

“Don’t Let the HO-HO-HO’s Ruin Your Holiday”

A webinar transcript about surviving infidelity during the holidays

Presented to you by:

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&

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“Don’t Let the HO-HO-HO’s Ruin Your Holidays.”

Doug: Hello, everybody. This is Doug with Emotional Affair Journey, and I’m here today with Linda. Linda, are you there?

Linda: Yes, I’m here. Hello, everyone.

Doug: Also with us is marriage and family therapist, Jeff Murrah. Jeff, are you there?

Jeff: Yes. Doug, Linda, glad to talk to you.

Doug: We are glad to have you with us as well. We appreciate you taking the time out tonight. I want to thank everybody for joining us tonight for our webinar called “Don’t Let the HO-HO-HO’s Ruin Your Holidays.”

I’m not going to take credit for that title. Jeff came up with that, by the way. I thought it was pretty catchy and liked it, so thank you very much for that, Jeff.

Jeff: Well, I was just getting into the spirit of things with Christmas. Many times, when there’s an affair, people use those terms to refer to folks.

Doug: I hear you there. Everybody, we’re going to be touching on a lot of areas tonight and we’re going to try and give you a lot of valuable content from which you can learn from and utilize in your own affair recovery process during the fast-approaching holidays.

As we know, the holidays are meant to be a wonderful time that we spend with our friends and our families, but they can also be a very stressful time, regardless of the situation. At least they seem that way for our family anyhow.

But certainly when you have to deal with the emotional pain, and the triggers and all the other painful aspects of an affair, the holidays can be especially challenging for sure.

Before we get started here, real quick Jeff, can you tell the folks on the call here maybe a little housekeeping about what they need to do if they have questions or anything like that.

Jeff: At present, the questions are muted. For those that have access through the Internet, they'll be able to type in their questions and we'll be able to get to those right away. The other questions, we will get to and open the phone lines toward the end of the call.

The questions that have been typed in, we'll probably move to the head of the list as opposed to the other questions because we'll be able to see those and come up with answers. I like to think fast on my feet, but I'm not able to think that fast.

Doug: And keep in mind, everybody too that there's only a limited amount of time that we are able to be on this teleconference, so we can't get to every question that comes in, but we'll do our best to answer those that we can. I hope you bear with us.

With that being said, let's kick off the discussion here this evening by talking a little bit about lying. Certainly there's almost always lying involved with infidelity. Jeff, my first question is directed to you. Since lying is such a major aspect of an affair, in your experience, what are some ways that someone can tell if their partner is lying to them?

Jeff: That's a tough one. I get this question quite often on my website and with some of the questions that people come in. "How can I tell if they're lying?"

I do not know of any 100% fail-safe way to tell if they're lying. I will give you some of the major ways. What I typically do is when people are hitting on several of these, I'm likely dealing with a liar. There's always some of these liars that they're aware of these techniques and they make it a point to practice them so they can get them down stone cold. That's why it's not 100% effective, because there's always somebody who tries to find a way to beat the system.

Some of the things that I have found – and most parents know this first one – avoiding eye contact when you're talking to them, they're cutting their eyes to the side and not wanting to look at you. That's a sign that something is going on.

Also, as you're paying attention to the eyes, look for changes in eye movement. This would be not only the size of the pupil, but how they are cutting their eyes as you're talking to them. This is especially true when you're asking them questions

about details, because depending upon where they look, that's going to give you some clues as to what's going on.

If their speech slows down, if this is a person that's used to a machine gunning off all kinds of responses and all of a sudden they start getting real slow through key areas, that's a sign that they're slowing their mind down – and there's a reason for that.

The next one I call the “Pinocchio Factor,” although we joke about Pinocchio and the long nose, with some people, they have a tendency to want to touch their nose or their face when they're telling lies. Strange thing. Sometimes those old fairy stories have some truth in them.

Hand movements. Many times, you will see exaggerated hand movements with some people when they're lying. Now bear in mind, you've got to look at the cultural factor here. If you come from a culture where there's a lot of hand movements, you're going to want to ignore this one. But if you come from a culture where there's not many hand movements and all of a sudden you see a lot, that ought to send flashing warning lights going off.

Then you want to look for lack of detailing in their response, if they tend to be kind of vague. “Oh, you all went out to eat. What kind of restaurant was it?” and they say, “Well, there were tables, there were lights,” they can't tell you what kind of food or go into any kind of details, something is going on.

At the other extreme, if they're too straightforward and logical, they thought it out and it's almost like they've got it all programmed. You also want to listen for changes in the use of pronouns, what I call the use of “weasel words” or “waffle words,” that's usually a good sign.

Last but not least, when they're smiling at odd times, the corners of their mouths go up when it's not something that's funny, there's something going on.

Doug: Those are all very good body cues that people can tune into to check out and see if people are lying. Are there any techniques that you recommend when somebody is lying to, not so much confront them on that, but to get them to stop lying?

