



*The 24 Most Common  
Mistakes Made by the  
Unfaithful Spouse  
after Infidelity*

by  
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Emotional Affair Journey

## **The 24 Most Common Mistakes Made by the Unfaithful Spouse after Infidelity**

*After D-day and beyond, the unfaithful person tends to make a ton of mistakes. Doug sure did. And it's probably safe to say that virtually every one of our unfaithful (and betrayed) blog readers did as well.*

*This guide is simply a listing, if you will, of the myriad of mistakes that we (and many readers) feel we made over the course of our recovery.*

*Please know however, that not all cases are the same and one person's mistake can be another person's success. So, if you have a question as to whether or not a listed mistake is relevant for your situation, put some serious thought into it and look at it from all sides to determine if you need to adjust your actions accordingly.*

*That said, we hope this guide is helpful for you.*

*Best of luck!*

**Linda & Doug**

## The 24 Most Common Mistakes Made by the Unfaithful Spouse

**Failure to end the affair permanently.** You probably have to put this as the number one most disastrous mistake. Unfortunately, it's a mistake that all too many cheaters continue to make. There really isn't a whole lot to say about this other than ending the affair and any contact with the affair partner is a necessity if there is to be any chance for saving the marriage. There can be no recovery and healing otherwise. Any continued "fence sitting" must stop.

**Thinking that since the affair ended that it is really over for good.** Just because one of the affair partners decides to end the affair doesn't mean that the other person (or both) will honor that decision. Affairs typically have an "on again, off again" nature to them. Temptations abound for both affair partners and when one is tempted they must be strong enough to refuse contact.

**Being abusive, violent or threatening in any manner.** We're not sure we really need to say much more than that as it would appear obvious that these things shouldn't happen. The fact of the matter though is that affairs can be life or death situations sometimes. The discovery of infidelity causes extreme emotions and it's important for both parties to be in control of their responses to these emotions so that things do not get out of hand.

**Continued lying.** No question this is a biggie. Affairs are all about secrets and lies and most cheaters will lie even in the face of damning evidence. Until they stop lying, the betrayed spouse will not feel safe enough to trust again at any level. And it's not just about affair related matters either. Lying about *anything* – even seemingly harmless little white lies only reinforces the belief by the betrayed spouse that the cheater cannot be trusted.

**Only divulging information in bits and pieces, or "trickle truth."** Holding back or spinning the truth in various ways can be extremely damaging and only causes the recovery and healing process to be prolonged. Again, it's a trust thing, and trickle truth only serves to delay the trust building process. Additionally, divulging new information or details sends the betrayed spouse back to square one and can be similar to a new D-day.

**Thinking that saying “You can trust me” is enough.** The unfaithful partner has to show their spouse through their actions that they deserve to be trusted. Words are pretty much meaningless initially. The cheater needs to be consistent in what they do and say and follow through on things as they said they would. Until the unfaithful is acting consistently in a remorseful, loving and trusting manner, there is no way trust can be reestablished. We should also mention that getting upset because the betrayed does not trust them - when it hasn't been earned yet - is also a huge mistake.

**Being defensive.** This can actually cover a wide range of scenarios. It can range from being defensive about and/or minimizing their behavior, being defensive about divulging the affair details, being defensive about the excuses for the affair, etc. Nobody enjoys admitting when they're wrong, and most people don't want to look weak, but when one is caught after an affair, he/she needs to take personal responsibility for what they've done, be accountable and vow to search for the answers as to why they did what they did. There should be no excuses.

**Blaming the betrayed spouse for the affair.** This kind of goes along with being defensive but it should be added that even though there might be some truth that the betrayed spouse may have some responsibility towards any previous relationship shortcomings, they were not to blame for the affair. The cheater cannot try to inject blame and needs to give their spouse time to recover before addressing any issues in the marriage.

