

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CLINICAL SEXOLOGISTS

EROTIC RECOVERY AFTER INFIDELITY: RESTORING THE SEXUAL TEMPLATE  
THROUGH SEX THERAPY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CLINICAL SEXOLOGISTS  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN CLINICAL SEXOLOGY

BY

TAMMY NELSON  
ORLANDO, FLORIDA  
JANUARY 2010

To Bruce Hirshfield, my husband, for his perpetual love, support and understanding.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Jette Simon, for teaching me that I could be a relationship therapist, and showing me I could have a better relationship.

To Dr Gina Ogden, who showed me how to be a sex therapist, researcher and a writer, before we ever met.

To Dr. William Granzig who believed in me, and encouraged me to finish what I wasn't sure I could.

## ABSTRACT

Infidelity damages the sexual template and recovery from the trauma of an affair can be difficult to repair. Sex therapy can help couples recover their sexual relationship after infidelity. Through erotological recovery, sex therapy can restore the desire phase of the relationship. This may also affect the emotional recovery of the partnership after an affair.

Affairs happen for many reasons. Infidelity does not always have to mean the end of a relationship. If the couple chooses to stay together, restoring the sexual template can even lead to an improvement of their erotic life. This can not only improve their relationship, but prevent infidelity in the future.

Sex therapists and sexologists can focus on restoring relationships despite infidelity using sexual template recovery and erotic methodology designed to reconnect the couple. A damaged relationship can recover and be repaired, becoming stronger, more erotically connected and renewed after infidelity.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
CONTENTS.....	v
PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	7

### CHAPTERS:

1 INTRODUCTION .....	8
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	
I    GENERAL CONTEXT: BROADER ISSUES .....	9
II   NEED FOR RESEARCH .....	10
III  RESEARCH QUESTION.....	10
3 ASSUMPTIONS.....	11
I    CAUSES OF AFFAIRS .....	11
II   STAGES OF AFFAIR RECOVERY.....	11
III  STAGES OF SEX THERAPY .....	11
4 HYPOTHESIS .....	11
5 LITERATURE FINDINGS .....	13
6 WHAT IS SEXUAL TEMPLATE? .....	13
7 WHAT IS MONOGAMY?.....	15
8 LIMERENCE.....	26
9 CAUSES OF AFFAIRS: HOW DO THEY AFFECT THE SEXUAL TEMPLATE? .....	27
I    COLLUSION .....	31
II   INDIVIDUATION.....	32
III  EXCITEMENT/BOREDOM.....	33
IV   POWER/DOMINATION .....	36
V    SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION.....	38
VI   ATTACHMENT ISSUES .....	42
VII  SELF ESTEEM .....	47
10 RECOVERY.....	48
I    STAGES OF AFFAIR RECOVERY .....	48
II   SEX THERAPY.....	56
III  STAGES OF SEX THERAPY .....	61
IV   EROTIC RECOVERY AFTER INFIDELITY:	

	HOW AND WHY IT CAN HAPPEN .....	65
V	RECOVERY FROM JEALOUSY.....	68
VI	MATE GUARDING.....	69
11	PROGNOSIS .....	71
12	RESULTS .....	72
13	FINDINGS.....	72
	I EARLIER ASSUMPTIONS .....	74
	A. cause.....	74
	II STAGES OF AFFAIR RECOVERY .....	74
	III PHASES OF FIDELITY RECOVERY .....	77
	IV STAGES OF SEX THERAPY .....	78
	V EROTIC RECOVERY PHASES.....	80
	A. CRISIS PHASE .....	81
	B. RENEGOTIATION/RENEW PHASE .....	83
	VI PROGNOSIS .....	91
	VII HYPOTHESIS .....	91
14	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	93
	I NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	94
	CONCLUSION.....	95
	APPENDIX.....	
	EXAMPLE: INTENSIVE FORMAT.....	98
	STEPS OF EROTIC RECOVERY PROGRAM.....	99
	PHASES OF FIDELITY RECOVERY .....	101
	EXCHANGING FANTASIES .....	103
	APPRECIATING YOUR PARTNER SEXUALLY .....	107
	SENSUAL FULL BODY CONTACT .....	110
	LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF AROUSAL .....	113
	DISCOVERING WHERE YOUR FANTASIES FALL	
	ON THE EROTIC CURIOSITY SPECTRUM .....	118
	SEX DATE .....	123
	SEX WORKSHEET #4 .....	124
	REFERENCE LIST .....	126

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is an absence of research or clinical treatment model for sexual recovery from infidelity using sex therapy. The treatment model currently lacks information on integration of sex therapy and sexual template recovery with the treatment of affairs and infidelity in marriage therapy and couples counseling.

## INTRODUCTION

How do couples recover and repair their sexual relationship after infidelity? Does infidelity damage the sexual template and how can sex therapy help couples repair their sexual relationship?

Through erotological recovery, sex therapy can restore the desire phase of the relationship. This may also affect the emotional recovery of the partnership after an affair. Affairs happen for many reasons. Does infidelity have to mean the end of a relationship? And if the couple chooses to stay together, can they restore the sexual template or explore and even improve their erotic life? Can this not only improve their relationship, but perhaps even prevent infidelity in the future?

Sex therapists and sexologists can focus on restoring relationships despite infidelity using sexual template recovery and erotic methodology designed to reconnect the couple. A damaged relationship can recover and be repaired, becoming stronger, more erotically connected and renewed after an affair.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### GENERAL CONTEXT: BROADER ISSUES

Rates of infidelity in society vary according to the literature, with the highest averaging at 55% of women and 65% of men having extra-marital sex at some point in their marriage (Atwood & Schwartz 2002). Therefore, it is surprising that in this culture there is such a high investment in fidelity in relationships when more than half of all partners will cheat. It appears that sexual infidelity is common among most couples. Why is there still an expectation that couples remain monogamous for a lifetime?

And can couples remain faithful to one partner for the length of a marriage? What does it take to maintain sexually committed to one person? Many books and papers have been written on how to prevent affairs. Many of these are a result of post-disclosure of infidelity in couple's therapy and tend to blame the victim for the affair (Spring, 1996; Lusterman 1998; Neuman 2008). Some advice from authors suggests that couples should limit all outside friendships with the opposite sex (Neuman, 2008). Some infer that the betrayed partner should give the perpetrator more sex, dress sexier, be more sexually appreciative, and be a better spouse in general. This attitude of inequity does not take into account that most affairs are not a result of unhappiness in the primary relationship. In fact, studies show that up to 56% of men and 34% of women who were in extramarital affairs described themselves as being in happy marriages. They also say that they love their primary partner and have good sex with them. (Ben-Zeev, 2008) Another study reveals that 80% of affairs happen because of opportunity (Love, Stosny, 2008). This tells us that not all infidelity is a result of a fault within the sexual or emotional system of a marriage or partnership.

## NEED FOR RESEARCH

The desire phase of the human sexual response cycle has been defined as only one of four phases of the human sexual response cycle for humans, i.e.: desire, arousal, orgasm and resolution (Masters & Johnson, 1982). Aside from proving or disproving the accuracy of this model, it is clear that sex therapy after an affair includes restoring desire through post traumatic stress work, cognitive behavioral work, and empathic communication (Baucom, Snyder, Gordon 2009).

Restoring desire in the human sexual response cycle, particularly in women, has to come as a result of clear and participatory exercises designed to increase arousal first. Arousal in women will then create desire, which may lead to orgasm (although not consistently in women after betrayal from infidelity – trust and sex will be touched on later). Then the resolution phase can be used to reestablish intimacy, safety and connection in the partners, fostering growth and new direction for the relationship and its future. Sex therapy is the obvious intervention for this work with couples.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

Can a partner find desire (lust?) for their spouse/primary partner after there has been extra-relationship infidelity? Traditionally, infidelity therapy has been split between focusing on restoring trust after an affair, (Spring, 1996) helping to define where the fault lies for the affair and helping couples move out of the relationship. (Gordon, Baucom, Snyder, 2004) Is it possible that creating a sexual connection can restore desire in a couple, not only helping them each heal from the affair but creating a whole new

marriage or partnership going forward? Can sex therapy be used to facilitate this work, and if so, facilitated in what stage of the affair recovery?

#### ASSUMPTIONS

CAUSE . There are several reasons couples have affairs, and there are as many ways that sex therapy can be used to help couples recover from the breach of fidelity. These interventions may vary depending on the cause of the affair.

STAGES of AFFAIR RECOVERY. There are predictable stages of affair recovery that affect the erotic function of a relationship, and sex therapy can help at these stages to reintroduce sexual connection, reestablish erotic function and renew the relationship.

STAGES OF SEX THERAPY. Not all affairs indicate the need for the termination of a relationship. Erotic connection after an affair will differ depending on the type of affair and the stage of affair recovery. There are also predictable and concrete stages of sex therapy identifiable throughout the treatment that can help couples recover their sexual template after infidelity. Theoretically all monogamy falls along a continuum. Research should support this hypothesis.

#### HYPOTHESIS

Sex therapy can be used in the recovery from affairs, to create or restore long-term passion. Couples have a greater likelihood of staying together, and for longer periods of time, when they improve their sexual communication skills.