Jeff: To be able to stop them, I don't know of anything that stops them right away. Some people are habitual liars. What you can do is to put some speed bumps in the way. If you can slow them down and slow the lying down, when it's slowed, you're going to be able to catch more things and catch them in the lie.

As long as they're going fast and thinking fast, it's hard to catch them. Some of the ways to go ahead and slow them down are things like using open-ended questions. These are going to be your questions that you can ask them that they cannot answer with yes or no responses. Yes or no type questions are a sure way to get them off the hook very quickly.

The second thing is to be comfortable with silence. Many times, the liars are able to get away with stuff because the spouse gets uncomfortable with the silence and they feel like they have to speak up and fill that space. You've got to get used to allow the silence to be there.

Number three: don't accept evasions. When you're asking them the question, if they don't answer the question, it's an evasion. You want to come back and make sure that they answer the question.

Number four: use the phrase "and" a lot. They start getting into their responses "and, and." They typically fill in the gaps at the point.

The last one seems simple. Many people get tripped up on this. Listen to what they're saying before you jump to the next question. Sometimes even the spouse that's questioning the liar, in their mind, they have this program. "This is what I'm going to ask them." A, B, C, X, Y, Z. They get so caught up in that, that becomes more important than actually stopping and listening to what the person is saying.

Doug: The one that you said about being silent, I just wanted to throw in something there. I've been in sales for pretty much my entire career since getting out of college, and one of the sales training techniques they tell you, in a sales situation for instance, the first one that talks loses. That's a common phrase that they say.

So I can see where it's painful for a lot of people to sit there and be quiet and not be the first to talk. Like the saying goes, as soon as someone says something, they

typically are the loser. In the sales situation, that means they're going to buy. In other words, I can see where silence is an important thing.

One question I had: should anybody become confrontational if you suspect somebody is lying? Say, "Hey, I know you're lying; stop it." Does that sort of thing work?

Jeff: They need to be called on it, because the liars many times when no one says anything, in the back of their mind, they're thinking, "They believed it," and they go onto the next one. Unfortunately, the liars are not only trying to convince you of their lies, in many cases, they believe it themselves.

With the confrontation, it's very important for it to be a confrontation as opposed to an accusation or an attack. So many times, couples get tripped up on that and they start laying in and attacking their spouse when they need to be confronting and getting specific as to what they're confronting them about.

If you're going to confront them about the lying, keep it to the lying. Don't try to spill over into other areas.

Doug: Gotcha. Thank you for that, Jeff. Moving along here, Linda, I wanted to ask you about signs of the affair and touch on that a little bit. This is kind of odd asking you questions about me, but I guess that's the way we have to do it here. What were some of the signs that you saw in me that told you that my emotional affair was still going on?

Linda: I think one of the first one was unwillingness to share all your information with me. You didn't want me to see the phone logs; you wouldn't give me the passwords. You were very defensive about what I would ask; you would throw it back at me that I didn't trust you.

Another one was blame. You would really point out my thoughts, tell me everything that I was doing wrong.

Doug: Did you think that was a way for me to deflect the situation a little bit or what?

Linda: Yes, to take the focus off of you and put it on me. I would worry more about the things that were wrong with me rather than looking at the issue at hand. Was it?

Doug: I believe so, yeah.

Linda: The reluctance to work on our marriage. You know I got every book and read everything, threw books at you and you didn't want to read anything, you didn't want to do many of the things I suggested.

And I think your inconsistent behavior. On the weekends, we'd have a great time, you'd be very attentive. Then during the weekday when you would see her, you would be distant, more critical. It just really added up to the point where I knew that things weren't right, that something was going on. I was trying to do everything I could to save our marriage, and it just wasn't working the way it should.

Doug: So that cued you in that something was still going on at that point in time then.

Linda: That's when I kept pressing you, kept asking almost every day.

Doug: Indeed. Jeff, are there any other additional signs that you would suggest that people might look at or anything that you can add to that?

Jeff: Linda is definitely very perceptive. She picks up on a lot of things. Many times, when the wives, or the husbands, depending on how things are going, when all that blaming comes on, they start wanting to believe the blame and it creates a mess.

Some of the signs that I've seen, if I put it real simply, it's going to be hiding, changes, and hygiene. By hiding, some of the things like hiding the cell phones, hiding any kind of charge records, being very protective of the email and email accounts. Of course, when they're hiding, that tells you right off the bat there's not much trust going on in the relationship.

Then with changes, if you see changes in terms of getting calls and text messages at times that they usually don't get them. Of course, if they're hiding them, that's a double whammy there. Changes in their musical taste, changes in their sexual

behavior. If they start asking for things clear out of the blue, you go, “Where is that coming from?” That’s a sign something is going on.

In terms of hygiene, what I’m referring to there is if they start suddenly wanting to take better care of themselves. If you have a husband that previous to this hardly ever did the laundry, and all of a sudden, he’s got this desire to want to get his clothes washed right when he comes home from trips and a sudden interest in getting the laundry done, and getting it done very quickly.

