The Unfaithful Female – “Tiffany”
Typically, what I’ve been doing is just starting off the conversation with allowing you to give me a brief backstory, if you will, of what happened, what type of an affair it was. How did it start? How long did it last? All that sort of thing. Maybe you can give us a little bit of a rundown there. That would be most appreciated.

Okay. There’s a complication, I suppose. I’ll just go from my part in all this, which is basically all we need to talk about anyway.

Sure.

It started with a text from an acquaintance. We have a business and this person is a patron of that business. In the south, you greet with hugs. I didn’t think anything of it. I knew this person for a long time. A hug was exchanged and niceties and everything. From that, we had, in the past, had contact just because of his business that he is in compared to what we do. He had texted and said that it was good to see me and appreciate the hug and it would be nice to get another one.

Well, at the time, my state of mind within my own marriage and life was some true and some filtered by insecurities. So, he piqued my weaknesses and my interest. That’s really how it started.

Then it turned into a physical affair at some point?

Well, it was mostly just through the phone, basically. I only saw him in person and most of those were within crowds or within mixed company, maybe five or six times within a six-month period. But, in the sixth month, it turned physical and it was only one time.

Okay. Did that then get discovered right away or what happened there as part of that?

Well, according to my spouse, my demeanor changed. I am typically a pleaser and I don’t like to ruffle feathers, rock boats. I’m pretty accommodating. I never go against the grain of anyone. There was a conversation that was had between myself and my husband, and the conversation I took as very egotistical on his part. He would, too. It got under my skin. And I guess because of my personality and what I was going through at the time, I stated my opinion in more of a manner that is not what he was used to. Not ugly, but he picked up on it.

It was different, yeah.

Yes. My husband has very good intuition. He’s been gifted that. He picked up on it. So, in the course of ... I can give you how many days. Twelve days afterwards that it was out.

He did some investigative work of some sort and just browbeat you?
Tiffany: He browbeat me. My husband is very blunt, very forceful in nature, very posturing. He has powers within the community, so he used that, and of course my fear and his tactics. When you’re angry and things are going on and you’re finding things out, I can understand. But, you use those to get answers or to manipulate people to give you whatever, forced them, it worked because I have a fear-based personality to start with. So, it didn’t take long and I just confessed.

Doug: Okay. How long ago was that, roughly?

Tiffany: Goodness. August 3rd will be two years.

Doug: I know that your recovery and your husband’s recovery has been a rough road since then, I would imagine. How are things right now, as far as in your marriage and relationship?

Tiffany: Well, we are in counseling. I was in individual counseling for a while. He decided. I don’t know what prompted him, but after me wanting him to come in because it was difficult for me to have counseling to heal my issues and then have to report back what I was doing with the counselor. I do not have the best recall. I don’t have the best ability to communicate what all has taken place. He found it very frustrating, so I was like, “I wish we did this together a counselor that is qualified to do this.” We’ve been with this person for probably just six months.

Doug: How would you say it’s been going so far? Has it been helpful?

Tiffany: I think it’s been helpful. Just as of last night. He’s got severe … I would say anger as in it’s verbal. He’s in a spin cycle. He is seething. This is not my … Well, if I had not been to this counselor, I could probably say the same thing, but according to our counselor, he is PTSD and he is getting his hits based on what he’s constantly researching, constantly trying to find answers because he still sees me as a liar and he can’t trust me. He has not forgiven me. He refuses to do that.

I would say that there are more good days than there have been in the past, but it is spoken of every single day.

Doug: Really? Asking questions or is he just making comments?

Tiffany: Both. And if I deviate … Here is a weakness of mine. I am not a very good communicator even in a relaxed atmosphere. I’ve never been the best communicator, but put added stress and added humility and shame and guilt and all that, knowing that I have “destroyed” his life, it’s even worse. With that, I have tried to come up with the why and I feel like I have the why, but because my why doesn’t make sense to him, I don’t …

Doug: He just refuses to accept it.
Tiffany: And if I deviate or even change an explanation or if I’m digging in deeper or if I say, “It could be this,” I’m really talking through it. It’s not concrete “this is why”. It’s more of, “This is what I was feeling.” So, you come up with all these variables, because in my opinion, it’s not for me. I know that there are certain ... Let’s just say, for example, men. Men, I believe, just through my own experience, it’s mostly the satisfaction of the sex or sex-driven, and with women, it’s emotional. It’s where your thoughts are. It’s where your feelings are. I think that a lot of times, for me, I’m less of a logic thinker than I am based on emotion. It’s hard for him because he’s all logic. I think that has a hindrance in our recovery.