If there is to be erotic recovery in the primary partnership after infidelity, then this erotic renewal must be addressed within the relationship. Sexual renewal must begin with a new level of empathy. Sexual empathy is, by its definition, the capacity for one

partner to understand, validate and hold the space for the other's fantasies and desires, even when they are different than their own or even perhaps distasteful or disturbing to the partner. This differentiated view of couples work (Bader, 2002) may even be a benefit of the breach of trust that happens after an affair. Most couples do desire erotic fulfillment (Money, 1986) and some differentiation is inherent in the limerence phase (Tennov, 1999) of a new relationship. Differentiation after an affair may trigger new relationship energy, renewing erotic interest in a long term partner.

What is not known is whether there is sufficient research, clinical experience or academic writing to facilitate even a discussion of erotic recovery after infidelity. For purposes of this dissertation *erotic recovery* is defined as *sexual template recovery* or *erotic reconstruction* or *sexual and erotic connection* in partnerships. Increasing the erotic connection in couples, as mentioned in *Getting the Sex You Want*, by this author, (Nelson 2008) is also discussed in the literature, perhaps most distinctively by Masters & Johnson, in *On Sex & Human Loving*. (1982)

Whether a relationship's sexual function is suffering from neglect brought on by long term partnership and domesticity (Perel, 2006; Mitchell, 2002; Levine, 2006) or by conflict, the results are the same as in relationships where sexual interaction suffers because of trauma to the relationship, as in infidelity and affairs. In either case, erotic function declines, and emotional connection seems to be congruent with intimacy both in the feelings of love and passion as well as lust and desire. Desire and arousal (Ogden, 2008; Whipple, Hite, 1976) may not be intrinsically available in women, but can be consciously created and sex therapists may help women and couples reactivate their desire and arousal cycle of sexuality in the relationship. It may be that couples cannot do

this alone after the trauma to the relationship that occurs after infidelity, due to the nature of the post traumatic symptoms that occur (Herman, 1992; Pittman, 1989; Spring, 1996).

The hypothesis is that couples may need to renew and renegotiate their monogamy agreements after an affair with the help of a therapeutic milieu. Through sex therapy they can make the monogamy agreement transparent and explicit, revisioning their sexual life together. With the use of sex therapy techniques, couples can focus on making their erotic connection a priority. The hypothesis is that the research will show that both sex therapists and couples therapists will provide skill sets and exercises as well as case examples to show how this has been successful with couples.

## LITERATURE FINDINGS

### WHAT IS THE SEXUAL TEMPLATE?

As presented in a paper by Dr. William Granzig of the American Academy of Clinical Sexologists, (2004) the *sexual template* is defined as “the basis for love and lust.” (p1) Granzig says that “the exploration of the template is a therapeutic tool to unlock the patients’ resistance to revealing their individual sexual desires. This information is then used to treat, augment, or restore the desire phase of the human sexual response cycle.” (p1)

The sexual template is similar to John Money’s (1993) concept of the *love map*, a developmental template in the mind to describe the pair bonding that happens in all relationships. A love map is the picture in the mind that is based on developmental, sexual and psychological history that depicts one’s idealized love. This unconscious attraction to a perfected partner is the projection of an erotic and romantic ideal, and occurs early on, in the limerence (or romantic love) phase of a relationship.

The love map is the developmental template of the pair bond and what one does in that relational pair, in the idealized romantic partnership. This includes the mated pair's erotic and sexual behavior. Money describes three categories of the love map and how they become pathological. Hypophilia, or sexual dysfunction, may be seen in the lack of lust or desire for a partner, or in the inability to act physically in a sexual relationship. Hyperphilia, or erotomania, is the pathology of over focus and connection to feelings of lust, perhaps uncontrolled, as manifested in terms of this discussion by outside sexual relationships. He defines the third pathological category as paraphilias, which he defines as perversion or lust that is compulsive and focused on specific things or objects. This love map is created early and is many times difficult or impossible to change. Love maps may be a permanent sexual template, designed from early childhood as an unconscious route to the erotic desires inherent in all future adult relationships. (Money, 1993)

In affair recovery treatment, sexual template recovery after infidelity can restore a sense of connection and equilibrium to a system that has been destabilized through betrayal, dishonesty and denial. (Spring, 1996) But this can only happen when couples find hope in the idea that they must end their marriage or relationship in its present form, grieve the past and the loss of shared vision that may have precipitated the commitment, and move on to their second marriage with each other, re-sexualizing the partnership in a whole new way. (Perel and Nelson, 2009) This marriage then begins with a new generative stage of lust, connection and increased erotic energy. As in New Relationship Energy, or the limerence phase of a relationship, (Tennov, 1999) many times this happens in the early recovery phases of an affair and can feel like a new beginning.

## WHAT IS MONOGAMY?

Granzig (2004) defines the word *monogamy* as a legal term, meaning to be married to one person, versus *polygamy*, meaning being married to more than one at a time. The term *fidelity* is defined as a commitment to having a relationship that includes having sex with only one person. Couples may feel “monogamous” because they have made an explicit legal agreement with their partner, but implicitly they do not always address infidelity as a disruption of the sexual template. (Shernoff, 1996)

For purposes of this paper the terms *monogamy* and *fidelity* will be used interchangeably, although monogamy is a legal term to define a marital state, and fidelity is a commitment to one person sexually. The popular use of the word monogamy as sexual and emotional fidelity to one person will be used in this dissertation to avoid confusion to the reader.

Infidelity and affairs in this paper will be defined as a non-transparent, non-negotiated betrayal of a monogamy commitment, either explicit or implicit, in a committed partnership. This partnership can be gay or straight, either legally married, living together or dating. This betrayal can include one partner having an outside emotional relationship, sexual relationship, internet relationship, or any relationship that constitutes a breach to the monogamy agreement in that partnership, where one partner feels betrayed, lied to, and experiences trauma as a result.

This paper will not address in detail the specific form of infidelity characterized by emotional affairs, pornography use, internet relationships, sex addiction, or other forms of monogamy breach perceived in committed relationships. For purposes of this research, this paper will use affairs, infidelity and non-monogamy as a way to describe

outside physical and sexual relationships beyond the monogamy agreement in committed partnerships.

Monogamy has been defined by Ben-Zeev as romantic exclusivity. (2008) He defines this as the highest commitment of the romantic bond, and violating it with infidelity is the most emotionally difficult to tolerate because it is sensitive and intimate and touches on the idealization of romance. There is an entitlement to the natural thrill of romantic experience, and when proclaimed monogamy becomes dull, expectations lead to frustration and couples move into clandestine adultery to create excitement as an occasional deviation. When that deviation is more prevalent it threatens the relationship and is no longer a solution to boredom but risks the primary relationship as it breaks the exclusivity bond. Clandestine adultery leaves the social, explicit form of marriage intact while finding an outlet to reduce the psychological conflict of emotional needs. If marriage does not alter in some way, this solution will continue to break down marriages as they stand in their current form. (Ben-Zeev 2008)

Are human relationships inherently monogamous, and are affairs inevitable? In America, the courtship of a couple is what is described as polyamorous, with dating being a time of many possibilities. This courtship period tends to last longer than it does in other countries. Other cultures are more monogamous sooner in relationships. (Druckerman, 2007)

The question of monogamy is not its definition as much as whether or not it is inherent in human relationships or whether infidelity is inevitable to mammals, in particular to men and women. Barash and Lipton, (2000) in *The Myth of Monogamy; Fidelity and Infidelity in Animals and People*, say that humans, (as well as most animals)

are not naturally monogamous. They claim that humans can *work on monogamy* but that marriage is a moral decision and as a choice is not genetically inherent to humans as a species. Even man's closest primate relative, the bonobo chimp, is sexually active without distinction for partners or pair bonding.

Monogamy has its benefits, both to relationships and families. The longer animal pairs are together the more competent parents they became. A long term connected monogamous relationship breeds creativity among humans and is therefore not only socially desirable but is perhaps the most productive. Like humans, the animal kingdom does experience divorce, particularly after a year or more of nonproductive cycles. However, they are more likely to stay together for longer periods of time if they are producing young. (Lipton and Barash, 2000)

Animal couples and human couples tend to be attracted to someone similar to them in physical size, intelligence and background, as well as attractiveness. A well matched couple stays mated for longer. A more stable relationship results when each partner perceived them self to be slightly less desirable than their partners. The partner who feels more desirable is at higher risk of infidelity. (Lipton and Barash, 2000)

One thing that is known from research about female and male sexuality is that a tendency toward non-monogamy and multiple mating is not limited to men. There are generalizations in the research that men are more visual and therefore prone to more infidelity, since they have a need for sexual variety. This theory has components of investigation based on theory that men seek out more partners in order to ensure impregnation from as many mates as possible in order to ensure the perpetuation of the species. (Barash and Lipton (2000)

Males are however more prone to extra relational infidelity if looked at only from a biological perspective (p 23). Barash and Lipton say that because of the vast amount of sperm that men produce versus the limited number of eggs produced monthly by women; men's sperm are lower cost potential when seen as productive rate potential. This low cost potential leads to a lower threshold for sexual stimulation as well as a multiple partner disposition to ensure sperm viability. On page 23 Barash and Lipton say, "...male biology bodes ill for monogamy." In England, with blood studies, genetic testing resulted in the finding that six out of one hundred children were not their father's genetic offspring. (Barash and Lipton 2000)