Starting to be real interested in how they look, not only what kind of physical shape they’re in, but also in terms of how they wear their hair and changes in their hairstyle.

Another one that people usually don’t pay attention to is smell, because with the changes in hygiene a lot of times you’ll notice changes in their aftershave or perfume; things such as that. Many times, the lover will want to change the cheater in terms of how they smell, how they dress, how they appear. If you start seeing these things, that’s another one of those flashing yellow warning lights. Much like Linda, have your eyes open and just pay attention. Don’t assume that you’re going crazy.

Doug: And I know that there’s been books that are written just on these signs. I know there’s one author that has like 829 telltale signs or something like that. It can get into a lot more things like financial signs, credit card bills, all sorts of things that people should be aware of when they see these things happening.

I’m sure Linda saw a few of those with me. I don’t think I ever put my cell phone down, texting all the time. If I was on the phone, if we were out somewhere and I got a call or a text, I would walk away for some privacy and talk that way. There are a lot of things like that people should be looking for.

What should a betrayed spouse do when faced with the appearances of these signs? How should they approach that?

Jeff: First, to not fall for the assumption that something is wrong with them or that they’re going crazy.

Doug: Be paranoid, in other words.

Jeff: Yeah. The way I like to put it: I usually tell them to trust their gut. A lot of times what happens is they get so caught up in the signs, they quit trusting their own gut. It's almost like the cheater will tell them a particular storyline and deep down inside they suspect something different and they have learned not to trust their gut. To undo this, they've got to get back to the point of trusting their gut.

Sometimes people do hide their email messages and so forth, especially around the holidays because they're getting gifts for their spouses and things such as that. But there's a whole different feel to it when it's doing something to surprise their spouse as opposed to the keeping of secrets like hiding an affair. The best way to do it is trusting your gut. When things don't feel right, then you need to go ahead and take action.

Also, when there's evidence there in front of you that can't be denied, then you need to do something about it.

Doug: Do you recommend people spy, get computer monitoring stuff and all that sort of thing?

Jeff: Spying is a two-edged sword. It all depends on the situation. The thing with spying is it is going to affect the trust in the marriage, even after the affair is found out, because a lot of times when the spying goes down whether it be spying through the telephone or I've had some people that put the GPS trackers on the cars. Those end up being very serious areas of contention.

I realize what the cheater a lot of times they'll latch into those types of things and make a mountain out of those to avoid dealing with the affair. If you realize that's the game going on, then you can avoid getting caught up in it.

It all depends on the situation. I wish I could give you one clear-cut answer. But before you go into the spying, approach it with caution. Also, bear in mind that private investigators, they can turn up information, but they're always going to put a spin on it where it looks the worst because that's their business. The thing is when you start spying and finding information, there never seems to be enough. We get caught up in this voyeuristic thing where we want more and more and more, and it's never enough.

Doug: Interesting.

Linda: Can I add a couple of things on that too?

Doug: Sure.

Linda: One thing about finding out, I think a lot of us go into denial because of fear. We know it's in front of us, we know that something is going on but we don't want to confront it because we don't know what we're going to do about it. I think there's probably, for most of us, a period of time where we suspected things were happening but we chose not to see them, even though our gut was telling.

For myself, I didn't know what I would do. My heart told me if I caught Doug cheating, I would leave him. But when you're faced with it, then there's a whole decision that needs to be made. So I think the easiest thing at that time was just to pretend it wasn't happening.

Jeff: And a lot of people live in that kind of la-la land. They know the affair, but they don't want to admit the affair.

Linda: Right. And another thing about the spying is that the information will haunt you. I know you want to know everything, but you really, in the long run, it's not beneficial for you to know every conversation, every place they went because that will always be with you. So you have to really think about it before you decide to do things like that.

Jeff: I can't tell you how many couples I have told them, "Don't ask for too many details," because when you get all those details, it creates such a vivid word picture, you can't put it back in your mind.

Linda: It's hard to let go of.

Jeff: Right.

Doug: Did you have anything else to add there, Jeff?

Jeff: Not right offhand.

Doug: I know we touched on a couple of real brief moments here about confrontation. I wanted to touch on that a little bit more here. I know that there are basically a couple of areas of confrontation that needs to be addressed. The first is

confronting your spouse about your suspecting their having an affair, and then that of confronting the other person.

I know many of you who are regular readers to our blog are aware that Linda chose not to confront the other person in our case for a variety of reasons. Linda, can you just briefly touch on some of the reasons why you decided not to confront?

Linda: I think the first one was fear. I was afraid of what I would find out. I didn't want all the details from her. I didn't want her to tell me that you loved her and the things that you did. I was afraid if I did talk to her, that would happen.

I wanted to hear it all from you. I didn't want to involve her in our situation anymore. It was between you and I. Bringing her into it just gave her more fuel, so I decided that wasn't the best thing for me.

And my personality style, I'm not a person for confrontation. I don't think I could've done it. There were several reasons, and I chose not to.

