle.
3. Your partner/spouse is involved in a "revenge" affair. He/she wants you to squirm. This may not be front and center in his/her consciousness, but just below the surface is some resentment and anger, for whatever reason, aimed in your direction. He/she thinks: "Hmmm this is payback time. Good. Now he/she knows what it's like to be on the receiving end. I'll continue this for a while...and secretly enjoy his/her torment. I won't give him/her the satisfaction of responding in a caring way to his/her needs."
4. Your partner/spouse is involved in an affair with the intent upon proving his/her desirability. In some cases where there is a history of sexual abuse as a child, or rape as an adult, your partner may compartmentalize the

"affair" to the degree that he/she might not consciously remember the details or events of his/her infidelity. The infidelity may serve in a pre-conscious fashion as an attempt to amend for the painful sexual history. He/she may NOT indeed remember what you ask for.

5. Your partner/spouse is involved in affairs such as: "I fell out of love" or "My Marriage Made Me Do It" or "I Want to be Close to someone...but can't stand intimacy." Often, the infidelity in these cases represents the need to deal with dependency issues. By that I mean, your partner/spouse may define him/herself in terms of how others respond to him/her rather than his/her inner values, standards, purpose, etc.

This person's life is wrapped around others. And his/her life is still wrapped around you. You want to know. He/she doesn't tell you... for fear of "hurting you" or becoming embroiled in pain or conflict from which he/she cannot seemingly extricate. What you (or others) think, feel and how you respond are TOO important to him/her.

As you see, the reasons for not getting the information you need for your own sense of validation and acknowledgement are varied and fairly complex.

Allow yourself to stand back and examine the themes and patterns you encounter. With the power of this knowledge you gain the freedom to use different strategies and tactics to work toward resolution.

Should I Spy?

If you are a spouse who suspects your partner might be having an affair, wants to find out if he/she is telling the truth or has a need to discover details of the affair, this article is for you.

The desire, sometime a fairly strong desire to spy or find out exactly what is happening between your partner and the other person, is commonly very strong, especially at disclosure of the affair or prior to that when you sense that something is off kilter.

7 Legitimate Motives for Spying

1. Trust is a big reason, not of your partner, but yourself.

Probably for some time you have sensed something is different or

questioned the change of behavior in your partner. Perhaps you confronted him/her and it was met with denial. This created a huge dilemma for you because a part of you was screaming, Hey, this doesn't fit! I don't believe it. To deny this part of you, which KNOWS the truth, creates a tremendous internal turmoil.

If the truth as you suspect it is confirmed, you can take a deep breath and at least know that you can trust yourself. You are NOT CRAZY!
Spying is a way to confirm your suspicions and trust more fully your gut feelings.

2. Spying may help you feel connected to your partner who seems to be steadily moving away from you. It is a way of maintaining contact and have some sort of connection to this stranger who once was well known.

Isn't it like the game of hide-and-seek we used to play as children? Sometimes there, sometimes gone. At least it is a game, and a game is at least some contact, some involvement. You miss the connection and try to find some way to maintain the ties.

3. Spying may be an honest attempt to bring resolution to the relationship. You want to know the truth. You sense something does not fit. You suspect there is a breach of something. You want to know what you are up against. You are not willing to stand pat and wait.

You are a person of action. You want some sort of movement. You want to get on with the relationship. You want to get on with your life. You know that it is difficult maintaining your sanity when there might be this huge elephant that no one is talking about.

You want to know the truth, face the truth, deal with the truth and be free.

4. If you suspect that this behavior might be the end of the relationship, you want to protect yourself legally.

If there is betrayal, lying and deception regarding a third party, other forms of deception may exist financially or in other areas of the relationship. Having "evidence" does have some impact in some court systems.

Whether you need to protect yourself legally depends on the kind of affair facing you and the character of your spouse. Please read through

my “7 Reasons For an Affair” to determine the situation that faces you.

If your spouse is someone who can't say no, doesn't want to say no or is acting out rage, please make sure to take protective steps.

5. You want to protect yourself medically. You might be concerned about sexually transmitted diseases. Your health may be at stake. And, of course, you need to know.

Shame, guilt or self-absorption may be so powerful in your partner that it gets in the way of responsibly informing you of the medical dangers when another partner is sexually brought into your relationship.

6. Secrets are work! There is not much written about the impact of a secret in a relationship, but believe me, in over two decades of working with strained relationships day in and day out, keeping a secret has a powerful impact.

It is the proverbial elephant sitting in the room that no one dare talk about. People take extraordinary measures to tip toe around it, but it IS there. Emotionally, you can't miss it.

