

An Infidelity Success Story

“Jackie” was extremely close to leaving her marriage because of her husband’s affair with a co-worker. She was having troubles with many different issues that we all have faced as a result of the devastation of the affair.

In this success story, Jackie used the same principles we talk about when we mentor someone to successfully get her husband to end his affair and ultimately work on saving their marriage. She wrote me a letter recently that I wanted to share with you.

Here is her letter:

Dear Linda,

First of all, I wanted to let you know that my impending divorce is a thing of the past. For this I have you to thank. This letter is for you but it is my hope that it will also inspire others out there who don't know where to turn to for help.

When I first found out about my husband’s affair I knew that I needed a miracle to save my marriage. I searched the internet and came across your site. I loved that your site detailed your personal journey from an affair and included your own personal story, along with honestly sharing your thoughts and feelings along the way. I could definitely relate to what you and Doug would write about as it so closely mirrored my own situation.

My husband’s story was much like Doug’s. At first it was a harmless friendship with a coworker. At the time, my husband would share the details of the conversations he had with the other woman with me and I felt no threat.

But as months went by, he talked less and less about her and became more distant to me. Then one day as a result of pushing him for an answer as to his growing distance, he finally admitted that, although he loved me and would always be connected because of the kids, he was no longer "in love" with me and didn’t think that he could ever be again.

I only heard bits and pieces after the part where he said that he didn't love me anymore and had fallen in love with his coworker. He never intended to hurt me. It just happened. It's no one's fault. We can stay friends for the sake of the kids, and other canned responses that he must have felt would soften the blow.

I was in denial at first but then I realized the affect this would have on our two children who were 7 and 11 at the time. I couldn't just sit there and let this happen. I immediately spent every spare moment searching for anything that would reverse the horrible course that our life was taking. I was guilty of getting every download that has ever been offered on the Internet, and reading almost every book on infidelity ever printed. Nothing helped and our marriage seemed doomed.

Then I reached out to you. After spending hours upon hours on your site and reading and listening to everything you had available I realized that maybe, just maybe, there would be a way to save our marriage. I emailed you and you quickly wrote back.

The one thing I remember you saying was that though it would be difficult and at times painful, there was hope to save my marriage. As you and I continued our email correspondence, I began to understand why my husband was no longer in love with me. I knew I couldn't change the past, but I sure could control the future.

I applied what you said about your own experiences religiously but I got absolutely no response at first. But then about 3 months later, my husband said that he was having second thoughts about getting a divorce. The kids hated the new woman in his life and the other woman was having problems with his own teenage children. I guess the life with me wasn't looking so bad after all. He agreed to apply some of the things you suggested, and the rest, as they say, is history!

You are so right when you say that pain is what causes us to grow. I would not be the wife and mother I am today if it weren't for your wisdom, caring personality and remarkable ability to deliver the information we needed in such an easy and down to earth way.

I can never thank you enough for showing me what I needed to do to get my husband back and keep our family in tact. I hope you never stop doing what you do because I know there are many clueless people like me who need you.

Sincerely,

“Jackie”

Hopefully you can find this letter to be somewhat motivational and at the same time confirms that most of us are (or have been) in similar situations, and that there is hope for recovery.

You see, nobody teaches us how to deal with an affair until after it happens, and that is the point in time when your emotions are raging and you are probably least able to deal with it.

You need a guiding light. Someone who has been in the same situation that you have been. Someone who doesn't just speak psychological babble, but speaks from experience and with sympathy and passion. You need a mentor.

What a Mentor Is

A mentor may wear many different hats but the one thing that all mentors share is the ability to listen and encourage. A mentor is "a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction," according to the Uncommon Individual Foundation, an organization devoted to mentoring research and training. It reports that mentoring is one of the most powerful tools we have for influencing human behavior.

A mentor, one who serves as a model and provides individualized help and encouragement, can be invaluable to a receptive mentoree. Among the most important roles mentors play include

- Giving timely information to mentorees
- Modeling aspects of what they wish to impart
- Challenging and motivating mentorees to move to higher levels
- Directing mentorees to helpful resources when needed (sometimes painfully so)
- Encouraging goodness and inspiring greatness
- Lessening mentorees' anxiety by normalizing experiences
- Helping mentorees set goals
- Keeping mentorees accountable to their goals
- Providing a periodic review and evaluation of mentorees' performance

A word of caution is in order: Mentors can do all of the aforementioned things and still be ineffective. Two dynamics are vital to the success of any mentoring relationship. Without them, all the modeling, challenging, encouraging, goal-setting, and accountability will fall flat. The two critical dynamics are (1) attraction, and (2) responsiveness.

