The Unfaithful Female – “Maria”
Doug: The first question I’ve been asking of everybody. It’s really just let me know, basically, your story. How did it start? What type of affair was it? How long did it last? Is it still going on? All that kind of stuff. Just go ahead and we’ll go from there.

Maria: It as an affair that started almost two years ago and it ended two months ago. It started, actually, just through our families were friends and did a lot of stuff together. Ironically, his wife had gotten some surgery, a complete hysterectomy, ten years before and she was just really frustrated with never wanting to have sex. In fact, the very first time it was ever suggested was on a drunk night of hers where she encouraged us two to be together because it would relieve stress from her. That is definitely not what she really wanted, but he and I took it from there anyway.

Doug: Okay. So, it lasted about a year and ten months. You said it just ended two months ago. Did you get discovered?

Maria: I did.

Doug: How did things play out?

Maria: We got discovered. Normally, we always met at my house. On this particular day, my 17-year-old was home because of a week off school, so we decided to meet at a parking lot near where I lived. It happened to be in a building that was not rented. It was just one of the things on regular surveillance. A lot of traffic was technically in that parking lot, not my kind of traffic, but sometimes stuff going on.

It just so happened that a sheriff who happens to know my husband came up and saw us talking. He immediately let my husband know.

Doug: Okay. I suppose the affair partner’s wife now knows and everything is out in the open.

Maria: Yeah. Very much so.

Doug: You’re no longer friends at this point in time.

Maria: No, unfortunately. We actually were good friends, so that was a big mistake I made.

Doug: Did you feel that this occurred just out of happenstance or out of they were giving you an opportunity or do you think there were problems in your marriage leading up to it?

Maria: Definitely problems in the marriage. Probably problems for maybe 10 years. We had been married for 24. My husband is a really shitty listener and he made me feel alone a lot.
Doug: When you say he was a shitty listener, do you mean you voiced your unhappiness or displeasure and he just kind of poo-pooed it and didn’t do anything or what?

Maria: No. What I mean by a bad listener, that’s definitely part of it, but he’s the kind of guy where he loves to talk at you, and if, for example, I’m in the middle of a story, he might just get up and walk out of the room and I’ll be like, “Where are you going?” He’ll actually sometimes not even reply. He’ll just leave. Then you’re like, “I was saying something.” He’s like, “Oh, I know, but I’m bored.” When I say a bad listener. He’s actually a really nice guy, but he can really make you feel like crap.

Doug: Almost like ADHD or something like that.

Maria: Yeah, for sure.

Doug: When it was discovered, walk me through what happened after that point as far as how your husband reacted, how you reacted, and what’s transpired since then over the last couple of months.

Maria: The reaction was kind of the biggest surprise for me because I felt like probably for a good 10 or 15 years our relationship was two people on a parallel path that definitely was going in the same direction and everything, but I didn’t feel like we were necessarily connected. I actually really thought that when he found out, he would be very angry and cut me off clean, no real emotion or anything. I was extremely surprised about how completely heartbroken he was. I don’t think he slept for a whole night for about a month-and-a-half. He had all kinds of angry outbursts and sadness and desperation.

I, on the other hand, number one, felt like I had to be the person that was there to try and help him get through it because I realized after I had done it that I had basically caused a complete hurricane of trauma in our house, not necessarily with the kids, but definitely with him. I have a 21-year-old and a 17-year-old.

Doug: They both know?

Maria: Yeah, basically, they do. Not in detail. The therapist told us that it’s better to not give them details, just the basics of we’re working through this or that kind of thing. Acknowledging, but not details.

My response during that first month was just to try and be the healer, which was completely exhausting. I tried to do exactly what I read on different things. I think that kind of emptied me out, though. I ended up being pretty emotionally numb by the end of it all and he was really looking for me to be in love with him again. But, at this point, I don’t even know what I want.
Doug: So, you guys are still working through things at this point. Are you separated or still together?