The reality is that women are just as prone as men toward multiple mating, and will seek out multiple sexual partners in an effort to supply themselves with competing sperm to ensure the survival of the competitors. If a woman has only one partner, then they are decreasing their odds of impregnation. (Barash and Lipton, 2000) Also, the male anatomy is such that the head of the penis is shaped so that it scoops out competing sperm upon insertion and withdrawal. A little known fact is that at the tail end of the ejaculate is a minute amount of spermicide, intended to kill off a following man's sperm that may come into the vaginal canal after ejaculate has been left in the female partner. This would indicate that the tendency for females to be non-monogamous as a way to ensure impregnation is in direct conflict to the males need to be the winning sperm, ensuring that their sperm be the father. (Barash and Lipton, 2000; Fisher, 1992)

With the onset of DNA testing, what biologists once assumed were monogamous species (as evidenced by common nesting, parenting, socializing, copulating) they realize now that some of the offspring of these supposedly monogamous species (primarily

birds) were actually from other partners. In David Lacks *Ecological Adaptations for Breeding in Birds*, 92% of bird species are socially monogamous, but not sexually. 10-40% of baby birds are fathered by an extra pair male – not the mate of the supposedly monogamous female bird. It is still a mystery as to the motivation of this non-exclusivity. (Barash and Lipton, 2000)

Margaret Mead, anthropologist, said that human couples will have three marriages in their lifetime. The first is for sex, the second is for children and the third is for companionship. She also said that they can have all three marriages with the same person. (Mead, 1949) She also said that monogamy may be the hardest arrangement for humans. (Mead, 1949; Barash, Lipton 2001)

Shernoff (1996) in studies of gay men found that only one third of male couples are sexually exclusive. Male couples seem to have an easier acceptance of sexual non-exclusivity than heterosexual couples. This may be explained by a more nonjudgmental acceptance of “casual sex, anonymous sex and non-monogamy in couple relationships” (p 408).

This is not an indication of pathology or characterological disorders, nor is it a relational or attachment dysfunction, but a social difference normal to the subculture of gay males. This may be due to the male view of sex as recreation instead of emotional connection and is perhaps hardwired into the male brain. (Shernoff, 1996)

The erotic scripts inherent in gay men may contribute to fantasies and desires that include nonexclusive sexual experience for some men. Studies have shown that in these relationships there is no significant difference in the quality or satisfaction between the

exclusive and nonexclusive gay male couples (Blasband & Peplau 1985; LaSala 2004; 2005; Anger, et al 2000) 2ndary reference

Monogamous and male couples in open relationships had higher levels of relationship satisfaction and lower levels of psychological distress than couples who had secret affairs outside their partnerships. (Wagner et al, 2000 and LaSala, 2004, 2005) This matches a study done by Lehmler (2009) who revealed research on romantic secrecy, finding that concealment and secrecy in romantic relationships led to reduced commitment, lower self esteem and health problems to both partners in committed heterosexual relationships.

Definitions of fidelity vary in gay male couples with *fidelity* defined to mean sexually exclusive, but with *monogamy* meaning emotionally exclusive as in *monogamy of the heart*. Fidelity sometimes means simply being honest, as in referring to being open about having sex outside the committed relationship. Or fidelity was a way to describe maintaining the negotiated rules of non-monogamy within the parameters of the sexual relationship. Infidelity, conversely, was defined simply as breaking those rules, and the rules could be agreed on case by case between partners in the primary relationship. This included defining parameters as a onetime experience versus ongoing outside relationships. (Shernoff, 1996) No discussion was made around recovering or processing after the outside sexual relations occurred.

Levine (2005) notes that full fidelity to any value over a lifetime is unusual; a commitment to one religion, political or professional value or system over a lifetime is not expected. Most people change loyalties, affiliations and beliefs as they grow

developmentally. The question is why is it assumed that beliefs about monogamy remain the same over the lifetime of a marriage?

Monogamy rules vary culture to culture, with all countries and cultures having some set rules and some laws preventing infidelity. According to Amnesty International (1999) some countries still have the death penalty for infidelity; Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabi and Yemen (Mackay, 2001). During China's cultural revolution in the 1970s a person accused of having what they euphemistically called lifestyle problems could expect to lose his job and be publicly humiliated. (Druckerman, 2007)

Kinsey (1953) reported that it was difficult to calculate honest answers about infidelity because extramarital infidelity contained such shame and contained such risk of repercussions that respondents often lied on their survey results.

Even with legal and moral preventatives against adultery, 42% of British have been unfaithful, 40% of Germans, 40% of Mexicans, 36% of French, and 22% of Spanish, (Mackay 2001, 1998). In the Global Sex Survey of 2005 conducted by the condom maker in Britain, Durex, they ranked the levels of extramarital sex among people of forty one countries. Turkey with 58 percent adultery was the highest, and Israel was the lowest with just 7%. (Druckerman, 2007). This survey was done of 317,000 people. (The responses are not overly reliable as they were done on line with a voluntary survey, where respondents could respond as many times as they wanted.)

There are as many slang words for infidelity in as many countries. Where here in America we might say that cheating on a spouse means *having someone on the side*, in Sweden and Russia, they *sneak to the left*. In Israel they *eat on the side*, in Japan they *go off the path*, in Ireland they *play off sides*, and Englishmen *play away*. The Dutch go

*strange* or even stranger *pinch the cat in the dark* and the French *go see elsewhere*.

(Druckerman, 2007)

People everywhere seem to have roughly the same biological urges, but may channel them differently. Americans never think of themselves as being the *type* of person to have an affair. In 1973, 70 percent of Americans said affairs were always wrong. In 2004 82 percent said affairs were always wrong, the rest said affairs were almost always wrong. In 2006, Americans said that adultery was worse than polygamy and human cloning. (Druckerman, 2007)

Despite the moral prohibition against adultery, and the denial of the cheaters to believe they are the *type* to cheat, there are certain beliefs about what happens when couples do cheat, that seems to follow certain implicit cultural scripts. Druckerman, in her research world wide of different cultures and their mores about adultery found that there were certain rules to infidelity. She says,

“One part of the American script says that a cheating husband is supposed to tell his mistress that he’s unhappy with his wife. This means he’s not a lousy two timer but rather a sensitive soul who is understandably searching for the love and affection he deserves. In China, however, I discover that married men routinely praise their wives to their mistresses, to prove they respect women and to set boundaries for the affair.”

(Druckerman, 2007, p 20)

Shirley Glass’s studies in 1992 of why people cheat showed that her mail-in survey said that women justified their affairs by saying they were in love and men said they were sexually excited. (Glass, 1992) Kinsey reports that half of men and a quarter

of women have cheated. (Kinsey, 1948, 1953) These reports may be unreliable because men inflate their conquests and women underreport them.

Druckerman quotes a national sex survey that says that 98 percent of men and 78 percent of women have fantasized about someone other than their spouse and people who think about sex every day were 22 percent more likely to have had extramarital sex than people who thought about it only a few times a week. People who enjoyed spending time with their spouse's family were 24 percent less likely to have had extramarital sex. (Druckerman 2007)

In America's history, the puritans punished adultery with public whippings and death. The puritans used the biblical definition of adultery which includes only a married or betrothed woman and her lover. Straying husbands were charged with the lesser crime of fornication (sex between people who aren't married.) (Druckerman, 2007)

Early laws punished every kind of sex outside of marriage including fornication, sodomy, and other forms of adultery, including criminal conversation, which meant having sexual conversation with someone else's spouse. It also punished enticement which was defined as convincing a woman to leave her husband, and alienation of affection which was defined as taking affection from its rightful owner (meaning the husband). These were all crimes against the husband, since legally his wife belonged in body to him, until 1920 when the law said that women could vote and were no longer the property of her husband. Most of these were punishable by fines. But women could be divorced, have their children taken away, shunned from society, whipped, beaten, and sometimes put to death for these crimes. (Druckerman, 2007)

In 1969 women were granted the ability to obtain a no-fault divorce, which meant they could walk away from their marriage just because they wanted to, without having to prove cause. This meant that they could leave their marriage if their husbands were cheating, and they could keep their children, obtain child support and alimony as well. (Druckerman, 2007)

In South Africa the rates of infidelity are very high among men. Only a third of the men use condoms, despite being educated and aware about the high rates of HIV and AIDS. With these high rates of HIV and AIDS, cheating can lead to death and infection of one's own family. And yet the men will not use condoms. Brent Wolff, the state epidemiologist in Uganda, says that "you could say that the dynamics of human relationships are antithetical to condom use...asking someone to wear a condom implies that you don't trust him, and you need to trust to feel love and passion." (Druckerman, 2007, P 211)

In Israeli Jewish law, adultery is defined only if a married woman has sex with anyone other than her husband. A married man who commits adultery is committing a lesser sin. He is allowed to have a woman for sex on the side, so long as the concubine is unmarried and follows purity laws under Jewish tradition, for example, not having sex during her period and for two weeks afterward, and taking the traditional purity bath at the end of those two weeks. (Druckerman 2007)

In Indonesia, under Muslim Islamic law, adultery is illegal, punishable by up to seven years in prison. Although polygamy is legal there, it was originally allowed to support women whose husbands had died in war, but this original motivation has been forgotten. (Druckerman 2007)

Much of the literature on affair recovery assumes that infidelity is symptomatic of deeper problems in a marriage or committed relationship. It ignores the deeper questions of whether or not monogamy is a human dilemma (Barash, Lipton 2000).