**Failure to Remove the Excuses.** Hopefully, the cheater will someday realize what really got them into trouble in the first place. Until the unfaithful spouse confronts the excuses that made it OK to have an affair, they haven't yet learned from their mistakes. Instead, they must be rid of any excuses for they were what caused them to take wrongful and hurtful actions, abandon their integrity and lose their partners trust and respect.

**Defending the affair partner.** The betrayed spouse may say some pretty harsh things about the other person. Some of that might be inaccurate while some might be spot on. Regardless, one of the worst things a cheater can do is defend their affair partner as it will appear that they are more loyal to the affair partner than to their spouse and to their marriage.

**Pointing out their spouse's deficiencies.** Every marriage on the planet has issues or problems at some point and typically both parties share the responsibility for those problems. There will be plenty of time to work on them after the crisis of infidelity has been controlled. It's best to regain some stability before working on the marital issues.

**Not showing remorse.** Not expressing remorse is a failure to take responsibility for what was done. An affair is not something that can just be swept under the rug. Many of our readers have stated that the biggest factor in their decision to stay in the marriage was their spouse's genuine show of remorse. If recovery takes making a list of every transgression that occurred during the affair and offering a sincere apology and show of remorse for each, then it needs to be done.

**Continuing selfish behavior.** We all know that having an affair in the first place is an insanely selfish thing to do. Yet even after the affair is discovered and/or ends the selfishness often continues. Some examples are: The unfaithful thinking that everything is about them and how they are hurting, feeling and grieving because they had to end their affair. Or perhaps they have the mindset that they just want to "move on" and thus demand their spouse to just "get over it." Or maybe it's just that they lack compassion and empathy and are unable to see beyond the fantasy world and understand the pain their selfishness has caused. Finally, one of the most damaging acts of selfishness is "fence sitting." The cheater won't make a decision to stay or go, so instead they hold everyone hostage. They want their affair partner and their spouse—the ultimate in having your cake and eating it too! The selfishness must stop!

**Unwillingness to endure the consequences of their actions.** This is where they tell their spouse to "just get over it" or "it's time to move on." It's not wanting to address the issues, answer the questions, tell the truth and put up with any discomfort as a result of their mistakes and choices. Yes, it sucks and it's a long and painful process, but it's time to man up or woman up and face the music and deal with it.

One other aspect of this is that the betrayed spouse may say things in the heat of the moment that they really don't mean. For instance, they could initially say "Get out!" or "I want a divorce." The cheater shouldn't assume that in this highly emotional situation that these statements are necessarily fact. The cheater

should not overreact and might want to accommodate their spouse's wishes at that moment, but they don't necessarily need to assume it's for the long run. The hurt spouse's feelings may change once the emotions die down a bit.

Now this isn't to say that the cheater should ignore or minimize what the betrayed is saying. Rather, they need to affirm that they heard and understood what was said, but they shouldn't necessarily restructure their life based on these emotionally charged statements – especially if it's in the early stages after the affair discovery.

**Lack of awareness or showing sensitivity when their partner suffers from a trigger.** When a betrayed spouse suffers from the effects of a trigger it can be like experiencing D-day all over again. The cheater needs to be sympathetic to these triggers and their effects and also aware of what might cause them. Ideally, the unfaithful should actually be aware of what the triggers are and then anticipate them. For instance, if the betrayed spouse knew much of the affair was conducted in a local hotel, then the cheater should steer clear of that hotel when out driving around together. If the affair was hot and heavy during the holidays, chances are that time of year will be one big trigger, so the cheater needs to be super attentive to their spouse during that time.

**Trying to rush and/or not supporting the recovery process.** The whole recovery process can be quite confusing and frustrating for both partners and typically the betrayed partner takes longer to move past the initial trauma than the cheater. However, all the aspects of healing – forgiveness, trust, etc. should be controlled by the betrayed spouse's watch, not the cheater's. It's the unfaithful person's responsibility to support and respect that timeframe and do what is needed to move the process forward. When it's all said and done, the unfaithful is far better served to support their spouse's recovery as quickly and effectively as possible rather than living for years with a spouse who is frustrated, resentful, angry and hurting.