Maria: Kind of. We are separated. We actually filed for divorce, but I think it was just something that he had done so that he would feel like ... He’s in law enforcement, so he’s very, very controlling and he needs to have timeframes and results. I think that when he filed for divorce, he didn’t necessarily mean it. I think he was putting pressure on me, also giving himself a timeframe to be able to, “In six months, this will be done, and one way or another, I will be okay.” Obviously, we know that’s not true. That’s where that was.

The whole time we have been going to therapy, but he moved out. He didn’t really want to live with me, which was good because he’d wake me up every morning at about 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning to either yell or cry. It would be very, very stressful.

Doug: Okay. That’s understandable, of course. I guess it’s good that you’re still in therapy. At this point, through your therapy, does it seem evident that you’re trying to save the marriage or are you looking more at a way to figure out how to split amicably? What are your thoughts there?

Maria: I would say it’s still on the fence. He has hope. I have hope. I think we have different kinds of hope. I’m hoping that somewhere along the line that something will be revived, but I feel a little less hope every day and I think he does, too.

Doug: Okay. Where do things stand as far as the affair partner? Are you still in contact at all with him? Has he left his wife? What’s going on?

Maria: No. He decided to stay with his wife. He has two younger children. Not younger, but younger than mine. He’s got a 17-year-old and a 14-year-old. I think originally when we were together, we thought that when the kids were out of school, that’s when we would leave our spouses and be together. Just the fact that we were discovered before all that happened, I think that played a big role in us not being together now.

Doug: How does that make you feel? Obviously, that was something you guys discussed and were planning on, which is kind of a common thing. I’m curious. This thing got kind of sabotaged in a way or whatever you want to call it. How did that affect you? What are your thoughts now as far as yours and his relationship potential in the future?

Maria: I think the way that it affected me is it made it much harder to deal with trying to figure out how to reconnect to my husband just because of the fact that I feel like I was also really grieving that old relationship. It’s kind of a weird dynamic because you’re grieving it, but you’re definitely not allowed to say it. At the same time, you’re supposed to be supporting and being there for the person that you destroyed their life unintentionally or surprised.
Doug: Right. Do you feel like you’re still in that kind of grieving mindset right now as far as grieving the relationship with your affair partner?

Maria: I would say I’m still in it, but not in a way of sadness or longing. It’s more like, at this point, I’m pretty much in disgust with myself. Sorry.

Doug: That’s okay. That’s alright.

Maria: In a way, I’m angry, too. I’m guessing that’s all part of the grieving process. I don’t know.

Doug: As far as that aspect of it, do you feel that’s affected things throughout your therapy and things like that? Since you are kind of going through the grieving process, do you think that this is kind of a temporary thing and maybe as you go on things might get better between you and your husband once you get past this?

Maria: I do. I have that hope, but I don’t know. It’s a little bit difficult because my husband actually, at this point, really understands basically what a jerk he was for a long time and he’s trying to fix that and make amends, but obviously part of it is still his personality, so I still see parts of it which make me a little fearful.

My affair partner, he set the bar pretty fricken’ high.

Doug: Did he?

Maria: He was quite a nice, loving, gentle, kind, listening type of person. A lot different than my husband. So, I think that makes recovery a little bit hard, just because of the fact that I have this part of me that is comparing.

Doug: Gotcha. Do you think that that part that you’ve seen of your affair partner is his true self in its entirety or do you think it’s just the way he was around you?

Maria: I think that’s who he was. I probably had known him for maybe ten years before that, and then during our affair, we spent a ridiculous amount of time hanging out together. Probably somewhere around 15-20 hours a week.

Doug: That’s quite a bit.

Maria: It is. More than I spent with my own husband a lot.

Doug: Yeah. Where was his wife during all this? Was she working a lot, too, or was she just oblivious?

Maria: Well, she worked part-time. Just because of the type of work that he has, it’s flexible, so as far as she knew, he was at work.
Doug: Gotcha. Switching gears a little bit, the most often-asked question from husbands whose wife’s had an affair was basically why. How could you betray me? Didn’t you think about me or think about the pain this would cause to me and the kids?