It seems there are very few species, and certainly not humans, who are genetically predisposed to being intrinsically monogamous. There have been studies done on one mammal, the humble (and monogamous) prairie vole. Unlike its close relative, the promiscuous mountain vole, the prairie vole mates for life. The Prairie vole has a social family organization where the virgin female prairie voles groom the males, coming into direct contact with the pheromone present on the male prairie vole's genitals, releasing the female into estrus. The male and female prairie vole then mate and are pair bonded for life, remaining monogamous. Studies have shown that the male prairie vole has high rates of the hormone vasopressin, the chemical in male humans that determines attachment and monogamy, while the mountain voles lack this receptor. (Getz and Carter, 1980; Fisher, 2007)

Kipnis (2003) in her book *Against Love; A Polemic*, challenges beliefs about marriage and partnership and the expectation of one partner as the sexual ideal. To hold one person as the ideal is to expect them to be one's best friend and greatest lover, and is setting one up for profound disappointment when they do not meet all of an individual's needs. This sexual exclusivity model does not work, as is seen in the high rates of infidelity and divorce.

Mitchell (2002) discusses how some spouses hold the expectation that the marriage will meet some needs but not others. Where sex with partners outside the primary relationship is accepted, and open marriage contracts are negotiated, there is less

disappointment and erotic connection within the marriage is an enhancement and not taken for granted.

The impact of affairs has mostly been seen as negative, although some authors and clinicians have noticed a positive response in erotic connection immediately upon disclosure, and an emotional improvement in the long term relationship after an affair. This is noted in Reibstein and Richards (1993) where they observe that some couples had more sexual confidence and more self esteem, more insight into how they interact with the opposite sex, a greater sense of themselves and their autonomous selves, separate from a partner, and that they had more wisdom about relationships in general, growing as individuals even as their marriages disintegrated. There can be new bonds, both sexually and emotionally. They acknowledge that these results are determined partly by how the affair is disclosed – whether it is intentional or whether it is unintentionally discovered by the partner. Sometimes the impact of discovery can be positive.

### LIMERENCE

Dorothy Tennov coined the term limerence in 1979, after she researched romantic love experiences in early relationships. Limerence is an involuntary psychological state that happens to all lovers in the early phases of partnership, where erotic connection occurs. This intense desire for another person is romantic in nature and forms an obsessive need for the object of one's desire. Limerence is characterized by intensity, obsessive feelings, intrusive thoughts, compulsive behaviors, sexual desire and a lack of clear thinking or understanding of the true nature of the beloved. Sometimes limerence leads to despair and depression if the feelings are not reciprocal or if the relationship breaks up during this stage. Limerence seems to be common across all cultures and

socio-economic backgrounds and is therefore a shared experience among all humans.  
(Tennov, 1979)

Fisher (1992) described limerence as the initial stage of love, or the lust stage. She defines relationships as having three clear stages; lust, romantic love and attachment. Lust propels us into romantic love (sex begets love) and love forms attachment.

However, the more attached couples are the less lustful they become. Meanwhile, the brain is still capable of producing lust hormones. Most would like those lust chemicals to be directed to the person they are attached to, but they don't always go there. (Fisher 1992) Fisher does not go further and indicate the possibility of sex therapy being used to create intense sexual experiences where the brain could then manufacture those lust hormones, allowing the partners to experience that lust stage of relationship once again.

**CAUSES OF AFFAIRS: Affairs and infidelity– how do they affect the sexual template**

As noted in the previous section, affairs and infidelity are common across cultures and monogamy is not inherent in humans, but a conscious choice. Limerence and lust are only a temporary phenomenon in the early stages of relationships. Long term domesticity decreases eroticism in couples. (Perel, 2006) Therefore, infidelity seems inevitable.

Yet there are many reasons for affairs. One can assume that even though research mentioned previously states that many couples may not have affairs because they are unhappy in their marriage, there are men and women who will seek out extra marital sex for erotic variety, or because their partner is not providing sexual opportunity,

or because there is something in their sexual cathexis that is not being fulfilled in the primary relationship, and because of shame, it is difficult to admit to their spouse or primary partner. (see issues of shame: Ellis, 1898) Perhaps they have a fetish or paraphilia that they are acting out with an outside partner. (Morin, 1995)

Erotic variety as a motivation for sexual infidelity would assume that attraction was the motivation for cheating. Attractiveness is many times determined by an individual's observation of symmetry. This could be why men find breasts attractive, due to their visual protuberance they can be easily assessed for symmetry. (Barash and Lipton 2000)

Men had out of pair sex with women who had these and other physically desirable traits, however, women had out of pair sex with men with mental traits as well as being visually symmetrical. (Barash and Lipton 2000) Therefore attraction is not the only reason people have affairs. If it was, then every couple would be seeking outside partners that they found attractive and having sexual encounters outside of their committed partnerships.

Competition seems to play a part in mate and secondary mate selection. Women are also more likely to choose a partner that other females choose, even after they may have rejected them at first. Males are more desirable when females perceive them as desirable by other females. (Barash and Lipton 2000)

Scheinkman (2005) takes a broader look at the causes and the effects of infidelity on intimate relationships. Although most clinical writing on affairs focuses on adultery as betrayal and a breach of trust in the relationship, Scheinkman notes that this decreases the focus on the issues of love and desire that may be at play, and looks at infidelity as a

symptom of attachment disorders. She says that the focus on affair treatment as trauma work (Herman 1992) leaves out the intricacies of sexual conflict and erotic context unique to every couple.

Sheinkman (2005) agrees that affairs often involve betrayal, but says that affairs are not always about betrayal. She differentiates the two meanings in that most of what forces a partner into infidelity is a longing or yearning for something. It may be for a part of the self that has been lost or undiscovered. It may be to act out emotions both in response to the relationship, or in regards to the expression of the self. Rarely is the affair about purposeful deception.

Scheinkman (2005) goes on to say that in other parts of the world and in other cultures, honesty is viewed differently than it is here in the United States. Direct exposure to all the secrets of each partner is not always the goal of treatment and is not viewed as the best outcome for the partnership. Differing values of privacy and respect around infidelity disclosure reflect a different world view on affairs in general.

Culturally, America has viewed affairs and infidelity as a permanent breach of trust, because of the American value of total disclosure, transparency and complete honesty as a moral nonnegotiable aspect of relationship. In treatment, forcing couples to disclose affairs and infidelity as a way to comply with this standard of relationship may be creating the trauma they are trying to heal from.

Pittman (1998) takes a further dichotomizing stand in his work with affairs, and goes so far as to label the villain and the victim, and says that the victim has no responsibility regarding the infidelity, but that the villain or partner having the affair, must always be totally truthful in order to heal the relationship. This discounts any prior

secret keeping on the part of the victim, and implies that the betrayed partner played no part in the creation of the relationship needs that may have led to the affair, including erotic deficiencies.

Brown (1991) offers some clinical categorical explanations and does differentiate types and reasons for affairs, and does not group them into one moral judgment of dishonesty versus honesty. She says that couples have affairs for many reasons, and this implies that recovery from the affair, particularly erotic recovery, may take many paths. She claims that erotic deficiencies or differences and dissatisfaction are not causes of affairs.

Weil (2003) states that affairs may be a result of longing for wholeness and vitalization of the self. Infidelity may be an effort to repair early ruptures in the parental bond and attachment. This can be a desperate need for the re-experiencing of a close relationship in a way that creates a new self object experience, and a way to recreate a new experience through sexuality. Every time the person experiences the affair they get a new chance at recreating the self, and this may help to integrate the self object experience.

She quotes DeSalvo (DeSalvo, Louise 1999) who said that in adultery, infidelity is never about sex or desire, but about a need for autonomy. Weil agrees that affairs are a frantic attempt to create an idealized mirror. She goes on to say that infidelity may also be the result of a loss in the critical development of the sensual bond between mother and infant at a nurturing stage of development. This would imply that all affairs are about sensual reward, and would seem to contradict her earlier statement that affairs are about psychological needs for autonomy and mirroring of the idealized self.

Weil implies that even when an affair is “sexy” that it has little to do with sex, and more to do with the physical representation of an early holding as a container for early sorrow and loss. This would deny that sex has anything to do with developmental healing or health. (Weil, 2003)

Weil does describe a case where upon revealing an affair to her husband, he attempts to have reclaiming sex with her, for the first time in many years, feeling passion and closeness with her. She was encouraged and sought her own pleasure and satisfaction, for the first time perhaps opening her sexual template to ask for her needs to be met, at which time the author implies that the husband experienced shame and backed off of the sexual relationship. (Weil, 2003)

#### COLLUSION

State funded field research done on marriage in Japan found that most marriages grow sexless in the early years. They become distant and formal. Sex seems “embarrassingly personal.” (p 175). After the initial stages of marriage when couples grow connected and intimate, they then begin to grow more separate. They begin to see sex as something dirty and smelly, and too intimate for married couples. Men go to sex clubs and prostitutes for sex. Women have lovers, or suffer. The implicit monogamy agreement is that sex no longer belongs to the marriage contract, but will be taken care of discreetly outside of the partnership. The unspoken and implicit agreement is that if you pay for it, it’s not considered cheating. (Druckerman, 2007) The collusion this creates is inherent in the idea that marriage is too pure for the messiness of eroticism.

Interestingly, Charnay and Parnass (1995) found that 89% of betrayed spouses were either unconsciously aware of their partners infidelity or were in collusion with them, even if they claimed they were opposed to the affair behavior.