Doug: Just a little bit of communication and getting on the same wavelength sort of thing.

Tiffany: Yeah. Our therapist, we have really been focused on my husband so that he can get some relief from his anxiety, his PTSD, going around circles, and his hypervigilance. Yes, I’m throwing out all these words and not knowing what it was. To keep him from being ... These are just conversations we’ve had with her. I’m not trying to make him the bad guy here, but he’s constantly on me. I can’t make any headway, so she’s trying to get him at a place where he can have some relief. So, we haven’t even gotten to me and my issues.

She actually has said that we are both come from hurt in two different areas. Mine is I come from a background of sexual abuse and mine is based on that. His is based on proving.


Tiffany: His is based on trying to prove himself.

Doug: Okay. I thought you said prison.

Tiffany: No, never prison. So, we haven’t even touched the surface of why I have reacted or why I have done the things I’ve chosen, the things I’ve done in my life, the patterns that I’ve had.

Doug: Is that something that you want to try to accomplish in couple’s counseling or is that more of an individual thing that you want to try to do?

Tiffany: Well, I did the individual thing. When you do the individual thing ... And he really dives into the “Doug and Linda” template. It was focused too much on myself instead of focusing on him and helping him. And it’s my responsibility.

Doug: You’re talking about your husband now as far as that mindset?

Tiffany: Yeah. It was my responsibility to get him where he needs to be.

Doug: Well, it’s still a team effort. Yeah, you’ve got to be the catalyst, but you both have to work at it. It’s not just one person.
**Tiffany:** I know. I think that is where he put ... Why he decided to go to couple’s counseling.

**Doug:** Going back just a little bit, you briefly got into how your affair started and everything. Do you feel that you were having rather severe marriage issues leading up to that point or was everything fairly good in your marriage leading up to the affair?

**Tiffany:** Well, I will say that there were always shades of gray. Not always shades of gray, but because of ... My decisions made me do what I did. My weaknesses. My lack of commitment. My lack of knowledge. My lack of being able to refrain from having acceptance from everybody. Those are my weaknesses and I went down the wrong path. But, those were also made up of the past through our marriage and I heard someone say one time, a great illustration, is that your marriage is like a hallway and you have all these doors and you have all these choices to go through these doors. Yes, I opened the door. I chose to go through that particular door. But, the hallway is the responsibility of my husband and myself. So, what’s in that hallway – and again, my communication skills are not the best and I cannot tell a joke back to someone to save my life. The condition of the hall is a partnership.

My had an affair before. He’s had several one-nighters, I suppose. So, they were known, not by secret, but by just telling me. So, there is that.

**Doug:** Okay. How does that make you feel that he’s had affairs in the past, more than one, yet he’s taken such a hard stance on things with your affair? How do you guys reconcile that?

**Tiffany:** Well, I tried to seek how he feels because it was done to him. There’s a couple of differences. He told me every time. And because of my personality and because of my codependency, I am a severe codependent. I am trying to break that. That is one of those things that I’m trying to work on. I’m not a person to tell someone what to do. I like to think that I encourage people, but I don’t give ultimatums. Because I didn’t, I think it was a detriment to us.

One difference is that he came right out and told me and I kept this a secret. The second difference is I have been married before. The backstory is I came from an abusive background. Not from my parents, but from where I was. I ran away from home after I turned 18. I fled there. Married the person that I fled with who was older than myself, who was very controlling because of where they are, what their personality was. I eventually knew that was what that was, so I left there. I was single for six or seven years. Married another person who became a substance abuser. I basically could not get my ex-husband to stop that, so the commitment to stick around and stay and try to help was overpowered by what was going on, so I fled there. I won’t say fled. I just left.
Then, I met my current husband and we’ve been married for 21 years next month. But, with that, with all the situations that were going on, the state of mind that I was in, I would have fled again. I did not have children with the first two marriages, so I think it was easier for me with this one. In my state of mind and in my heart, I think I was just escaping. I know I was just escaping. I was trying to live two lives because one was very … I was unsure, I was insecure. The affair gave me a sense of validation.

The difference is, in his mind – I don’t deny it – that I would have left eventually if I could have made it now. I don’t think that I … There’s just a lot of variables and it ended so quickly. You get a shock to the system. You get a shock to your moral compass. You get a shock to the kind of person you are and want to be. I know my wrongs. He, in no way … He, purposely, when he would tell me these things about what his activities were, he had no desire to leave because it was just not him. He was doing what he was doing to do it. I didn’t think that. I feared it. But, in his … I wasn’t going to leave you. The possibility was there for me.