Maria: You don’t. It’s funny because I think that ... I talked to my sister about the affair probably about a month or two before it all ended. She’s a good person to talk to because she’s not judgmental, but she’s very, very open with her opinions. She was pretty much telling me, “When you do this, if this comes to light in any way, a tornado is going to blip through both of your families.” When she told me that, I imagined a light mist, a light rain. I did not understand. I was very naive.

Doug: Well, there’s a certain element of denial in there, too.

Maria: For sure. I really have been surprised about my husband’s reaction. It definitely surprised me. I don’t know. I thought he would be a lot colder and different.

Doug: These are things that we don’t prepare ourselves for.

Maria: No, definitely not.

Doug: As we grow up and go through life, you just never know how these things are going to be taken. I’m sure that’s one lesson that you’ve learned through this whole thing.

Maria: Oh, my God, yes.

Doug: What do you feel that you were getting from the relationship with your affair partner that perhaps your husband wasn’t providing, other than being a good listener?

Maria: Not just being a good listener, but he was very in-tuned. In being a good listener, he would remember things that I had talked about the week earlier and bring them up and check in. Very extremely connected in a way. I went and had a biopsy done last year and my husband never asked about it, didn’t want to go with me. It pissed me off. Of course, my affair partner was e-mailing me that day, “Hey, your biopsy is coming up. What time are you going today? Let me know when it’s done.” Things where you connect with somebody.

Doug: Right. I understand. So, he paid attention to you and he felt generally concerned about you.

Maria: Correct.

Doug: Did you feel that you guys really loved each other?

Maria: I did.

Doug: And during that time, did you feel you loved your husband?
**Maria:** I felt like I loved him, but I didn’t feel like I was in love with him. I don’t think I’ve been in love with him for a long time. That’s been the hardest part, trying to figure out how to get back to that.

**Doug:** So, right now, you kind of feel the same way or do you feel it coming back at all or are you still just not ready for that?

**Maria:** I’m still not ready for that, but I can’t tell you how much I want it. I don’t want to lose my family.

**Doug:** That’s difficult. That’s one of the unintended consequences of these whole things.

**Maria:** Yeah.

**Doug:** Yeah. I felt the same way, too. I’m a pretty big family guy and that was the intense consequence for me or potential consequence.

**Maria:** Yeah. I love our history. I love the idea of us having grandchildren come and visit us. I love our weekends. I really do love ... My husband and I, we have fun together, actually. It’s ironic because we really are good superficial friends.

**Doug:** Gotcha. Okay. Let’s switch gears again just a little bit. You mentioned that your husband, it just really affected him and a lot of pain and all that sort of thing as a result. How is he doing? Do you feel he’s healing some?

**Maria:** I do.

**Doug:** Do you think you have a pretty good understanding of what he’s gone through and what he needs to move on?

**Maria:** Oh, my God, yeah. I think that’s what makes me hate myself is knowing what he’s gone through. I hate that I did that to him. I do feel like he’s getting better, I hope. He goes out a lot. Almost daily he’s finding somebody to do something with. Complete opposite of me. I tend not to leave the house.

He’s pretty busy at work. He’s actually getting back into work. I would say a month ago he was kind of in a walking coma.

**Doug:** Outside of your therapist, does he have somebody that he can talk to and that he’s been sharing his experiences with?

**Maria:** He has his own therapist as well as he has told every single friend that is open to listening our whole entire story. So, I get to wear my red scarlet letter everywhere I go.
Doug: Okay. I’m sure, from the way that you mentioned that, it doesn’t really make you all that thrilled.

Maria: No. I wish he hadn’t told everybody.

Doug: Do you think he did that as a way to punish you or that’s just him?

Maria: No. He just needed to talk to people. He really wasn’t trying to hurt me.

Doug: Do you guys still talk about the affair relationship quite a bit?