Doug: As I said, I think most experts will agree that it tends to give the other person a lot more power within the relationship that way as well. At least in an emotional affair, my understanding is that it's probably not a good thing to do.

But I'm certain that there are some situations with other types of affairs that it might make sense to confront the other person.

Jeff, do you have any thoughts on that where there might be some instances where that would be a good idea?

Jeff: In family therapy, there are two schools of thought. There are some that believe that you can go ahead and confront the lover and turn that situation around where you team up with the lover against the spouse in order to stop a lot of their game play.

This is very similar to doing an intervention with an alcoholic. It can be done, but it requires a lot of social skills, a level of sophistication that many people don't have. For that reason, I typically advise them not to confront the lover, because in confronting the lover, you literally are bringing them into your emotional bedroom. You're bringing them into your life, you're giving them more power than they

need to. The real issue is between you and the cheater. Their choice of going outside of the marriage to confront the other person about it is not always good.

The one exception to that I would see would be if that lover had seduced the spouse. For instance, maybe slid something into their drink and took advantage of them – one of those types of situations. In that case, the cheater is caught up being more of a victim than anything else. That's one where it would work.

But if it's one where the lover and the cheater have been mutually going into it, it's not beneficial.

Doug: I see. Well, not to mention also that there can be some physical dangers that could always come about too when you talk about confronting; physical violence or other types of things which you should be concerned about.

I would suggest that in any situation if you're considering confronting the other person to really think it through very seriously before you do it. Think about any and all consequences that could come out of it. Obviously, every situation is different, but certainly I would do that before I did anything.

Moving along to the confronting your spouse when you suspect them of cheating. When should you confront them? Why don't you start with that question before I go onto the next one, Jeff.

Jeff: Okay. When to confront them, like I said earlier, when your gut tells you to and when the evidence cannot be denied. When it's so blatantly there, you need to confront it.

I'm glad you brought that up about the danger. Of course, you need to put safety first. If your spouse is the type that in confronting them, they're likely to become violent towards you or toward the children, then confrontation needs to be handled a whole different way. In those cases, you may need to find a place to get safe before you confront.

It all depends on the violence factor, because when you are dealing with affairs and you throw in confrontation, there's always the possibility of violence. If you went ahead and looked at the crime statistics, the number of people that are shot by a

spouse because of an affair or the lover is much greater than just the regular public that has no relation with you.

Many times, with affairs, because Hollywood makes it look so glorious and wonderful and lots of fun, people forget that it is life-threatening and people die because of affairs.

Doug: I think a lot of people, because it's such an emotionally-charged situation, they tend to react in a kneejerk fashion and really don't think things through. Certainly that's something that they probably aren't thinking about. Again, I just think it's very important for people to really think things through before they act in any way.

So how do you suggest that someone goes about confronting their spouse then if that's what they decide they need to do?

Jeff: This is putting it real general, but confront with what you have and not with what you suspect. What I mean by that, if they've been keeping a lot of late hours, you confront them on that thing. "Honey, you've been staying away from the home a lot. What's going on with that?" Don't automatically jump and make the accusation of the affair.

If you're finding some unusual numbers on their phone, ask them about those unusual numbers. "Who are these women that are calling you?" "Who are these men that are calling you at work and coming by?"

If what you have is emotional distance where they are pulling away from you. For instance, Linda noticed the inconsistent behavior, that's one of those things that "Honey, on the weekends, you're close to me, but during the week, you're far away from me. What's going on with that?"

I would start with going ahead and confronting the tangibles in terms of what you have as opposed to what you suspect, because if you come to them and immediately hit them with, "I think you're having an affair," you're definitely going to have a fight over that.

But if you go ahead and you present them with what you have the evidence of, give them a chance to explain it and start talking about what that evidence may mean.

What does it mean with all these men or women calling you? What does it mean that you're staying out? What does it mean that you're pulling away from me? See what they come up with.

Doug: It comes off as not so confrontational as well. It's more like a discussion.

Linda: If you are discussing a certain matter like the phone calls or so forth, stick with that. Do not let them divert your attention to anything that you have done wrong or their feelings, because when I confronted Doug with the phone numbers, he totally went away from that and started talking about how we had grown apart and so forth. It diverted my attention from what I was really trying to confront him with.

Doug: And it gave you a good clue of what was going on at that point too, didn't it?

Linda: No, I started to focus on everything else rather than the phone calls, where I should've stuck with that, tried to get you to talk about why you had so many phone calls from that certain person. Instead, my attention was diverted to things that I wasn't doing or our feelings for each other. Does that make sense?

Jeff: That makes plenty of sense.

Linda: I said if you're going to confront them, stick with the facts and let them answer those facts and don't allow them to go off on something else.

Jeff: Because they tend to be experts at distracting.

Linda: And manip... Yes.

Doug: Were you going to say manipulating there, Linda?

Linda: I was going to, yes.

[laughter]

Doug: I was going to ask about when someone should make the decision not to confront. Based on your response, Jeff, would I assume then if you don't have any facts or you're guessing then maybe you should just wait until you have more evidence or what?

