

# 12 Tips for Surviving and Celebrating the Holidays After Infidelity



Emotional Affair Journey

## 12 Tips for Surviving and Celebrating the Holidays After Infidelity

**Doug:** Hello, everybody. This is Doug and I'm here again today with David Feder. David is an individual and couples therapist in private practice in the Toronto area since 2001. He's in possession of a slew of professional designations and certifications, and he specializes as a therapist and a coach who focuses almost exclusively helping individuals and couples survive and thrive after infidelity. Welcome, David. How are you doing today?

**David:** I'm doing great. Thanks for having me. it's really good to be back.

**Doug:** Awesome. I appreciate you taking the time to join us.

**David:** My pleasure.

**Doug:** We're getting closer to the holidays. now, you're up in Canada, have you had your Thanksgiving yet?

**David:** Oh, yeah. The turkey is well digested.

**Doug:** Okay. Well, we still have another couple weeks here as we're doing this recording, and that down here in the States is actually kind of the official kickoff of the holiday season. I know that people who are struggling with infidelity, this can be a really difficult time of year for them in many ways. So we want to talk today about how to celebrate the holidays after infidelity. I'll go ahead and turn things over to you for now and we'll hopefully have some good ideas for the people out there. So, thanks, David.

**David:** Sounds good. What I wanted to do was I really thought it would be helpful in my own practice to put together a few tips, and that's what I thought. I thought it was just going to be a few tips that I would be able to share with the folks that I work with here in Toronto as well as outside of Toronto.

But as it turns out, when I started to put down, as I say, a few tips – and that’s the operative word – it ended up to be the 12 tips. And as I was telling you before we started here, it reminded me of the 12 – what's that song?

**Doug:** 12 Days of Christmas?

**David:** 12 Days of Christmas, and lo and behold, I came up with the 12 Tips of Christmas. Some of the tips may sound familiar. I’m not saying that all are original thoughts, but they did emanate from me and some of the experiences I had here in the office working with some of my clients. So I thought it would be good to share with your listeners.

**Doug:** Okay. Now, are you going to do these while singing? Is that the idea?

**David:** No, I'm going to spare you all.

**Doug:** Okay. Alright. Good.

**David:** The person who had a good voice in my family was my mother, and it seems, at least as I get older, I seem to take more after my father who didn't have much of an ear for music. So I think I'll just talk about them.

**Doug:** There you go. Okay.

**David:** But thanks for the offer.

**Doug:** No problem.

**David:** So basically, as we prepare for the holiday season, I think that many people will be preparing for either Christmas or Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, and what's interesting about these two holidays is that both of them speak about things that all of us are in great need of, and perhaps even greater need given the situation in the world that we live in today, and that is the need to love one another and to take care of one another, to look to a brighter future, as well as, I think, the holidays impart the message that anything is possible.

In the story of Hanukkah, we talk about miracles, so I'm not really sure I'm referring to miracles, but I am a believer that most things, if we really put our

minds to it, are possible. Just an aside to drive that message home, once a year, one of the things that I do is I do long-distance cycling. I'll just say this before we get into the topic that we're here to talk about. Once a year, I participate in a fundraiser which is The Ride to Conquer Cancer. It's a fundraiser, and everybody participating has to raise a minimum of \$2500 or more. It's a minimum of \$2500. I usually try to exceed that. It's a bike ride from here, Toronto, to Niagara Falls on the Canadian side. So it's basically about 120 miles, and we do it over two days.

One of the things that I learned by doing that ride was that each time we do the ride, we have upward of 4500 to 5000 cyclists who participate. In addition to that number of cyclists, we have about 500 to 1000 volunteers. So when you think about that's 5500 to over 6000 people, all participating, all devoting their time and their energy over a weekend, but because of the fundraising component over the course of, let's say, six months before the ride, dedicating themselves to a particular cause.

I learned in the first year that I did it – and this will be my tenth year this year – that when people really put their minds to accomplishing something, they could accomplish anything. And hence, when I say that the message imparted by Christmas or Hanukkah or other holidays is that anything is possible. I really do believe that anything is possible.