#### INDIVIDUATION

Metcalf, in her paper presented at Corfu, reminds clinicians that affairs by nature of their intensity and perhaps their brevity potentially create the opportunity for individuals to explore their identities in ways that would otherwise be unexplored. In this manner they change the relationship dramatically and quickly.

Affairs are usually short (most affairs last an average of 3 years) and many times secretive, and can be highly erotically charged. Interestingly, Metcalfe points out that the one discovering the affair experiences the same effects as the one who has the affair, but without the erotic and pleasure aspects. Both partners expand their experiences of their relationship with themselves as they learn new parts of their strengths and vulnerabilities, and their understanding of the world through a crisis of identity. They expand their experience of the other, as an experience in differentiation, or individuation. This is the opposite of emotional fusion, which seems to be the current view of romantic love. A new side of both people emerges after the disclosure of an affair. This may be experienced as erotic and the couple may see each other as the *other*, with their own erotic identity, thereby creating a self to be attracted to without losing their own identity. (Metcalf)

## EXCITEMENT/BOREDOM

Stoker (1986) discusses sexual and erotic attraction as a form of hostility, as the opposite of boredom. (Note: Can this hostility translate into treatment possibilities later on in the therapy?) He defines excitement as “...anticipation in which one alternates with extreme rapidity between expectation of danger and just about equal expectation of avoidance of danger, and in some cases, such as in eroticism, of replacing danger with pleasure.” (p?)

He says that excitement is a mental state that is the result of fantasy from past experiences reinvented to serve a need. Sexual excitement is not generated by qualities that create love in a couple. These qualities may actually work against the feelings of lust necessary for sexual turn on. Stoller’s claim is that *hostility*; or the desire to hurt another, is what creates sexual excitement. A lack of hostility leads to indifference and boredom, or lack of sexual excitement. This hostility is a repetitive attempt to undo traumas that threatened masculine or feminine development in childhood. (Stoker, 1986)

Sexual excitement is held together by secrets, along with hostility, risk, revenge, and dehumanization. The polarity of two possibilities always creates the excitement – as in pleasure and pain or danger and safety. (Stoker, 1986)

He quotes Freud, in one of his papers – *On The Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love*, that the tendency to debase sexual objects to increase sexual excitement points to the need to create an obstacle to satisfaction in order to heighten the desire. When the resistances are not enough to heighten excitement, we will at times create them. These scripts that are enacted throughout life are reparative and

meant to not only recreate the wounds of the past but also repair those early relational traumas. (Stoller, 1986)

The interchanges of hostility in these sexual scripts are created as the fantasy includes hostility against the self and projections of hostility toward others in retaliation for imbalances of power in childhood. This functions as a way to create revenge and restore the power and the masculinity or femininity threatened in the childhood script. This sexual script is many times secret. Because of the shame of *bad* internal desires these erotic pleasures are locked into the secret script, connected always with the idea of secrecy. This ensures the sexual excitement as well. These secrets can be kept from others, and sometimes from the self. One part may know the truth but another part of the self may act as if this is not acknowledged, creating an illusion of secretiveness. Fantasy and masturbation function as “aggressive depersonalization maneuvers” (p 24) and to “confess the fantasy is to confess to a crime.” (Stoker, 1986)

Excitement happens because the risk is not a real risk that threatens safety and security to the point where anxiety cannot be defeated. The fear of the greatest trauma, humiliation, is then transformed into excitement. Excitement is a defense against anxiety. It changes anxiety into something more bearable. (Stoker, 1986)

When mystery, risk and danger are reduced it causes a lack of interest, a reduced sexual excitement, and/or erotic boredom. This is similar to the lack of interest that occurs after seeing the same pornographic movie over and over again. Boredom by pornography and real life sexual relationship is caused by repetitive exposure to the same erotic scene. Stoker says it, “. . .is not related to depression or indifference but is probably

a state of frustration moving toward anticipation. It is a hunger for hostility.” (Stoker, 1986, p21)

Sexual excitement needs an internal fantasy or scenario that plays out pain from childhood. This story hides important conflicts and “screen memories” of real events, where the resolving of the issues can be “celebrated by orgasm.” (p 31) The actors chosen to act out the parts inherent in these scripts must fit the role but also vary them some so that they are unpredictable and add an element of surprise to the real world experience. However, if they do not stay assigned to their roles, implicit in this agreement is the unconscious desire to leave them and *find someone else to fit the need*. This aggression or hostility may also be a central part of the excitement as well. (Stoker, 1986)

By tearing down the old belief and story, a new one is created, but at great risk to the relationship. It fosters either boredom or abandonment. Individuals have a sexual template he describes as the “paradigmatic erotic scenario” (p ?) that allows us to understand them as a person because it plays out the early drama of childhood needs. (Stoker, 1986)

Fantasies are a way to rework a problem from childhood. By converting trauma to triumph and adding the sexual excitement, along with orgasm, one can fetishize or dehumanize a dilemma and reward the self with the behavioral response of orgasm or other sexualized reward. (Stoker, 1986)

What one actually thinks or feels is the culmination of all of ones inner fantasies. One’s mental life is experienced in this form continuously. A fantasy can be conscious, preconscious (available to consciousness if desired) or unconscious (out of consciousness

and not retrievable just by willing it there). An internal erotic script is a story line or plot with characters and action, and it is private until it is consciously shared or acted out.

(Stoller, 1986)

In Ogden's (2008) study of women in her ISIS study, four in five women said that they had the most satisfying sex with committed partners outside of their marriages. Sex with their husbands was, in one out of every six women, the least satisfying. Over one in thirty women said that sex was the most satisfying in affairs outside of their marriages.

### POWER/DOMINATION

Person (1986) challenges that male fantasies are not dominated by violence and aggression as may be assumed by popular cultural stereotype, but more by control of their penis and their partner. Phallic omnipotence as a cultural stereotype has held power, and depicts men as capable of violence and always craving domination over women. This is depicted in "...pornography, movies, TV, and sexual humor, and in the major fiction of our time." (1) This may not be a clear motivation for infidelity, nor a true reflection of men's fantasies. Men may have wish fantasies about domination but also of size and endurance, as well as willing and accessible females. (Person, 1986)

Person says men who have sexual domination and aggression fantasies reflect a developmental conflict, related to anxiety about castration or other fears of loss. Two common male fantasies are the always available women and lesbian sex. Although they do have fantasies also of rape, control, and domination, they also fantasize about being submissive, and masochistic. Many male fantasies have themes around unfulfilled desires. (Person, 1986)

In adolescence, the common theme for sexual fantasy is having a girl totally accessible, as in being tied to a bed. This is due to the desire for total exploration, uninterrupted, to discover a woman's anatomy. This continues in young men, developmentally the fantasies change to willing females, and consent, or even women who pursue the male. Domination fantasies and sadomasochistic desires were in the service of "phallic narcissism" and not to harm the woman through violence for the sake of inflicting pain alone. (Person, 1986, 10)

The difference in men and women's fantasies when it came to domination is great, according to Person. "Eleven percent of the men reported fantasies of torturing a sexual partner and 20 percent of whipping and beating a sexual partner, but 44 percent fantasied [sic] forcing a partner to submit to sexual acts. The comparable figures for women are 0 percent, 1 percent and 10 percent." (Person, 1986, p. 10)

Lesbian fantasies for men are primary probably because it protects them from humiliation by the lack of need for sexual performance, protecting the phallus. It also reflects women as being erotic and lustful, as they imagine them to be. (Person, 1986)

The remedy of fantasy of sexual power may be a compensatory need to make up for fear of the fathers superior sexual endowment. This threat or jealousy may lead to performance anxiety and the fear of rejection or infidelity, leading men to compensate through fantasy where they regain power through phallic domination. This fear of sexual powerlessness and female rejection creates a fantasy life than will ensure the opposite of ejaculatory dysfunction in the man. This may be a primitive response to a dependency need in the male and "narcissistic vulnerability" (p. 16) to control women through phallic "supremacy." (Person, 1986)

The boy fears that he will be rejected by his mother, from an analytical perspective, is an explanation of the fear of annihilation in the face of his father's phallic and biological superiority. This risk to his self respect perpetuates a constant risk of shame and humiliation. The adult anxiety about the potency of the penis can be ongoing and the fear of not pleasing the woman, or being rejected by her, can manifest in anger at her. Males will deny dependence on female sexual acceptance and participation. They create a male dominance to preserve their sense of self, to compensate for childhood wounds. (Person, 1986)

### SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

Bader (2002) reports that in The Journal of the American Medical Association 25% of women reported that they were unable to achieve orgasm, 30% lacked interest in sex and that 30% of men have premature ejaculation or other sexual dysfunction. He says that most couples complain they don't have sex often enough.

Consistent with other reports, Bader (2002) says intimacy and familiarity trigger unresolved issues and conflicts in both partners. The difference between normal marital ennui and pathological boredom is difficult to define. Bader claims that perhaps expectations of a turned on sex life are too high for long term couples. He says that sexual boredom is universal and should not be such a shameful topic for long term partners. The answers can be found in fantasy, and their origins in sexual excitement and psychological safety. He says that familiarity breeds sexual boredom. (Bader 2000) this is similar to other reports (Perel 2004; Sheinkman, 2005; Kipnis, 2003) and seems intuitive.