Maria: I would say, at this point, we don’t talk about it as much. A lot of times, it can be painful. I felt like that we needed to spend a little more time on just trying to be in the moment where we’re at and maybe enjoying each other’s company because it felt like it was just a consistent, negative space that we would go into. So, we actually have made a conscious effort. It’s not that we’re not talking about it. I think we had a long talk last Friday about it. But, we are trying to talk a little less about it and try and act a little more like normal life. We’re beginning to miss normal life a lot.

Doug: Do you feel that when he does have questions and things like that, that you answer him in a way that is helpful or effective as opposed to getting angry and frustrated and all that sort of thing? Have you guys had a lot of fights outside of the initial?

Maria: No, we’re not fighters. I would say that I feel like a lot of times, in the moment, he’s very grateful for the things that I say and I feel like a lot of times we can get through stuff even though it can be painful. But, I think just because of the trauma of it all, or maybe just the fact that he’s not a great listener. I feel like we have to talk again a lot, and then he’ll ask the same questions and then he’ll say, “Oh, my God, that’s the first time you said that and I really understand.” I’m like, “Really?” Because I feel like we just did that.

Doug: Well, that’s all part of it.

Maria: Yeah.

Doug: I think in our situation ... Well, I know Linda asked me the same questions dozens of times. I think a lot of it just has to do with the fact that it sets an emotional discussion in most cases that it’s almost like their emotions make things go in one ear and out the other sometimes.

Maria: Exactly.

Doug: Or they just don’t maybe grasp what you said or they didn’t understand it because they’re just trying to...
Maria: Right. Or they think they do, but they’re so emotional that it seems like it just doesn’t stick.

Doug: Right. And like you said, if your husband had a listening issue to begin with, that may just kind of compound things. But, it’s important, obviously, to be patient and try not to get frustrated, though it is a difficult thing to do at times.

Maria: It’s also hard to be honest, too, because sometimes when you’re the person on my side, you’re confused, still. That’s hurtful to the other person.

Doug: Sure.

Maria: A lot of times, I try to temper that or not be completely honest about my confusion.

Doug: Right. Well, there’s confusion and then also, at some point – and I think you have a little ways to go yet – there will come a time where you might have a different perspective on things, too. That tends to change your story a little bit. I heard from somebody at one point – I can’t remember who it was – that it’s important for the betrayed spouse to understand that there could be that change of perspective and it isn’t necessarily that the cheater is lying to you. It’s just that they have a different view of what may have happened or how they felt or something like that.

Maria: Sure. Yeah.

Doug: It needs to be handled kind of gently at that point in time. It’s very easy to see how a betrayed spouse might feel that it is indeed just another lie or a trickle truth or whatever, but it may not be the intention of the person to do that.

Maria: Right. That’s what makes me nervous about being completely honest when I’m actually not sure how I feel is because I don’t want him to hear something in there about my confusion and only grab onto the things that is negative, not the thing that’s positive.

Doug: Right. Do you preface your answer with saying that, “I’m still confused about that,” or something like that just so he can understand that you’re not trying to intentionally lie to him?

Maria: Yes. I don’t think that ...

Doug: I bet he doesn’t take that so well, does he?

Maria: Actually, he has taken it remarkably well. It’s a little bit scary because even our therapist thinks that there’s something wrong, that he shouldn’t be so receptive to me. I think he’s acting a little maybe more along the lines of somebody that’s kind of obsessed, just
because of the fact that he’s willing to just overlook everything at this point. Not in the beginning he wasn’t, but two months in, he just wants me back.

**Doug:** I guess there’s positives to that, but there’s also negatives. You hope he’s not just trying to sweep things under the rug and not address them and get them out of his system, and then at some point down the road, he explodes or something like that. I understand where he’s coming from. I think some of that may just be, perhaps, it kind of goes back to maybe his upbringing and just being a man and the way we address problems and issues and our feelings and all that sort of thing. That’s for his therapist to figure out.

**Maria:** Yeah. He had parents that never once told him that they loved him. Obviously, they were good parents and everything, but I think that the whole emotional side of his upbringing was different.