**Doug:** Well said.

**David:** Yeah. So, I really love that message that I learned, and I thought it would be worth sharing.

So, thinking about the holidays, many of us, I think it's safe to say, have looked forward to this particular time of year since we were kids, and as adults, we still look forward to the holiday season. But after an affair, anticipating time spent with extended family and friends can be more challenging.

So, what do we do? And it could be more challenging for a number of reasons, because not everybody represents a good part of our support system, because people have their opinions and sometimes we feel judged, and that makes it hard

for us to be around certain friends and extended family. So, I was wondering, or thinking about, what do we do?

Infidelity, as we know, and I think it's safe to say that most of us have either directly or indirectly been affected by a form of infidelity, whether it be emotional or physical, and what most of those people know is that infidelity changes lives.

We know that people going through or recovering from infidelity navigate through any number of peaks and valleys, but we also know that often with some good help provided by a knowledgeable professional or coach who understands the subtleties of infidelity and its impact, we know that recovery is possible, that we can get to the other side of infidelity.

But similarly, anyone, whether you're the hurt partner or the involved partner, or kids for that matter, probably found out that the holiday season can be difficult emotionally, and that's why we're having this conversation here today.

So, what I'm going to do is go through a list of, as I say, the 12 Tips of Christmas or the holiday season, and if there are any comments or questions, we could discuss it, and if you have any thoughts, I'd love to hear about it.

**Doug:** Sounds good.

**David:** Yeah. Thank you. So the first one is don't be alone. As you said in the introduction, the holiday season is a difficult time for many people, and in the mental health field, it's the time when we hear about people feeling most depressed and most alone and alienated or isolated from other people.

So my advice or my tip that I wanted to start with is not to be alone but to surround yourself with as many people who love you, are willing to be there for you and who won't judge you, people who want to be with you and people who you want to be with. I call it people who make you feel good.

Very often, we feel compelled to be with people just because we have to. But what I think about it is I encourage is I encourage everyone, particularly during the holiday season, to make conscious decisions about who you choose to spend time with. And the operative word is making a conscious decision about *who* you

want to choose to spend time with. It's not "You have to." It shouldn't be "You have to," but you choose to.

**Doug:** And I think that's a challenge at times, too, because you have traditions and they may be, "Let's all go to grandma's house and mom and dad and Cousin Joe and everybody's going to be there." But if Cousin Joe knows that your husband or wife cheated on you, then there may be some seriously awkward moments, and perhaps it could turn ugly.

**David:** I think there's always that potential, and that's really why I encourage people to make a good choice that works for them, because if it gets ugly, when you really think about it, if it gets ugly, what's the benefit and what's the value? It only makes it harder afterwards. So I think that people really need to give themselves the permission to make the choice that's going to work for them.

**Doug:** Right. Makes sense.

**David:** Not feel compelled to do something that they know, as you say, is going to turn out ugly.

The second tip is if, after the affair, you and your spouse are hoping to be able to stay together and are working together to save your marriage, think about, after what happened, of all the places you and your spouse could be that both you and your spouse decided to spend a holiday season together at this time. Because nobody has to. When people make a choice to be together, when people make a choice to spend a holiday time together, they're making that choice because they want to, not because they have to. Because they could be anywhere else, so they could have told you, "I don't want to spend that time with you."

So I think that this is something to be mindful of, to be grateful for, and to see this as a gift that mostly the hurt partner gives to the involved partner, and not to take that for granted. I call it a gift of tremendous value, and I think it's important to acknowledge it as such.

**Doug:** Yeah, absolutely. Very good.

**David:** The third tip, I recommend that people manage their expectations efficiently, and not to have high expectations, but just to take it almost one moment at a time or one day at a time. Keep your expectations modest.

Connected with that is doing what feels right and not overextending yourself by doing anything that doesn't feel right. Again, in keeping with the theme of choices, this is another choice that people have to give themselves the permission and feel empowered, hopefully, to make those kind of choices.