Intensity decreases over time with heightened intimacy. This may be related to stress and perhaps with mood states. Although the intensity may decrease, the actual quality may improve, as intimacy and familiarity with the body and interests increase. The increased safety of long term mature love may counteract inhibition, in similar ways that infatuation leads to novelty. (Bader 2002)

As couples are not familiar with each other early in their relationship, they are more distance psychologically, creating separateness and a merging from the fusion of sexual excitement. Because they are not interconnected through the merging of their lives as yet, they have space for differentiation and independence. Fusion happens when each partner is still solid in their own reality. Each partner can have their own reality, while experiencing the other, including sex, without risking the loss of self. This distance gives psychological space, and a boundary that allows for connection and discovery. (Bader 2002)

This distance also allow for an enhanced capacity for “sexual ruthlessness” (147). Sexual ruthlessness is described as a way of being erotically selfish and not concerned overly with the partner’s experience. This allows the self to experience their own erotic experience without guilt or shame, or worry or responsibility for the partner’s experience.

Without sexual ruthlessness, the partner is engulfed by the need to ensure that their partners experience is pleasurable and then cannot selfishly experience their own needs in entirety. Also, the greater the feeling of “otherness” the more likely one can erotically objectify the other. Being able to treat the sexual partner as a sexual object allows for more intensity. As couples become more familiar with each other’s bodies, the emotional familiarity increases, creating a relaxing of boundaries and a mutual

identification leading to a merging experience. “Each person feels he or she really ‘knows’ the other, for better or, perhaps increasingly, for worse.” (Bader 2002, p 148)

Many times these assumptions are untrue. The subjective experience is that of knowing everything about the other, and yet this identification is based on projection and is not necessarily a true representation of the other as separate from the self. This empathy for the other may create intimacy, but also guilt and worry. As the hidden self emerges there is less room for differentiation and sexual ruthlessness, and this decreases the sexual passion. Increased attunement in a couple can lead to decreased passion because empathy leads to responsibility for the other’s feelings. (Bader 2002)

The partners may unconsciously merge as one partner senses another’s emotions and subtly takes them on. As early in the relationship self doubt and insecurity may be low, couples slowly learn about the others vulnerabilities. Their own sense of responsibility then increases in order to protect the other and insecurity increases. Shame about hurting the partner and being responsible for the others pain may increase inhibitions and decrease passion. This is normal in emotionally attuning to a long term partner. (Bader 200)

Also, the more emotionally significant a partner becomes, the more the experience of them becomes similar to them as a primary parent. The long term partnership begins to echo the one from childhood attachment. The repetition of the parent child relationship is called transference, and will happen unconsciously. There is a tendency to repeat what happened in childhood in order to restore balance from childhood power struggles with primary caretakers. As much as a person experiences a partner as a parent, those projections will affect their sex life. (Bader 2002)

These projections inhibit erotic freedom and the “ruthless pursuit of pleasure” (Bader, 2002, 154). One will be drawn, almost unconsciously, to a partner that will allow enough safety to act out arousal. This person must prove that the belief about oneself is not true, and that sex can be enjoyed freely. The example on page 156 is “If we are worried about hurting a partner with the intensity of our sexual desire, but find ourselves with a partner who seems to particularly enjoy aggressive intensity, that partner is making it safe for us to get turned on.” (Bader 2002) This person is exciting because they are also safe.

Sexual problems sometimes arise from the desire by one partner to experience something that they need to get aroused which would allow them to decrease their shame for fantasizing about it, but this desire triggers too much shame in the other partner to provide. (Bader 2002)

Sexual problems and flagging interest can indicate a hidden conflict in the couple, many times of guilt and anxiety, even if the surface feelings are not conscious. Bader says that in reality,

“The ongoing irony – or tragedy, depending on how severe the inhibitions are – is that each partner actually wants nothing more than for the other to be ruthless, to assert, and to take what he or she wants without worrying so much about the other’s well being.” (Bader, 2002, p 171)

An example of this dilemma is the mother/whore split of the good wife, with the lusty desires who cannot express them and be a good wife and mother, and the husband who cannot bring his lustful desires to her for fear of degrading her with his needs, will split this off to an affair; to the other woman who loves sex. His wife may feel the lack

of this desire, and act it out in her fantasy life. She may, though, unconsciously repress her own needs to protect her husband's ego. (Bader 2002)

Some couples argue to experience make up sex. Sexual excitement that emerges from conflict can heal sexual and emotional distance, and create the psychological separation necessary to experience desire. This may also serve the purpose of deflecting merger and over identification. Intimacy can threaten these things, while arguing, fighting and conflict assures differentiation. Sexual ruthlessness is now possible. Fighting brings up the fear of loss and separation, and reconciliation brings a relief of that tension. (Bader 2002)

In lesbian couples, this dynamic, of merger-fighting-separation-sexual excitement-intimacy merger- is common to bed death. The strong identification that happens to same sex female couples has a narrative of maternal transferences and deep intimacy. This closeness collapses separation and psychological distance, killing erotic distance necessary for turn on, and then there is no room for sexual ruthlessness. The fighting/reconciliation cycle needs to be activated to restore balance and erotic connection. (Bader 2002)

## ATTACHMENT ISSUES

One theory proposed for the causes of infidelity is that it is a breach of attachment, and explained by attachment pathology. Susan Johnson, the author of *Emotionally Focused Therapy and Attachment Theory*, (2003) in her talk on *Attachment theory and Emotionally Focused therapy*, in Albuquerque New Mexico (2009) at the Imago International Conference, quotes *Pittman* (1989) and says that perhaps society is losing *social capital*, through loss of connection as social creatures divided by the nature

of the world in that where families no longer live in social communities with their extended families and support systems. Most couples are isolated, and forced to connect by the internet and through wireless connections.

She claims that humans are biologically wired for connection. She quotes a study by *Eisenberg* where rejection and abandonment is coded in the body as physical pain. She says that wounds on a hand take longer to heal during a hostile argument with a partner than they do during calmer times. (Johnson, 2009)

Attachment, she says is the difference between perception of the world as a painful, dangerous place and a safe world. If one calls out and no one answers, then it creates the feeling of the world as unsafe and threatening. This perception of threat or pain is tested in relation to relationship when she reports her own research done on couples using fMRI machines, to test their perception of distress, and how their attachment to a partner, both positive and negative, will help their anticipation, perception and experience of physical pain. (Johnson, 2009)

Johnson put couples into fMRI machines, one inside the machine and the other outside, and let them hold hands, while the one inside is shocked when they are shown the letter *X* on a screen. The hypothesis was that if there was a perceived danger, reflected in the encoded threat, shown in the brain activity as it happens, couples would see the world as a safer place while a safe and attached partner held their hand. Where there was secure attachment bond, the partner experiencing the pain would feel less threat, and perhaps experience less pain. (Johnson 2009)

The partner inside the fMRI machine, when told that they would receive a shock every time they saw an *X* on the screen, did perceive the threat of the pain with less

anxiety when holding a partners hand, if they felt attached to that partner. They also experienced less intensity in their threshold of pain when they felt the shock, if their partner was holding their hand. *However, when a distressed couple was put inside the machine, they actually did better holding a stranger's hand than their own partner's hand.* (Johnson, 2009)

Johnson also noted studies of resilient relationships where resilience signs determined successful outcomes, as shown in research by Ted Huston, who could predict in newlyweds who would be successful (as determined by longevity in their relationship) by watching which couples were more emotionally responsive to their partner. (Johnson, 2009)

Johnson developed Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) as a way to create empathic reflection, validation and repetition in the couple's therapy, claiming that couples pick up emotion on each others face within a 1/1000 of a millisecond. Therefore a partner would pick up emotional suppression and already has picked it up before there is a thought to suppress it. So even if one partner tries to deny an emotion or thought, by the time they decide not to think or feel that thought or emotion, it is almost too late. She asserts that there are only six main emotional states; anger, sadness, surprise/excitement, disgust/shame, fear and joy. In the face of anger one will naturally assert themselves or be defensive. Feeling sadness one will seek support or withdraw. When one is surprised or excited they will attend and explore, when disgusted or shamed will hide, expel or avoid. When there is fear they will flee, freeze or give up, and in the face of joy will seek contact and become more engaged. (Johnson 2003)

Johnson (2009) in her lecture talked about the pathway to primal panic that exists in the brain of humans. Upon seeing their partner with another man or woman, humans go into panic, anger and despair, even if there is a secure attachment. Depending on the type of attachment style a person has, their reaction to an attachment breach may include infidelity or jealousy, or other survival reactions. With an anxious attachment style, a partner may create drama or do something that forces the other to respond to them. With an avoidant attachment style, a partner will try to minimize the conflict, trying to care less in order to survive. With a fearful attachment style, a partner will create and experience chaos, reflecting an attachment style that appears to say come here, but don't touch me. (Johnson, 2003)

The sense of self and other is affected every day by attachment style, and in every relationship, including sexuality. Johnson says that with practice and good emotional presence, a couple can have a good sex life. If not, then they will have "shut down" sex, looking constantly for novelty. Differentiation and attachment are two sides of the same coin. Partners can be more separate and autonomous partner's can be if they are securely attached. She says that affairs are an attachment injury. (Johnson, 2009)