Attraction is the starting point in every effective mentoring relationship. The mentor and the mentoree must be drawn to each other to some degree. If either side is not genuinely interested in the other, true mentoring will never take place.

Along with this attractiveness, the mentoree must be willing and ready to learn from the mentor. Without a responsive attitude and a receptive spirit on the part of the mentoree, little genuine mentoring can occur.

There is no *single* way to be a mentor; every mentoring relationship takes on its own personality.

We define a mentor with respects to infidelity, as a more experienced couple or individual purposefully investing in another couple (or individual) to effectively navigate a journey that they have already taken.

It is a broad definition because, as we just mentioned, there is no one right way to mentor. Each mentoring relationship takes on its own style. The amount of time couples spend together and the content they discuss is personalized to that relationship. An infidelity mentoring relationship can be short term or long term.

It can be consistent and predictable or spontaneous and sporadic.

While every mentoring relationship has its own style that unfolds as the relationship develops, some potential confusion can be spared if the mentors and mentorees discuss their initial expectations of the relationship. This discussion, of course, necessitates the mentor to be somewhat clear on his/her own "style" before communicating with the mentorees. For example, the mentor may want to discuss whether he/she sees themselves more as models or as coaches or as teachers or as guides, and so on.

For now, here is a representative list of what a mentor does. A marriage mentor:

- willingly shares what they know (in a noncompetitive way)
- represents skill, knowledge, virtue, and accomplishment because they have gone before the couple they are mentoring
- takes a personal and heartfelt interest in the other couple's development and well-being
- offers support, challenge, patience, and enthusiasm while guiding other couples to new levels of competence
- points the way and represents tangible evidence of what another couple can become
- Mentor: Someone whose hindsight can become your foresight.
- exposes the recipients of their mentoring to new ideas, perspectives, and standards
- has more expertise in terms of knowledge yet views themselves as equal to those they mentor

What a Mentor is Not

"What I need is someone to talk to who has walked down the path I'm just beginning," said Lisa, four months after discovering her husband's affair.

"Whenever I go to my mom or dad with a situation, they end up parenting me or teaching me something I don't really need to learn."

Lisa, like most people we see, needs a mentor. Mom and Dad certainly serve a helpful function in the life of a new bride or groom, but they cannot usually offer

the distance and objectivity that a mentor gives. For this reason, it is important to realize exactly what a mentor is not.

A mentor is not:

- a mother or father. A mentor's job is not to parent the couple they are mentoring.
- automatically a pal or a buddy. A mentor's job is not necessarily to be friends for the purpose of socializing.
- "on call" for every little crisis. A mentor's time is limited to discussion about major situations, not minor ones.
- necessarily committed long-term. The mentoring relationship may have a prescribed timeline or it may follow a natural cycle of its own.
- a professor. A mentor's job is not to instruct in the traditional sense. The mentor's life experience is their teaching tool.
- a know-it-all. A mentor's job is not to have all the answers.

The Marriage Mentor's Mission

We believe strongly that the first priority for mentors should be a well-defined mission. This mission needs to be clearly stated, enthusiastically accepted, and internally believed. To be effective, every couple who volunteers to mentor another couple needs a strong sense of mission.

We believe the following sentence captures the spirit and belief of what most are trying to accomplish.

Our mission for infidelity mentoring is to lovingly walk alongside couples who are suffering from the ravages of infidelity. To help them based on our own experiences and knowledge through the minefield of affair recovery. The ultimate goal is personal recovery. Saving the marriage is certainly the goal, but may not be the actual result in all instances.

What is a Marriage Mentor Relationship?

Before we finish, we also want to sharpen the point on the mentoring relationship. For make no mistake about it, this is a relationship and the mentorees shape it just as much as the mentors.

For our purposes, a mentoring relationship is intentionally established by mutual agreement between a more experienced couple or individual and a less experienced couple or individual for the purpose of helping the less experienced couple or individual.

Note that this relationship is intentional. It's premeditated, planned, and on purpose. It's also mutually agreed upon. All parties involved know the purpose of the relationship. A true mentoring relationship does not happen incognito. You can't genuinely mentor someone without them agreeing to it. And vice versa.

Also note that this definition highlights experience. Crucial to the success of the relationship is that the more experienced couple or individual has traveled a road similar to the one the less experienced person is traveling. They have knowledge and wisdom to impart because of their experience. And while the mentors will also certainly benefit from this relationship, the relationship exists solely for the benefit of the less experienced person or couple.

If you are struggling to see the light at the end of the tunnel with respect to your own infidelity situation, perhaps the answer might be working with someone who has been where you are – a mentor.

Take care,

Linda