In other words, focus on yourself instead of focusing on meeting expectations of others that just don't feel right or don't feel good, and in managing your expectations or whatever, and basically doing what you can reasonably do, and not do any more than that. And be honest with yourself, be honest with the other person or people.

The fourth is if there's anything that you're worried about or anticipate that may be problematic for you during the festivities, know what these are, so identify them, try to prepare in advance, and then plan for it.

So if there is someone who you worry about being around or a situation you think may make you uncomfortable, let others who you know care about you and who are there for you be your support system. So speak up. First of all, know what it is and then speak up.

People can't support another individual if they don't know what that person needs, so the idea here is to be prepared. Know that you don't have to be alone in your worry or fear, but know who those people are.

**Doug:** Good.

**David:** The fifth is I always think it's helpful to have a gratitude list in your back pocket, and this list would be a gratitude list of things or people in your life that you're grateful for. For that matter, included in that list could be gratitude for something that many of us take for granted, and that is, when was the last time, I wonder – well, I'll include myself – myself, you, or anybody listening took a

moment to be grateful for that heart that never stops beating. That's always there for you no matter what happens, or the breath in your lungs.

These are things that are gifts that we should remember, or the people in our life, or if we have a pet, or something particularly of value to us that we're particularly grateful for. It's a good idea in advance to have what I refer to as a gratitude list and to keep that in our back pocket so that we can look at that list whenever we need to, whether we're feeling down or sad or lonely or whatever it is that we're feeling, that we're able to bring that list up and we don't have to think on the moment or in the moment when we're probably least equipped to come up with things that we're grateful for when we're feeling depressed. So we have that list, we could pull it out and we could look at it whenever we feel the need to or want to.

**Doug:** We wrote a post – oh, it's been a few years ago – about gratitude. I agree with what you're saying. I think it's important to have gratitude for things, especially things we tend to take for granted. And we got a lot of negative comments from people that say, "How do you expect me to show gratitude for something when my life has been destroyed or when I'm going through what I'm going through?" They're just so down, they're so despondent. Any suggestions there?

**David:** Yeah. As you were speaking, the first thought that came to my mind is that – I'm going to tell a little story. There was somebody who – I don't remember who it was, so forgive me, but I remember listening to a YouTube video of a gentleman speaking, and he said every morning when he wakes up, he looks over at his night table, and there are two sets of glasses on his night table. One is *life is wonderful*, a pair of glasses. The other is *life sucks*. And every morning before he gets out of bed, he gets to decide which pair of glasses he puts on.

**Doug:** I like that. Yeah.

**David:** And the rest is pretty clear. If he puts on that *life sucks*, then life sucks. Everything that you see and experience during the day is going to be seen through the lens of negativity versus the other, and I think that that's really true. We have



an opportunity, I think, where if we make the affair and the betrayal the only thing in our life, then we're going to be very myopic and we're going to see the world through a very narrow lens.

But I do believe that no matter what happens in our life, there is still goodness in our life. And it seems that this is the moment of storytelling for me, but it reminds me of my experience with my maternal grandmother. She was a wonderful person. When I was about, I think, seven years old, she developed gangrene in her left leg, and the treatment back then was she had to get her leg amputated.

And the way her leg healed, she could never be fitted for a prosthesis, so she lived the rest of her life with one leg, and she only went out for two special occasions in our family. She only left her home twice in probably about 25 years. And her going out was sitting on the balcony in front of the house and looking at people walking and cars driving by.

But my grandmother always had a house full of visitors. And you know when people get sick, what typically happens is people visit at the beginning, and then they drop off, and the person who is sick is left basically on their own. That never happened to my grandmother.

One day I asked one of the people who visited, I said, "What is it that brings you back all the time to visit my grandmother?" And she said, "Your grandmother always has a joke." And when I thought about that, probably about 15 years ago, I thought, you know what? The message my grandmother taught me and my siblings was don't focus on what you don't have but focus on what you have.