Barash and Lipton studied attachment styles in couples and said, "Women with a higher level of anxious attachment, who agreed with the statement "I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me" (p.77) had more extra marital (pair) partners than avoidant attachment styles. They use as an example women who agree with this statement as a barometer to determine anxious attachment; "I am nervous whenever anyone gets too close to me" (p. 77) (Barash and Lipton 2000)

For attachment theorists, like Susan Johnson, the spouse becomes the primary attachment figure for adults, serving as their emotional security, comfort and support. This may happen within a larger social and cultural context where extended family has decreased and the primary partner defaults as the fill in for all emotional needs in marriages and partnerships. (Johnson, 2009)

According to Johnson, couples experience separation distress when they have attachment disruption and will go through predictable stages. The four stages are One: Angry protest; Two: Clinging and seeking; Three: Depression and despair and Four: Detachment from the relationship. All of these stages are characterized by emotional expression, which is a way to communicate these motivational stages to the partner. Ways that couples deal with the loss of emotional connection include the following: One: a preoccupation with the relationship including constant monitoring, coercion and aggression; Two; a numbing out, or shutting down to protect the self and a decreased caring for the other; and Three; doing both for those who avoid and are afraid of intimate closeness in relationships. (Johnson, 2003)

Johnson's Emotionally Focused Therapy includes what she calls softening moments when a spouse, vulnerable and reaching out, engages with an accessible partner, asking for attachment needs to be met. For some couples sex may be a softening moment, or may be the only opportunity to have their dependency needs met. During sex they can connect both emotionally and physically with their partner, being held and touching, and perhaps finding reassurance in softer feelings. She does not mention emotional vulnerability or erotic needs of any kind, nor mention them as a priority. (Johnson 2003)

Although little is said about sex by Johnson, she does say that adult attachment is sexual. (Hazan & Zeifman (1994), secondary reference) She refers to the capacity to hold the other in ones mind as comforting and this can be used as supportive imagery. Greater self disclosure happens when there is a more secure attachment. Therapy can help foster this self disclosure, apparently indicating a higher level of attachment. Couples with a higher level of attachment are cognitively flexible under stress and open to ambiguity. These more attached partners “disclose more” (p. 109) and are more attuned, empathic and less rejecting. Johnson says,

“...the ability to disclose and confide in a direct way about needs and fears and to tune in to the others experience is crucial if partners are to define or redefine the relationship as a safe haven and a secure base.” (Johnson, 2003, p. 109)

#### SELF ESTEEM

In the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy’s theory of why couples have extra marital infidelity, (EMI) the reasons include low self esteem, relationship deficits (e.g. a lack of affection) or a social context in which infidelity is condoned. The vulnerabilities to extramarital infidelity include marital problems, including avoidance of conflict, and fear of intimacy, as well as life cycle changes, including transitioning to parenthood, empty-nesting, and exiting.

Morin (1995) describes several different types of affairs. He says there are flirtations, dalliances and affairs. Dalliances, he says should not be disclosed, as they mean nothing to the person having them, and can crush the person’s self esteem when finding out about them. Spouses may agree passively to monogamy and value sexual fidelity, without behaving in accordance with their explicit commitment. (Morin 1995)

In Solomon, Teagno, (2006) *Intimacy after Infidelity; How to Rebuild & Affair Proof Your Marriage*, they describe three different types of infidelity. The book has very little direct discussion about sexual or erotic recovery from each of these types of infidelity, but one should infer that there are erotic issues related to each. The authors do not give specific sexual interventions for each type.

The first type of infidelity they describe is the Infidelity of Fear. This type of infidelity is a result of fear of boredom, or a fear of not being attractive, or of being invisible. These fears will all trigger an infidelity response of some kind. The second type of infidelity they mention is the Infidelity of Loneliness. This is a result of couples disagreeing, not seeing the world in similar ways, and feeling alone in the relationship. The third type of Infidelity is the Infidelity if Anger, which occurs as a result of arguing in the relationship, or as a culmination of unexpressed or unhealed resentment. These types of infidelity would naturally lead to different needs later on in the affair recovery process. (Solomon, Teagno, 2006)

## RECOVERY

### STAGES OF AFFAIR RECOVERY

In America the pursuit of happiness is the way to justify affairs and any moral qualms that couples in this culture may have about cheating. (Druckerman, 2007)

Couples allow themselves to break out of their commitments to pursue sexual relationships with others as a way to pursue their personal freedom. Yet when the disclosure of infidelity happens in a relationship, two years of trauma after an affair is

common. It changes cognitive functioning and the nervous system is effected, (Druckerman, 2007) as with any crisis or trauma (Herman, 1992).

And this trauma can last for a while. The discovery of affairs becomes the focus of the relationship for years on end. Everything else recedes into the background during the initial stages of affair recovery. Several years of emotional angst in relationships during recovery is typical after affair disclosure in America, and not necessarily other cultures. Some couples never pull out of this phase of post disclosure. One spouse said “it robs you of your past.” (Druckerman, 2007, p 24)

Affair disclosure can trigger the end of a relationship, many times because they happen most often when there are already problems in the relationship. But affair disclosure crisis is not always negative. Sometimes it can be an opportunity to renew a commitment in the relationship, renew the direction of the partnership and perhaps start over. Some couples even begin dating each other again. (Morin 1995)

Ogden (2008) found that in her book *Return of Desire* that it was possible to move beyond the hurt and betrayal of infidelity to reclaim sexual desire.

Brown, in her book *Patterns of Infidelity and Their Treatment*, (1991) believes that disclosure of any hidden affair must happen in the therapy in order for the relationship to continue successfully and that nondisclosure is a less intimate form of partnerships. This lines up with her philosophy that intimacy is about total honesty in relationships.

Her contextual model for treatment is within a family systemic model, where she claims that affairs are an adaptation, dysfunctional in nature, created to survive a less than

satisfactory developmental system of origin and that this adaptation continues in adult relationships. (Brown, 1991)

Talking about President Bill Clinton's well publicized affair with Monica Lewinsky in 1998, Druckerman states on p 30 "his real crime, though, happened to be the other moral violation most closely linked to extramarital sex in America; lying." (Druckerman, 2007)

She questions, "what if it's the opposite, and less truthfulness would make us happier?" (Druckerman 2007, p 110)

Sabini and Green (2004) did three studies where they measured the emotional response of gender to the disclosure of affairs, to test the hypothesis that men are more bothered by sexual infidelity and women by emotional affairs. What they found was that sexual infidelity was associated with anger and blame, but emotional infidelity was associated with hurt feelings. Neither was determined by gender.

Levine, (2005) says that some people who have affairs do not regret their infidelities, and may experience benefits from being unfaithful. Men who visit paid sex workers may see this as normalized behavior among their mail peers and extra marital sex maybe only a degree of infidelity.

In the initial phase of therapy, the therapist may have three counter transference responses to infidelity, including anxiety or worry that their own spouse or partner may be cheating, or they may enjoy and even envy the clients pleasure at experiencing infidelity. This may induce panic about possible danger the patient may face and a quick referral to another resource or even advice to divorce. (Levine, 2005)

Levine (2005) uses a double sided approach with couples while trying to ascertain the causality of the affair. First he asks if the infidelity began as a value judgment; did they do it because they thought they were right or because they felt entitled to it? The second question explores whether the infidelity was a rebellion against the relationship as it exists currently with the partner; did they do it as a way to resist or get out of their current commitment?

When a wife wants to know the details of the infidelity committed by a man, Levine assures her that there may be ambivalence about knowing the answer to her question. If the man wants to know the details about the infidelity committed by the woman, he puts off the answers, concerned that domestic violence occurs more often between men and women from this disclosure. (Levine, 2005; Ogden, 2008)

Levine also cautions that the partner giving up the affair may be grieving the loss of the possibility of the affair partner, and acknowledges that the betrayed partner may not have sympathy for this grief, and it may stir up the pain of the betrayal. Levine acknowledges that if the partners have been unhappy prior to the disclosure of the affair, this is a publically and socially acceptable way to end the marriage, but if they choose to stay together they can decide that also. There is discussion that even if there is forgiveness there is often not an end to the discussion for a long time. (Levine, 2005; Druckerman, 2008)

Interestingly, Levine also states that many couples may fail to reestablish a sexual relationship after infidelity. This may be due to the ambivalence of the betrayed partner. If there is sex then there is the implied acceptance of the infidelity. It implies that

everything can go back to normal. He also mentions that it is less likely to become sexual the more episodes of infidelity there are in a partnership. (Levine, 2005)

The AAMFT website says that the marital history is rewritten to justify an ongoing affair. The affair person will rewrite the whole history of the relationship, comparing the forbidden love affair and the romantic idealization to the routine familiarity of a long term marriage.

In resuming mutually desired sex, what was thought of as an expectation or entitlement to sex in the partnership prior to the infidelity is no longer a right. Now sex is a way to bond through gratitude. Sex may also be a clarification of the wish to continue the partnership and build upon the new intimacy that can happen from weathering the storm of the affair. In the discussion of forgiveness he states that there must be persistent pervasive remorse. Levine (2005) notes that marriages can improve from the disclosure of infidelity, and that not all relationships fail as a result.

*In Surviving Infidelity*, (1998) Don David Lusterman identifies sex as a power struggle, when he describes that couples can be passive aggressive through the act of sex by not expressing their anger and having sex while withdrawing their affection and emotional connection. And that couples experience resentment around sex when they feel that the only time a partner shows affection is when they want sex.