**Not being totally transparent.** Sure, the cheater needs to show transparency by revealing secret email accounts, passwords, unlocking their cell phones, etc. But being transparent also includes revealing their true emotions and feelings and not keeping them bottled up inside. Transparency is more than not lying or being secretive. It is opening oneself up completely to one's partner. Along with this, it's important that the cheater keep any and all agreements that they've made

with their spouse. If part of the recovery plan is that the cheater will not go to bars after work, then they shouldn't go to bars after work. If it means the cheater has to go to marriage counseling once a week, they better be there.

**Going on as if nothing happened.** Life does not go on as usual after an affair is discovered. Not if recovery and healing is the goal, that is. The cheater will typically need to make big changes in their lifestyle, behavior and character to prove to their spouse that they are taking responsibility for their actions and taking steps to ensure that it never happens again.

**Not giving up control.** During the affair the power to control can be just as exciting as the affair itself. The unfaithful are doing whatever they want to do without anyone intervening and telling them what they should and should not do. When the affair is revealed all of that comes crashing down. Many times they try to hold onto the control/power by refusing to give up the affair but eventually they have to give it up along with their freedom. (surrendering their phone records, etc.). In some respects they also try to maintain that control by becoming angry when questioned or only giving up the information that they feel comfortable disclosing. Blaming their spouse and making the affair partner appear better than they are also means of control/power. By making the betrayed spouse feel bad about themselves or their ability to be a good partner gives them the advantage and the ability to control the situation.

**Not talking and/or answering questions about the affair.** This is another biggie. The betrayed spouse has questions. Lots of questions. Understandably so, by the way. In fact, the same questions might be asked a dozen times or more. It doesn't mean that the betrayed is trying to punish the cheater, though it may seem that way. They simply have to understand what happened and why. The cheater's job then is to oblige their spouse and answer all the questions their spouse needs answered honestly and as calmly as possible. This will only help to move the recovery process along.

**Not acknowledging the depth of the pain that the affair caused.** One common denominator that is the result of infidelity is pain. The pain can be expressed in different ways and it can be responded to in different ways – but it is always there. That pain can be eased if the cheater can get to the point where they too are able to experience the pain with their spouse. Until the cheating spouse gets to this point, the betrayed will often feel the need to be able to ease it somehow

– to escape it. Though it's a natural reaction, we urge you not to do this. Enduring the pain helps the healing process.

**Not educating themselves about affairs and affair relationships.** Though the cheater may feel like educating themselves about this stuff is akin to getting one's teeth pulled, it's important that the unfaithful learn the dynamics of affairs (causes, effects, typical responses, prevention, etc.) and how to recover from them. Doing so will help in the recovery process and can help them understand why they did what they did, and can lead to improvements in their relationships - not only with their spouse, but with their kids, friends, co-workers, etc. as well.

**Refusing to look within.** It's so very important for the unfaithful to figure out why they did what they did. It's OK for them to enlist the help of a therapist, spouse or a friend to help, but they need to look deep within, ask themselves the tough questions and figure it out as soon as possible. What were the real reasons for the affair? Did they need an ego boosting? Did they feel that no one appreciated them? What were their personal issues? Why were they so selfish? True recovery cannot progress until the cheater shifts the focus to themselves - not in a selfish way - but in an introspective manner.

**Demanding Forgiveness.** One shouldn't demand forgiveness. It needs to be asked for. And even then, forgiveness is a gift that the betrayed extends to himself/herself and is a process that takes time to work through. It's far better for the cheater to ask for forgiveness and what they can do to help in that process.

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*We hope that you have found this short guide to be of benefit to you.*

*Thank you once again for allowing us to share our experiences in healing from an affair. We look forward to hearing from you, and wish you the very best that life can offer!*

***Linda & Doug***