She never, in all those years, spoke about the fact that she only had one leg and she didn't feel comfortable going out. She just focused on what she had, and what she had were three grandchildren who loved her dearly, and she loved them. She had her daughter, my mother, and she had a son in law in my dad who looked at her as a mother. And she had her siblings and whatever. So she just focused on what she had.

So I think that there are always things to be grateful for, even when things are really bad. I encourage people to remember that.

**Doug:** Yeah. Good stuff.

**David:** Going over to tip number six, remember what the holiday season means to you and what it has always meant to you. Remember all the good and special times spent in previous years. Picture these in your mind, smell the smells. Just imagine it, hear the beautiful sounds and so on. Use your five senses, all of them, to remember and enjoy those memories.

So try not to let what is currently happening in your life take those memories away. Think of those memories, and think about how you safely replicate them with whoever it is you choose to celebrate the holiday season with. If you have kids, think of the type of holiday season you want them to have this year. Stay focused and make that happen.

Don't let anyone or anything that happened take that away from you, because you would be robbing yourself of a wonderful opportunity to spend some really good time with people you care about, like your kids or whoever, and create new memories. That will be priceless.

**Doug:** Very good.

**David:** That was actually tips six and seven together, the seventh one being creating new memories with your kids.

The next one is if you're reminded of your problems during the holiday season, which undoubtedly will happen because of the affair, try not to disparage. Try not to get swallowed up by it.

You might find that your mind travels between positive and negative thoughts. And this is natural. But if it happens, take a moment and honor your thoughts, honor your feelings and try not to, as I say, get enveloped by them, because all the things in our lives and all the things we worry about eventually pass. It becomes part of our past where it can't and doesn't hurt us anymore, or at least it hurts less.

The imagery that I often use when I talk about that is if you think about the ocean, standing by the seashore and you're looking at the waves, the waves come in, and

then they go out. They don't stay in. And that's how I think about our thoughts. A thought may come in, but it's only a thought, and a thought in and of itself doesn't really need to hurt us.

To get rid of it or to manage it, as I say, I don't think we should try to ignore it or pretend it doesn't exist, but I think it's important to honor it. But then consider if it would help sharing it with a trusted individual, a trusted person who is there for you, or take a moment in a quiet space, take a moment to yourself, and if you are into meditation, meditate.

A type of meditation could be nothing more than just focusing on your breath, and think about your breath as life giving. Or finally, if right then at the moment, if you could take some time to yourself, or later on afterwards, journal about what you thought. It doesn't have to be a long journal entry. It could be something very brief.

Journaling allows you to process it or talking to someone allows you to process that thought and see quite often whether it is something that you have to really worry about or something that you could ultimately let go and come back into the present. I think it's important to be as present as much, as often as you can in order to enjoy what is happening around you during the holiday season.

**Doug:** Yeah. Those are great tips, because I know during this time, it's a triggering event for a lot of people, and they can certainly think about things, and sometimes it even goes much further than that into full-out panic mode, panic attacks and things of that nature too just because of any kind of trauma that they may have experienced. So those are some great tips on how to manage that.

**David:** For sure. Thank you. The next tip is taking care of yourself by doing nice things for yourself and by allowing others who are within what I refer to as your inner circle to do nice things for you. Try to remember, try to keep in mind that regardless of what has happened, that when people are being nice to you, you deserve it.

Even though you may have, if you're the involved partner, done something by having the affair, had done something that was hurtful to another person and

quite damaging, that you're not all bad. In fact, we're all capable of doing good and bad, because we're human.

So trying to keep that in mind, and not to minimize the hurt and the pain that the infidelity caused the hurt partner, but I think that all of this is based on or built around the fact that as the involved partner, you're mindful of the hurt you caused, your decisions caused, and you honor and respect that person, but you also honor and respect yourself.

The next one is more for the participating partner, or the involved partner as those terms are interchangeable. If you've ended the affair, the holiday season may be a time when you feel pulled to contact the affair partner.