Secrets are a drain. If the secret persists, its impact is felt in subtle but insidious ways. People become physically ill, sometimes seriously so. People become depressed. People start doing crazy things. Children start acting out, stop achieving, become listless or exhibit a host of other symptoms. Children, or the next generation, often carry the emotional load.

You want to spy because you don't want to live with a secret. You want to discover the truth. You want to feel the freeing power of the exposed secret and the opportunity it offers for healing, resolution, a rich relationship and a productive life.

7. Some of us like drama. Soap opera scenarios and adrenaline based lives are a hallmark of our society. We get juiced or pumped up entering into emotional relational triangles that offer intrigue. Without adrenaline, life seems boring or mundane. Perhaps an unspoken reason for an affair may be to fan the fire? Or, you may spy to keep the sense of being alive a part of your life.

Is Spying an Invasion of Privacy?

My, how the person involved in the affair cries foul when he/she discovers you are spying.

Outrage can be intense: “How dare you!! I never thought you would stoop to that! How could you!? How can there be trust in this relationship if you do that? This is none of your business; I don’t spy and go behind your back! Now you know why I want to pull away from you. How could I love anyone that would do something like that to me? On and on.

Usually the person having the affair does not see or will not admit the duplicity of his/ her clandestine behavior. But you are made out to be the villain if you use detective work to discover the truth. It doesn’t make sense, but then again not much about an affair borders close to sanity.

Are you a morally corrupt duplicitous character hell bent on destroying the integrity of a relationship through spying? No, of course not. The integrity of the relationship has been destroyed through the affair. The affair shattered the promises and mocked the vows that the two of you made.

The affair invaded the domain of your marriage and crumbled its protective boundaries. **The affair broke the contract of the marriage; it was the act of betrayal. Spying does not damage the marriage. It is an attempt to seek the truth and resolve the pain and deception.**

Spying is often used to grasp the reality of the situation. It’s intent is to find the truth. Only the truth can provide a foundation from which to begin resolving the hurt, pain and forging a direction for the marriage and enable each person in the marriage to attain health and sanity.

Are You Ready to Handle What You Might Find?

Have you considered the many situations that spying might uncover? Can you imagine the worst thing you might find? Predict what your response will be to the worst-case scenario. Are you ready? Here are some **specific questions to ask yourself:**

1) Do I have friends I can count on for support if I discover the worst? Do they know I might need them? Have I told them exactly how they might help me? **Do I have the capacity to stand back from the deep emotions and not get mired or lost in destructive thoughts and feelings?**

2) How have I handled emotional pain in the past? What if it gets almost unbearable? If I encounter the worst possible emotional hurt and pain, **do I have a therapist I can contact immediately and see soon to help me through the rough spots?**

3) **What will be my strategy for what I find?** Do I have a strategy for the different scenarios? Do I have a strategy to confront or not confront my spouse? How, when and under what circumstances will I confront him/her?

4) **What kind of strategy will I have for self-care?** What will I need to do to keep myself functioning somewhat effectively?

5) **Do I have a coach or an objective someone who can help me develop strategies and goals for confrontation and self-care and keep me focused and working on these strategies and goals?**

6) **Do I know what kind of affair I might face? Do I know the prognosis for that kind of affair?** Have I educated myself about affairs and what I must do to effectively resolve and move through this crisis?

Spying is Not Revenge

Do not use what you find as ammunition for revenge. Sure, you may have wonderfully violent fantasies of what you would really like to do to him/her and the other person. This is very normal. But, don't act them out.

Using what you find to extract revenge will only lengthen the time of pain and anger. It will undermine your integrity as a person, lower your personal standards and make you exceedingly unattractive. Resist the temptation to sling the mud!

Keep what you find to yourself.

You spy because the truth will set YOU free. The quickest cleanest way to break free from the affair is to set your focus on you as you navigate your way through the difficult weeks and months.

The sooner the two of you can face each other, without outside input or influence, the better of you and the relationship will be.

There usually is no reason to share new found information with family, friends, children or the spouse of the other person. A concern about sexually transmitted diseases or health risks might be an exception. If it is important to share such information, do so without much fanfare or drama.

And of course, if you pursue legal action, any information obtained through spying is sometimes might be helpful to your attorney. Some “evidence” does carry weight in particular states or districts.

If you have questions or are in need of support, please visit my site at: <http://www.break-free-from-the-affair.com> or <http://www.infidelity-help.com>

About the author: Dr. Huizenga, [The Infidelity Coach](#), is a respected Marriage and Family Therapist with over two decades of clinical experience, study and research.

He is an expert on infidelity and extramarital affairs and author of [“Break Free From the Affair”](#) – a groundbreaking and best selling e-book offering hard-hitting strategies for 7 kinds of affairs. He offers personal coaching and resources for those facing infidelity that result in marriage problems and possible divorce.