Jeff: You confront with what you have. If the only evidence you have is that they're emotionally distant from you, talk about that. If all you have is they've made some unusual requests of you lately, say, "This is out of the pattern, this is unusual that you're doing this," you stick with that.

There will always be some other signs, because with affairs, there are always a multitude of signs. There's not just one or two.

Doug: I see. Linda, any more thoughts on that?

Linda: I think initially you don't see the signs, but once it happens, it's like it all just floods back. "Oh yeah, I remember watching him do this. I remember the time...." It all just becomes very clear. All the signs do. But it just takes that realization that's happening before you remember all the things. It's sort of like it was your gut, but you weren't going to act on it. It all just comes like a movie. It all comes circling back to you after you really understand what happened.

Doug: Like several months down the road, you can kind of piece things together and it all makes more sense at that point. Is that right?

Linda: Yes. All the signs were there. You just ignored them, or you were too busy to think about them or you were just in denial.

Doug: Good. Switching gears just a little bit here. We're obviously getting into the holiday season. I've even already done some of my Christmas shopping, which is about three weeks earlier than I normally do.

Jeff, can you tell us just a little bit about what some of the risk factors for affairs that specifically exist during the holidays? I know there are some unique situations that you've run across in the past.

Jeff: Right. With the holidays, people enter the holidays and there's a lot more emotional vulnerability, because just given the families that we all grow up in, there's a lot of emotional baggage. With that heightened vulnerability, you're at higher risk for affairs, because with your emotions running high, you're more vulnerable to people making advances to you, you're more vulnerable to taking risk, you can find yourself getting caught up in things that you didn't plan on getting caught up in.

There's also an increase in the amount of alcohol and drug use. With that increase in alcohol and drug use, people start doing other things. When they tend to lose a lot of control with the alcohol and drugs, they tend to lose a lot of self-control in the areas of their sexual behavior and their relationship boundaries as well.

Also, there's an increase in office parties. I know in some communities when there's an office party, it's almost like a free for all. Although it's not often talked about these days, some businesses and some people in lines of work where there literally are an office wife or an office husband that they have and these office parties give them a chance to party-hardy with their office wife or office husband, or hit on some of the young secretaries or the secretaries hit on them. They're going to be at risk, especially when you start combining the parties with the alcohol.

You also have changes in routines, because with people doing the shopping and so forth, they're staying out later and they're keeping later hours. So the cheaters will take advantage of this because they can hide a lot of their activities.

Now bear in mind that the lover is also going to have a lot of emotional needs and they're going to want more out of the cheater during this time also, because they want their share of loving too.

There's also much higher stress, and some people when they're stressed, they resort to affairs as a way of dealing with stress.

Another factor that people don't often think about, but it's definitely a big one, is the increase in spending money. We all know that we do tend to spend more money during the holidays, but with that spending of money, it can start a domino effect with losing impulse control and other areas as well. What start as a spending spree may end up you just start giving into all sorts of things, especially with sexual antics. It's almost like once they start giving into their urges, it's hard to say no and it's hard to stop.

Doug: You were kind of dealing specifically there with people in risk of having affairs themselves. How can someone who either suspects their spouse of an affair or already knows about, are there ways that they can minimize these risks in any way?

Jeff: Of course. People don't always want to do these things, because I know as a counselor, it blows my mind when I start talking to people about preventing affairs, they're not interested. It's almost like they want to clean up the mess after it happens. They would rather do the stuff on the backend rather than the front end. But yes, there are things that you can do on the front end.

What these are:

Reduce the risk. This may mean cutting down on the alcohol use at the parties, cutting down on vulnerable situations. If there's an attractive person at the office and they ask you out to lunch during this high-stress time, if it's just going to be you and them, you may have to say no and avoid that situation because it's going to be way too risky for you.

Another thing that you want to do is when you are stressed to talk to your spouse about it rather than talking to other people. A lot of times during the holidays when there's a lot going on, it's much easier, at least you think, to go ahead and talk to somebody at the office or talk to the neighbor across the street.

What starts off as a simple conversation starts spreading into more and more emotional engagement and it could spill into an affair when you never intended for it to. So when you're stressed out, talk to your spouse rather than others.

This one is relatively simple, but practice self-care; things like getting enough rest, eating right, getting exercise. This will help not only reduce your stress but also reduce the likelihood that you're going to fall into some problems, some situations that will get you more vulnerable to an affair.

The next item is more of an attitudinal one, and that is to be thankful. I mention that because when people are not thankful for how things are going and they have a lot of resentment or a lot of unhappiness, they're much more vulnerable to falling into an affair or somebody putting them in a situation where they can emotionally exploit them.

When you're thankful and you're talking to your spouse, it's almost like you've shut the doors and windows where a lot of these risks can get in.