**Doug:** Yes.

**David:** You may find yourself thinking about the affair partner a little bit more, worrying that he or she may be spending the time alone. You may be concerned about how they're managing, and you may feel compelled to reach out to them. Having said that, I think it's important to point out that they may reach out to you as the involved partner.

Hopefully, you really have established some really good boundaries about what you – and this would have come from, let's say, when you ended the affair, the message that was given to the affair partner about how you would respond should they contact you. And that boundary would have, more often than not, been to have no contact with them, or if they reach out to you, not to respond back to the affair partner.

And by no means – and we have talked about this, but by no means should you go see the affair partner, because the chances of getting pulled back into other affair is probably pretty great, and maybe even more so during the holiday season.

**Doug:** Absolutely.

**David:** If you're hoping to reconcile and you're working on your relationship with your spouse or partner, as I said, just stay clear of any contact with the affair partner. Instead, tell someone who cares about you what you're thinking of doing.

If you're thinking about responding back, use that support or reach out to your coach or therapist if you have one or to a support group if you're involved with one.

Finally, the last tip is know what you want from the holiday season, know what you want it to be like, and use your power to make it become your reality. This is a time – and I mentioned this in a previous tip – to not only hold on to some of your old memories that meant so much to you, but it's also a time to create new memories. And a lot of what recovery from infidelity is all about is creating new memories or new ways of doing things.

The holiday season is no exception of an opportunity to create new memories, so allow yourself or give yourself permission to do this by using your power to make whatever it is you would like the holiday season to be.

In summary, with regards to these tips, as much as we may look forward to the holiday season after the discovery or disclosure of an affair, this time of year can be, as we said, harder than at other times, or as hard. So I encourage people to stay within their power in order to increase the possibility of being empowered to make choices that are good for you, not feel as though you have to meet the expectations of others, but instead to take care of yourself.

**Doug:** Yeah, those are great tips, Dave, I appreciate those. And I'm going to add a 13th one I want to run by you, and you can tell me if you think it's a good one or not, okay?

**David:** Sure.

**Doug:** And I think that maybe there might be some consideration with the couple to maybe put any discussions or affair-related recovery discussions and things like that on hold. Maybe call a truce, if you will, and not deal with this stuff over the holidays, so to more concentrate on maybe making it a pleasant one. What do you think about that?

**David:** Well, I think it's basically a good idea in the sense of not using the time to talk about things that are particularly negative, but the only caveat, I would say, is that a person may still get triggered.

**Doug:** Sure.

**David:** And I don't think it's reasonable to tell that person, "You need to repress whatever just came into your mind." And if you could deal with it by talking to someone in your support group or support system as sort of that message kind of infiltrates all of the tips that we've talked about here today, and if it could be dealt with that way, I think that's great.

But I also think that I don't look at triggers as a negative, I look at triggers as golden opportunities or golden nuggets to rebuild the relationship. So if for example I was going through an affair as the hurt partner, I got triggered and I felt compelled to tell my wife, "This is really hard, I'm really feeling anxious, and it's so hard because I don't know what you're thinking or how this is for you," and I see that as an opportunity for the involved partner.

If you give the hurt partner a message of reassurance to be a little bit more transparent with how the involved partner is feeling about being together, it's an opportunity to say things like, "I know this is hard and I understand that, and I'm so sorry you're going through that, but this is where I want to be, and it's you who I want to be with and there's nowhere else I'd rather be." And that could be a very heartwarming message.

**Doug:** Sure.

**David:** So I think that in a general sense, I agree with your tip, but I also see, as I say, triggers as being golden opportunities to rebuild.

**Doug:** Yeah, I agree with that. Absolutely, I know that in our situation, some of the best connecting moments that Linda and I had started off as bad moments, the result of a trigger or something of that nature, but it's how you deal with the triggers and be able to turn it around, have a decent conversation and a connecting moment that does help in the overall situation.

And I think when I said as far as putting it on hold – and I agree with what you're talking about as far as triggers and whatnot, it's the questioning and just bringing up stuff as far as the details and stuff of that nature.