So, there’s three key differences. He didn’t lie; I lied. I’ll flee. And he’s committed.

**Doug:** I gotcha. Okay. I imagine that’s a difficult situation to try to work through. Are you guys addressing that in your therapy at all?

**Tiffany:** Yes, we are, because I choose to. It’s hard. It’s hard for him because I’m such a person who doesn’t ruffle feathers and I am not one of those people who will just say what I think because it’s more of a passive-aggressive, upset that you don’t say it. He was caught off guard and it’s hard for him.

**Doug:** I imagine.

**Tiffany:** I wasn’t caught off guard. I knew every time he was going somewhere to do something.

**Doug:** Okay. So, the fact that he told you and was up front, more or less, about it, that’s the big difference, to him anyway.

**Tiffany:** Yeah.

**Doug:** Okay. You mentioned something about that you thought about or you had the opportunity to flee, but you didn’t. Was that having anything to do with your feelings for the affair partner or just in general?

**Tiffany:** No.

**Doug:** Okay. So, you didn’t feel like you loved your affair partner or anything like that?
Tiffany: I think I am such a ... Okay, here is what I can tell you. I have very low self-esteem. My husband is a very high-profile. He commands the room type personality.

Doug: Type A personality.

Tiffany: Yes. He’s known all over. I’m not. I’m two steps behind kind of person. Not by his design, by my own insecurities, by my own inadequacies in my head. I think what was drawing me to this was the simplicity of who he was.

Doug: Was this an escape?

Tiffany: Yeah, the non-public. I felt like he was more along the lines of my level. I didn’t feel as inferior.

Doug: Gotcha.

Tiffany: My husband does not make me feel inferior by his own. It’s just how I ... It’s my reality. It’s how I perceive it. He does not say that, “I’m better than you,” or, “You’re less than me.” Or, he didn’t. He used to not. But, in some aspect, I think he is. I don’t mean that to be in a submissive way. He speaks his mind. You know where he’s been. Most people want to know that. Most people would rather know where you stand than to be blindsided. I get that. That’s what I’m trying to work on. If I can just open my mouth and tell you how I feel and not be fearful of the response – and that is across the board. It’s across the board. That’s just how I have lived my whole life.

Doug: Okay. At this point, I assume that by going through everything here that you’ve been going through with the counseling and all that sort of thing, it’s your goal and your desire at this point to stay married. Is that correct?

Tiffany: That is my goal. My choice. When you come from this situation, when you’re in the season and you’re trying to prove yourself, and you’re trying to prove yourself honestly, through words and through actions and through body language and through everything, and you’re not at all trying to be manipulative and it’s heartfelt, it’s very difficult to break down those barriers that have been built up because of the choices that you’ve made, that I’ve made.

The fences, they come out because you’re trying to ... You want so badly to be believed. I do rest well at night knowing that I can’t be any more honest. Now, there are things that I cannot remember that I don’t know that I’ll ever remember because I’m not a detail-oriented person. I am a day at a time kind of thing. I know it sounds like I sound like I’m ... I don’t observe like a Type A person does. I’m not Type A. I’m not a slide by the seat of my pants, although my choices would make you feel that way. It is hard to break down the barriers of trying to do all
the things to help him. But, I’m committed and I do love my husband. It’s not because I have nowhere to go or I have no family. It’s very hard to break down the barriers of what he perceives. I would say, most people, that’s a hard wall to break down.

Doug: Yeah. So, you stated a couple of times that your husband doesn’t believe a lot of things that you’re saying, that you’re lying. Is that a blanket statement from the standpoint that he doesn’t trust you still or would you say that there is some trust there?

Tiffany: I don’t give him any reason not to trust me right now. He just can’t ... He gets my phone. I have children. I have my children with me everywhere. This is two years almost. I am not alone by myself. I make it a point. He gets my phone. He downloads it. I don’t go out of town. He actually says, “I believe you’re not doing anything.” But, what he doesn’t trust is my pattern because all he sees now, he has connected the dots with the patterns in my life. So, what he doesn’t trust is that I won’t do it again because he knows the type of personality that he is. I think a lot of the fear that he feels is that I am tougher now than I ever have been. How should I feel safe that you’re not going to do this again when I am tougher than I ever have been? My answer to that is it doesn’t matter. And his toughness is verbal. Let me just make that clear. My answer to that is it doesn’t matter what you say to me. I’m changing. You work on yourself. I’m not going to go down that slimy path again because I am a woman of faith and my whole thing is that I want to finish well and I don’t want to have to answer for this sin ever again. I will not. I will not answer for this again.