The last one is to have realistic expectations. Several years ago I wrote an article called “Don’t Invite the Ham Family for Christmas.” In this article, I talked about how many times we tend to have this Norman Rockwell picture of having all the family around the table on the holidays in carving up the holiday ham. We actually expect every holiday get-together to be like that, and those unrealistic expectations can set us up for problems; either set us up for the fantasies that, “Gee, my real life I’m not having a lot of fun with, but this fantasy woman or fantasy man, I can have this ham family.” You’ve got to throw that away.

Likewise, the whole idea of when your family is not this ideal situation, it’s going to create a lot more stress. In modern culture, you see the equivalent of this with Clark Griswold with National Lampoon Christmas Vacation. He wants this elaborate Christmas, and nothing ever works out that way.

But many times, people are like that. They have these unrealistic expectations about how their wife is supposed to respond them, how their husband is supposed to respond to them and when it doesn’t happen, they have problems. So learning to be thankful, learning to be realistic, those will go a long way.

Doug: That all makes sense. Linda, do you have anything to throw in there?

Linda: In the wavelength of being thankful, on the way here I was thinking a change in us is that we see now the good in each other. Everything that we do for each other, it just really helps our relationship.

Instead of focusing on what we’re not doing, we focus on everything that we do to make each other happy. I think that makes a big difference. Don’t you agree?

Doug: Yes, I do honey. I do agree with that. Just by keeping my mind more on the family and more on you and everything like that by realizing what we do have together, it makes all the difference in the world. There’s no doubt about it.

Jeff, anything else?

Jeff: Those are main ones. And if you do tend to be a person that tends to get into a lot of parties, go careful. You’ve got to be open to the idea that if you’re a person who tends to drink too much, take your spouse with you to make sure that you

don't get carried away and it will keep you from getting into some of those situations.

Doug: So basically, the primary thing is just to know your boundaries, stay within those boundaries and be honest about doing it.

Jeff: Right.

Doug: Another holiday biggie that we've certainly experienced in the past, and I know that a lot of our readers on the blog experience these all the time and that is the triggers; triggers of past pain, especially around the holiday. They seem to be a little bit more intense I would think, at least the emotions behind them.

Linda, can you go ahead and give us maybe a few examples of how you experienced these emotional upheavals, as I call them, as a result of these triggers, especially now that the holidays are upon us?

Linda: I guess for me, because the holidays are so defined and they're so important to family and to me, I know what we were doing on Christmas two years ago and I know what I was doing two days before Christmas. For me, to realize that you were on the phone with her or Christmas Eve talking to her where your mind should've been with your family and with me.

So last year's Christmas was really difficult because I realized that you weren't with us two years ago. Your mind was somewhere else. Your heart was somewhere else. So last year, I had a really difficult time and I think you wrote about the day after Christmas, I stayed in bed all day. I cried because it was just so hard to realize that I had lost a Christmas with you because of the affair.

This year, I think I will be much better, but it's stupid things that trigger emotions. Like Thanksgiving, it was a ping-pong game for us. I don't want to go into a lot of details if we don't have time, but I spent all night crying because of a ping-pong game that reminded me of something two years ago.

It's not anything that's insignificant. If you're recovering from an affair, your partner needs to be aware that it may seem really stupid to them, but it's very important to the person who was betrayed that you acknowledge their pain, that

you reassure them and you help them through that rather than saying that they're silly or this is stupid after two years. You need to really be there for them.

Doug: Other than getting emotional and things like that, what do you do or how do you handle these triggers when they come about? I know that we typically have a discussion about them in some way, but is there any way that you can think of that you either avoid them or change and try to think of something more pleasant? What exactly do you do when you're faced with a trigger?

Linda: I try to ask myself, "Is this really worth getting upset over? Is it going to affect my happiness?" Before we went away for the weekend, I had terrible triggers. I thought, "Am I going to ruin our weekend because something is bothering me?"

I wanted to have a wonderful weekend with you, but if I continue thinking about these triggers, I'm not going to be happy; we're not going to be happy together. So what am I getting from this? If I want more attention from you, is that why I have the triggers? I will get it from being me and enjoying our time rather than bringing things like this up.

I guess I just talk to myself in my head and try to figure out why I'm doing it, what am I insecure about and I try to ask you or tell you I'm insecure right now about something and try to talk to you about it.

Doug: I think that takes a lot of discipline to be able to do that. A lot of people tend to react emotionally right off the bat and can't do that. I think you might be unique in that you can do something like that. What do you attribute that to? Is it because you just know the dynamics of this so much and you've studied it? How do you know that?

Linda: I think it's been time, don't you? I think my triggers have really decreased and just a lot of the reading I've done. I'm making a choice. Am I going to choose to be happy or am I going to keep the affair constantly in our life?

So every time something comes up, I have to do a mental talk with myself. Do I want to keep this in my life or do I want to move on? It's a struggle. It's a daily struggle that I think you just have to make a choice at one time. I just think time

and your help has really been beneficial. The way you deal with my triggers has really helped me to decrease them and to put them more into perspective.

Doug: And how exactly do I do that?