**David:** Yeah. I would agree with that.

**Doug:** So I think maybe from a conscious effort, from a conscious perspective I should say, you should maybe put that stuff on hold for at least a few weeks if at all possible.

**David:** Yeah, I would agree with that, and I think that what you said also lends itself to another conversation that I have here in the office with my clients or online with my clients, because you mentioned putting on hold or having a hiatus of a few weeks where you're not getting into the questioning and things of that nature, and as I say, I agree with that, but I think that there's a lot to be said, and again, something that we may want to talk about at some point if there's interest, and that is the types of questions that even when people do get into asking questions, what are the helpful questions and what are the destructive questions or the ones that don't –

**Doug:** Absolutely, yeah.

**David:** What questions help us rebuild, and what questions make it harder to rebuild? And a lot of the work that I do there, I've put together actually a series of questions that I use, it also piggybacks on the work of Esther Perel, some of the excellent work that Esther does which I think is just state of the art right now.

But I agree with you, I agree that this is a time for when some of those – hopefully not, but people engage in marathon sessions, and it's a time to maybe put that on the side, on the back burner.

**Doug:** Yeah, very good. Awesome. Well, David, I appreciate it. Once again, your knowledge and expertise here is invaluable. And please let everybody know how they can get in touch with you.

**David:** Yeah, I'd be happy to do that. Let me just say before I do that, I think that I consider the holiday season a time, as I said at the beginning, for hope, for new

beginnings. So people should try to enjoy the holiday season and make their Christmas or Hanukkah a holiday this year that's worth remembering.

So I want to wish everybody listening to this good health, hoping that the year 2019 will be a year filled with more kindness, not only in your respective families but really throughout the world. We're living in difficult times right now.

**Doug:** Yes, we are.

**David:** But a time filled with more kindness, more healing, as I said, good health and closer connections for everyone.

**Doug:** Awesome. Thank you. That's very well said.

**David:** Yeah, I really hope that that happens for everyone. To get a hold of me, there are many different ways. You could call me, my phone number here is (416) 315-5107. People could feel free to send me an e-mail at david@closeconnections.ca. That's my e-mail address. And you could also go to my website, which is [www.closeconnections.ca](http://www.closeconnections.ca).

And feel free to send me an e-mail or anything of the sort. I meet with people both here in my office here in Toronto, or I also speak with people through the Internet, and people can feel comfortable contacting me either way.

**Doug:** Fantastic. I always enjoy talking to you and you have a lot of great stuff that you put out there, and I'm sure people got a lot of benefit from your discussion today, and hopefully, they use what you've said as they go into the holiday season.

**David:** I hope so.

**Doug:** Thank you so much.

**David:** My pleasure. And one of the things that I'd love to encourage people, if people do have any thoughts about these tips or just in general, or if they use any of them and they want to share with me how it helped them or didn't help them, I'd really love to hear it. So I hope people will reach out.



**Doug:** Alright, very good. Sounds great. David, thank you so much.

**David:** My pleasure. Thank you very much and happy holidays.

**Doug:** Same to you. Take care.

**David:** Thank you.

**Doug:** Bye.

**David:** Thank you. bye now.

# An Invitation!

And a special 50% discount to a fresh new approach to recovering and healing after infidelity

---

Whether you're really struggling or things are just "Okay"...

You want to recover and heal from this whole mess. The pain and uncertainty can be too much to deal with at times. You just want this to all go away and feel better. To get unstuck.

We want to support you with that with a fresh new approach to recovering and healing after infidelity - regardless of where you're at in the process.

No matter what area requires the most attention - trust, forgiveness, talking about the affair, healing, self-care, etc. - you're covered.

The Affair Recovery Movement



## WHAT DO MEMBERS GET?

- Access to all of our programs...Current and Future programs
- The Recovery Library - A curated collection containing several hundred audios, ebooks, guides, articles and videos.
- Monthly group coaching calls
- Office hours
- A supportive community forum and chat room
- 2-minute tips
- Discounted private mentoring sessions