Doug: Yeah. It’s tough enough to go through it once. You don’t want to do it again.

Tiffany: No.

Doug: So, I guess from that statement, it’s pretty safe to say that you probably feel that you’ve suffered from your choices.

Tiffany: I continuously suffer from my choices, yes. Yeah.

Doug: As a follow-up to that, what would you say is the biggest struggle that you’re having right now as a result?

Tiffany: The biggest struggle is the knowing that there will be another trigger to come that’s caused by me and my choice.

Doug: Another trigger to come for you or another trigger that will affect your husband?

Tiffany: For him, that will affect him and that has changed him into a person that ... He’s not the same. He’s not the same man and I’m hoping that the healing and the restoration that we
go through will help us be able to do something like you’re doing maybe one day. Not on this scale. But, I hate seeing him suffer and I have to see him suffer every single day.

**Doug:** That’s got to be difficult.

**Tiffany:** And his suffering, it makes me suffer. I’d really like for us to find joy again.

**Doug:** Is your marriage right now just one of complete emptiness or unhappiness or are there times where you guys reconnect and you guys are having fun, having good family time, and things like that?

**Tiffany:** No, there is good family time. There is moments of good times with us.

**Doug:** Is there intimacy?

**Tiffany:** There is. Those are eggshell moments still.

**Doug:** You mean he has triggers and images and things like that?

**Tiffany:** During the revealing of all this, in the beginning stages, he has to have all the details.

**Doug:** He wanted to know everything?

**Tiffany:** Yes. So, he got all in my texts and he asked for me to, in writing, describe the sexual event. So, he has that in writing. He has texts. He has pics. There were no bad pictures, but there’s pictures during the time as far as even family stuff. It goes back to say, “At this time, you were doing this.” That kind of thing. So, he has all that. He, from time to time, goes back and he reads them. It’s a constant – not constant, but when he goes through stages, he will pull it all out and start reading it again. That’s not good. He’s been advised not to do that, but ...

**Doug:** Yeah. That’s something that I’m sure the therapist will try to work on, I would think. Final question. Obviously, when you go through this, you realize your mistakes and your shortcomings and things like that. Through that, what would you say is one of the top things that you’ve learned throughout your experience, whether it’s about relationships, about yourself, about affairs, whatever?

**Tiffany:** Well, I learn almost every day. But, honesty. I’ve learned that commitment is a strong ... You have to have commitment. You can’t have that fight or flight mentality. You can’t run away. You have to speak up. You have to let your feelings be known, even if it ends up ... Because I think that if I had just spoken up, if I had just told him what I’m feeling and what I was thinking and not being fearful of what the answer would be or the rejection and speak in love and not necessarily speak in anger, speak in ... Regardless, be grateful for ... I don’t know. There’s just so many things that you take for granted. I think I’ve learned. I’m learning still. Just
don’t take anything for granted. Oh gosh, I could make a list and I don’t know that I could explain one thing outside of just honesty. Again, my communication skills are ... I get real pausy when I want to say things right and I want to make a difference and impact people. I’m not a ...  

Doug: Okay. It’s alright. Take your time.  

Tiffany: But, if anyone is even remotely having a thought about doing this, go to somebody that can talk you out of it.  

Doug: Right.  

Tiffany: Because the consequences and the damage is just too great. It’s too far of a cost for everybody.  

Doug: I couldn’t agree more.  

Tiffany: It’s just too damaging for yourself and for the people that love you.  

Doug: I really appreciate you taking the time that you spent with me here today. I know it’s difficult to talk about this stuff and everything. I do really sincerely appreciate it.  

Tiffany: You’re welcome.  

Doug: Hopefully, with your continued counseling and everything like that that you guys are doing, things will start to turn around for you all.  

Tiffany: Well, I’m very hopeful. I’m hopeful. It has its ups and downs.  

Doug: Sure.  

Tiffany: But, I won’t give up. I will not have the flight. Those days are gone. Those days are gone. I’m in a fighting mode at this point and I don’t mean a bad fight, it’s a good fight.  

Doug: Fighting for your marriage.  

Tiffany: And my family.  

Doug: Yeah. That’s awesome.  

Tiffany: I hope this is helpful.  

Doug: I’m sure it will be. Absolutely. Again, thank you so much. You take care of yourself and perhaps we should chat again someday.  

Tiffany: Thank you so much. You take care as well.  