Linda: You affirm that I'm not crazy that I have these; it's okay, that my feelings are real. That's the most important thing to me is that you realize that I am hurt, and you will listen to me and you comfort me and you reassure me.

About a year ago, you might get angry because you didn't really want to bring it up. For me, that was really difficult. It just told me that you didn't care about my feelings.

But now that you stop and listen and you comfort me, they're over much more quickly, much more faster and I just handle them better. I really think it's because of the way you handle them.

Doug: That's good. I was going to buy a ping-pong table for Christmas, but you can forget that from happening. That's for sure.

Linda: As long as I win, I don't care.

Doug: Well, that's not ever going to happen. Jeff, any suggestions that you could help Linda and our listeners as far as overcoming these triggers or at least managing them more effectively?

Jeff: Yes, I've got some things. I'm going to go ahead and expand because it's not just triggers for the spouse that has reminders about the affair. There are also those people that might be the cheater, and as the holidays come around, they're faced with triggers where they want to jump back into the affair situation and they're struggling with that.

It may be triggers, not necessarily that draw you into the affair, it might be triggers where you have these fantasies of wanting to hurt the cheater. There could also be triggers of violence.

The holidays pose a special problem because we bring into the holidays, it's almost like we bring in a whole set of Louis Vuitton luggage of family issues into holidays

because families are such a big part of the holidays. With that being said on luggage, there's lots of triggers. It's just affairs make them a lot more complicated.

The triggers, they can either be based on fantasy or they can be based on real things. In some cases, it can be something as concrete as a ping-pong table. The trigger could be certain Christmas songs. The trigger could be certain smells. It could be certain Christmas foods. It could be a particular song.

There's also those fantasy triggers. It may be nothing that anybody is saying; it's just something that you imagine in your head. The reaction, once it kicks in, is still very real and still has to be dealt with.

With each of these, of course the first step is going to be to be able to identify the trigger. Stepping into the holidays without knowing your triggers are like stepping into a minefield. Many times, people will feel like they're going crazy because they have all these emotional upheavals and they're not sure, "Why did this suddenly hit me? Why are these thoughts suddenly bothering me? Why did my mood suddenly change?" It's most likely some triggers going on there.

Once you identify the triggers, then you can take steps to change them. Some of the things that you need to change – at first, you may have to just make small changes, and later on can make the big, radical changes.

Some of the changes would be to change your reaction to the trigger, because once you know what it is that sets you off whether it be a particular type of day, that song, somebody's perfume or whatever, to start changing your reaction to it and consciously make those changes.

It may need to consist of changing the timing. If you're at the office and you're walking by somebody, and all of a sudden, you have a smell that sets a trigger, you may have to give yourself a permission not to react right then and there but give yourself time to get to the bathroom or get to another place and then have your reaction and start dealing with it. So changing the timing.

You can change the intensity of the reaction. You can also work on changing the direction of the reaction. There are tools that you can take. I wish I had time to get into this more right now. But these are some of the things that you can change about reactions.

To put it simply, you've got to work consciously once you know what they are on changing your playgrounds, your playmates, and your play toys. When I'm talking to people, I often use the term ghost, that to resurrect these ghosts, you've got to take steps to getting rid of the ghost of Christmas past.

Whether or not it was a real affair or one that you fantasized about the affair. Maybe in Linda's case where you're remembering an affair that happened two years ago, it might even be longer than that, but the triggers are real. Once they're validated, many times they go away, but you have to know what they are.

We'll give some ways to go ahead and start dealing with them. What I'm hoping, because I do plan on spending some more time on triggers in the upcoming affair recovery group. Some of the things that we talked about this evening, I hope to go more into detail why some of those signs are indicative of lying or what to look for when an affair is still going on, how to respond to each one of these, dealing with all those confrontational issues as well as triggers. I know triggers are a big one.

Doug: I think it's a subject we could talk a long, long time about. That's for sure. I know we mentioned it many times on the blog. There are comments and emails constantly that we get about it. It's a big thing. It's certainly something that we can spend some more time on later during the group, like you said.

Jeff, I don't know, we're getting towards the end here. Are there any questions or anything out there?

Jeff: We had a couple that came in. One out of Tennessee. They report that they feel anxious about confronting if the evidence they had was obtained by snooping, because their spouse would get mad at the invasion of privacy.

In dealing with this one as a counselor, since affairs do not consist of just one sign, I would be on the lookout to see if there are other signs so that you don't get that accusation of snooping. You may have to go with soft signs like feeling like your husband has pulled away from you or feel like he has changed the way that he talks to you; things such of that if you have a lack of a hard sign.

Is there anything that you want to add to that, Linda?

Linda: Not at the moment. I'm sorry.

Doug: She wasn't a snooper or anything like that. But I guess from my perspective looking back two years ago, if she would've come to me with some sort of evidence that she had discovered the affair based on snooping or whatever, I certainly would've gotten angry.