**Doug:** Okay. Part of the other survey, segment that we had questions for was those of, I guess in your case it would be the wife of the affair partner. The biggest question or the most popular question that was asked was really along the fact of why did you have so little disregard for the fact that he was married with children? Didn’t you care about the impact it was going to have on him and his family? That kind of thing.

**Maria:** I think that it’s very easy to kind of compartmentalize that relationship and you assume that it’s never going to be discovered. It is disregarding them for sure, but in that moment, I think that you definitely assume that you’re never going to get caught, even though you prepare ways to not get caught and you’re aware of it. But, you tell yourself, basically – I told myself – that wasn’t going to happen. For me, I guess ... I also justified it in a way because your affair partner talks about their spouse, they give you the highlights of how their intimacy isn’t working, they’re not close anymore, they’re disconnected, so you feel justified, I guess.

**Doug:** Sure. One thing that I also found while I was combing through these responses was that there seems to be this unwritten code amongst women that you don’t do things to hurt another woman and to hurt another mother and another friend. How would you respond to that notion? Basically, to continue on. Is there any kind of loyalty that you thought existed between you and your friend or just the fact that she’s another woman?

**Maria:** Gosh, that’s a good question. I don’t know if I can answer that.

**Doug:** Okay, no worries. Think about it maybe in the background, and if you come up with an answer, you can talk about it later. I think it might go back to the point that you compartmentalize things. Maybe that wasn’t even an issue that you could consider. I thought it was interesting that it came up quite a bit on the survey. Men maybe don’t have that same kind of loyalty aspect in a lot of ways.
Have you ever apologized to the other woman or to the wife of the affair partner?

**Maria:** I did. I don’t think that it was helpful, but I did. And I let her call me and ask me questions and yell at me.

**Doug:** Okay. As you look back at this whole situation, what would you say that you are struggling with most at the current time?

**Maria:** I would say that the disappointment in myself for not, basically, asserting myself more during my marriage to say that I was unhappy or disconnected with things. I’m just completely disgusted with myself for doing what I did. I don’t know how I crossed that line.

**Doug:** Is that something you’re trying to work through as far as discovering why you did some things that you did? If so, are you doing that through therapy or just on your own or what?

**Maria:** I had therapy once a week. A lot of fricken’ therapy right now. I don’t feel like it’s moving fast enough, so I don’t know exactly why I decided I can cross that line and I don’t know.

**Doug:** It’s a tough process. It really is. Although the whole experience lasted two years, you’re kind of just in the middle of the figuring things out stage. It might take you a little while. Up to this point, what lessons do you think that you’ve learned from the whole experience?

**Maria:** The biggest lesson, back to that assert your complaint. I think women suck at that. I think it’s really easy just to go hop in your husband’s boat and try not to rock it.

**Doug:** That’s a good analogy.

**Maria:** I think men are natural leaders a lot of the time. I think, in a way, I let my husband walk all over me and then I got mad at him for doing it. But, I let him do it. Also, the huge lesson is if I can tell somebody who is thinking about an affair don’t do it ... Sorry.

**Doug:** Absolutely. That’s okay. Take your time.

**Maria:** It’s not worth it. It was amazing how at the time how in control and how good it felt to find all those things that I was missing and to actually have a piece of my life that I felt like was my own, but in the end, it’s not worth it.

**Doug:** Absolutely. That’s really all I have from a questions standpoint. I appreciate you digging deep and helping me out on this. I know it’s not easy.

**Maria:** I’m so sorry about the crying. I really intended not to cry.

**Doug:** Oh. You’re the first one who has ever cried when I talk to them. (laughs) Don’t worry about it. Thank you so much, again, for your time and everything. I hope everything works out.
Mariá: I hope it was helpful.

Doug: It will be, believe me. I hope everything works out for you and your husband.

Mariá: Thank you. If you have any other questions, you can e-mail me or whatever as well.

Doug: Okay. I appreciate that. Thank you so much.


Doug: Bye-bye.