I think the anger would be more of a deflection than anything else, just probably in anger because I got caught more than anything else. That anger might be there temporarily, but I think that once I would've fessed up to it and talked about it more or whatever, the anger would've gone away. That's probably pretty much all I have to say about that, but I think that's probably what would happen.

Linda: And it did, because I did catch you texting and I confronted you. You did become very angry that I didn't trust you and so forth. At the time, I was trying to be a good wife and save my marriage. The last thing I wanted to do was make him angry, so I let it go.

I really highly suggest that you, as I said before, focus on what you're talking about. Show them the evidence rather than letting them divert your attention to putting it back on you, that you don't trust them or so forth. I think we said a person has nothing to hide. If they're hiding something or being secretive, then they're not being honest.

Jeff: Yeah. And I would add that in 90% of the cases where people get real angry, the anger is a secondary emotion. There's some trigger behind it and that trigger is what really needs to be dealt with. So many times people get caught up in the anger and not dealing with either the shame, or the embarrassment or just the sheer shock of being found out. It's almost like it sends a cold shiver down your backbone when you're caught. [gasps] "Oh, my gosh!"

Doug: Your heart stops is what happens.

Jeff: Oh, yeah. That too.

Doug: I had a mini-stroke.

Jeff: I know we're running out of time, and I want to get to this other question before we wrap up and talk about the affair recovery group. We have another comment coming in from Maryland. They said, "I have terrible triggers and need

help. I have not spoken to the AP for one year and nine months. But I work with him every day so I see him about three minutes or so. My stomach does somersaults and I feel tormented and a lot of shame. I'm with my husband and family, but I can't stop those triggers from taking over my brain."

Doug, do you have anything to add to that one or in response to how to deal with those triggers at work?

Doug: Yes and no. I really didn't have that issue as far as triggers go so much because I'm removed from that situation. I don't work with the affair partner anymore, so it's a little bit easier for me in my circumstance.

But I would certainly suspect if I still worked with her, it would probably be different I would think in a lot of cases. I think the key is, and there are a lot of experts that would agree, that somehow – and I know it's difficult – but you have to remove yourself from that situation any way you can, even so much as to quit your job, I guess. I hate to recommend that to anybody, but if the triggers are that bad, that may be the last resort. Otherwise, perhaps, there are ways you can have your boss – tell them the situation and try to get it to where you don't have contact with that person; that sort of thing.

One of our readers had that exact same situation and they were able to discuss it with their employer and they developed a situation where they wouldn't run into the other person.

I could see where that's a tough situation if you see your affair partner like that on a daily basis. It's certainly going to trigger things. That's a tough one.

Jeff: Yeah, that's a tough one. Trying to get some boundaries in there is key to overcoming that. We're going to need to be winding up this evening, but I do want to tell everyone about the **Affair Recovery Group** that we'll be starting in January.

In those groups, we will be dealing with a lot of these topics in much more depth because so many times with webinars like this, you don't have the time to go into the kind of depth that you want and people are hurting. They want to know how to take it and apply it in their specific situation.

With what these groups have to offer, we're going to be taking them step-by-step through the affair recovery. With these educational groups, the leaders – Doug, Linda, and myself – are experienced and we've got practical answers in terms of dealing with affairs.

It also provides a safe place in the safety of their own home to work on an affair. I know some people don't get the help they need because they're afraid of going to a counselor's office or getting out in public with it. This will offer them a way to go ahead and deal with it and start getting the help that they need there within their own home.

My understanding, sign up for the **Affair Recovery Group**, which there will be a charge for. It's affairrecoverygroup.com/membership. Is that correct, Doug?

Doug: Yeah. That's the website that I put together where it just kind of describes the group in a little bit greater detail. There is a special enrollment that we're offering to the people just who have registered for this particular call. We wanted to give you first opportunity.

In this type of program, we can only handle so many people in the membership. It's impossible to be able to provide good service, if you will, to thousands of people. We're going to have to limit it to the first 100 people.

But for those that are on this call or who have registered for the call and couldn't make it, it's going to be just \$1.00 for the first month for you to give it a test drive and see if this is something for you.

There are a lot of components to this group. Linda and I have thought about it and thought this would be a great thing to offer people. It's really not anything that's being offered out there that I'm aware of.

So go to that site that we mentioned. Once again, it's affairrecoverygroup.com/membership. Just check it out and see if it's something that you might be interested in. If so, great. If not, that's great too.

That's pretty much all I have. Jeff, anything else?

Jeff: That's it. I hope that you all have a wonderful holiday and our listeners do too. I appreciate each of you being here. It's my hope and prayer that each of you

got what you came for and that you've got some answers and direction in dealing with the situations that you've got.

Doug: I couldn't have said it better, Jeff. Thank you everybody so much. Everybody have a wonderful holiday. We're always there on our blog if you have any comments or want to email us, feel free to do so and we'll respond to those as best we can. Everybody have a great holiday. Take care.

Jeff: We'll talk to you later then. Bye, bye.

Doug: Bye, bye, Jeff. Thank you.