*Helping Couples Get Past the Affair* (2009) by authors Baucom, Snyder, and Gordon describes three distinct stages of infidelity or affair recovery. Stage one focuses on helping couples deal with the crisis of discovery and cope with the initial impact. Baucom, Snyder and Gordon's treatment model in this stage is based on trauma techniques and they use tools designed to manage affect dysregulation in both partners.

In Stage Two the therapist helps the couple discover what caused the affair behaviors and what problems need to be addressed to prevent a repeat of further infidelity in the relationship. Stage three guides the couple to move on and separate or create a new vision of their life together, learning from the past to continue their relationship.

Spring (1998) is the only author who directly addresses the erotic element of a partnership after an affair. She is also the only author, although not a sex therapist, who gives direct advice and intervention for sexual exercises at home.

Spring (1998) talks about the aftermath of the affair and allows for both partners to experience intense emotion, struggle, grief, guilt, confusion, ambivalence and conflict. She relates to the couples therapy through the healing of the trust that has been breached, and the implication is that sexual recovery happens as the trust is restored.

According to Spring, (1998) after an affair sex is strained and layered with probable conflicts and potential for issues. She writes that there is the specter of a third person in the bedroom now that cannot be ignored, but that must be surpassed, in order to restore intimacy.

There might be a yearning to reestablish sexual intimacy to have the feeling of reconnection but safety has not yet been established in the early phases of treatment after an infidelity. Vulnerability due to a lack of trust after infidelity may lead to fear and suspicion which can cause performance anxiety which then can lead to performance difficulties. The pressure to perform sexually in the face of distrust and intimacy breach may add extra stress to the sex life and create erectile dysfunction in the male and other orgasmic performance issues in both partners. (Spring 1998)

The expectations may be very high for recovering sexual connection but feelings of inadequacy after an affair on the part of both partners may contribute to disappointment or thoughts that the relationship should end. These inadequacies may include body image issues and imagined comparisons to the outside partner. There may also be real longings for the new relationship passion that may have been in the affair. This comparison to the sex with the outside partner may affect the intimacy. (Spring 1998)

Spring's goals with the couples she works with to achieve sexual connection after an affair seem balanced and realistic. In part due to the fact that she has these goals at all, there is a built in recognition that intimacy comes from a renewed sexual life. She also acknowledges that prior sexual connection may not have been fulfilling for either partner and may have contributed to the cause of the affair. Regardless of causality, these issues must now be addressed if the couple is to continue toward a new vision of sexual and erotic connectedness. (Spring 1998)

One caution she gives to couples is to examine the meaning that is attributed to sexual behavior after infidelity that may be misinterpreted. Feeling responses to a partner's behavior may be suspicions or projections and not always facts. Different interpretations about the behaviors in bed of both the offending partner and the victim of the infidelity must be talked about and looked at so as not to be misunderstood and cause more harm to the sexual and emotional relationship. (Spring 1998)

One example she uses is that if the partner doesn't want sex it doesn't necessarily mean that they are still cheating. The partner should share that they have been taking

their spouses disinterest (or heightened interest) in sex personally and confirm with the partner the meaning of the sexual behavior. (Spring 1998)

Spring recommends that sex be used to reconnect and not prove fidelity. When couples can share that they are trying not to take interest or disinterest in sex personally they can focus on gestures of reconnection, and not use the frequency, level of interest, or amount of passion as a barometer to determine hidden meaning or fidelity outside the relationship. (Spring 1998)

She also recommends couples use a process oriented approach to sex focusing on sharing intimate time that is not goal oriented around orgasm. This takes the pressure off of the need to prove love, fidelity or attraction with sex, and removes some of the performance pressure inherent in post-infidelity sexuality. (Spring 1998)

One way that Spring gets away from putting all of the responsibility on either partner to restore the sex life of the couple is that she very clearly states that it is not just one partners responsibility but infers that the victim must restore intimacy by “...injecting creativity, energy, and romance back into your own lovemaking...” (Spring 1998, p 201)

She does give the offending party some responsibility to go out of their way to change the sexual dynamic by being more vocal about appreciation and complimenting their partners looks. Readers might wonder if this is a specific comment to men to admire their wives and girlfriends looks and appearance, or if this is designed for both men and women as an approach to be more vocal about their attraction. (Spring 1998)

Honesty about what sexual dysfunction was present in the affair and what may have been going on pre-infidelity is important in the communication about ongoing

sexual communication. This can normalize ongoing sexual performance issues, assuring both partners. It puts the focus on the work in the moment of what has perhaps been problematic all along. (Spring 1998)

Spring (1998) encourages couples to try not to avoid physical contact but to negotiate what kind of physical contact feels safe. She suggests things like the sensate focus exercise (see Masters & Johnson, 1982)

It may be normal for partners who have had an affair to compare sex with their lover to their current partner. Perhaps their current partner is more inhibited about sex. Maybe the affair was more exciting because it was dangerous and forbidden. Both partners have a responsibility now to revitalize passion at home if they are going to make the relationship work. She goes on to suggest self education using x-rated films and books on sexual response to learn about what brings turn on and arousal to the self and to the relationship. (Spring 1998)

As partners begin touching again, this may include learning ways to arouse the partner, perhaps for the first time. Spring gets very specific, encouraging them to explore the body and mutual masturbation. She encourages couples to become an expert in their own body and learn to convey this to their own partner. She tells couples that they must acknowledge that fantasy and sex tools are normal. (Spring 1998)

## SEX THERAPY

In Masters & Johnson's groundbreaking work *On Sex and Human Loving*, (1982), they describe arousal and desire in terms of the Human Sexual Response Cycle, a result of a study of 382 women and 312 men where sexual response was indicated to have four stages; excitement, plateau, orgasm and resolution. Each stage corresponded to a level of

arousal. This model is a descriptive technique to give couples a common language of to describe their sexual needs that can help them begin a new connection after infidelity.

Although Masters & Johnson is most widely known for sex research, their work on intimacy and communication skills lends itself to erotic recovery from infidelity in that it focuses on building trust. Before the current language of attachment psychology was in vogue, Masters & Johnson presented an approach to relationship coaching that focused on a variety of attachment styles that manifest in different intimacy styles.

They provide clear instruction on how to provide nonverbal communication to increase trust, commitment and decrease feelings of suspicion, rejection or impatience. Using techniques like the use of *I* language, expressing feelings and active listening Masters & Johnson teach couple to develop a language to talk about sex. Then they lead into the discussion of sexual fantasy.

While they provide a framework for couples to see that fantasy plays a major part in counteracting boredom and focusing the mind, boosting self esteem and improving relationships with long term partners, they provide safety to engage in erotic fantasies without acting them out. (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1982)

Instead of teaching some more conservative women to embrace what might be disturbing sexual fantasies, however, they move toward teaching women to change or stop their fantasies, without a clear understanding of why they have them and how they might embrace their own private internal lives. (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1982)

In *The Erotic Mind* by Jack Morin, (1995) Morin's theory that attraction plus an obstacle will equal erotic excitement is explained in the "four cornerstones of eroticism" that he describes in his book. The first: longing and anticipation, includes the short term

anticipation that makes sex more intense when it is finally experienced, if there is a teasing anticipation that is done purposely to add the element of anticipation as an aphrodisiac to sex. Longing and fulfillment describe true emotional longing, or being separated from the sex object against one's wishes, and then finally coming together in a moment of sexual fulfillment.

The second cornerstone is violation prohibitions, where forbidden fruit becomes the turn on, going beyond privacy and into realms of danger. This is where feeling naughty becomes enticing and erotic. It is easy to see where infidelity might come into play in this cornerstone of eroticism. (Morin, 1995)

The third cornerstone is the search for power, which includes the power plays in sex that have to do with size, strength, age, or relationship power that are erotic turn-ons, either in fantasy or in real life encounters. (Morin, 1995)

The final cornerstone is overcoming ambivalence either through fantasy or the ambivalence of longing. This ambivalence may also come into play with erotic fantasies of others outside of the primary partnership, creating fantasies or real opportunities for infidelity. (Morin, 1995)

All of these cornerstones lead to what Morin describes as feelings of peak eroticism, of which there are six types: exuberance, satisfaction, closeness, anxiety, guilt and anger. (Morin, 1995)

When discussing anger as a type of peak eroticism, he describes anger and arousal as a mobilizing force, spurring one to action, feeding the energy of sex. Many view anger as dangerous, but he describes it as self protection, and that it can be combined with arousal, (as in the use of the word *fuck*). Anger in couples can sometimes lead to

“sexless bickering,” (p. 120) or as in sex with high drama fueled by anger or rage. But if neither partner attacks or violates the integrity of the other (name calling or shaming) then enough connection can remain for erotic connection. (Morin 1995) This may be similar to the hostility or sexual ruthlessness discussed by Bader or Stoker previously.

Morin says that some couples fight to “restore their individuality and separateness, opening up a desire-enhancing gap between them.” (p 131) Morin says, “As they pull back from each other to stake out their positions, they regain the perspective necessary to see afresh what drew them to each other in the first place.....This disagreement reestablishes the otherness that is the basis of all attraction.” (p 131)

The object of sex therapy, according to Masters & Johnson, is to treat couples rapidly without dragging out the treatment. They created intensive formats that the couple would have to perform every day for two weeks. Allowing for continuity and decreasing anxiety, this rehab model allowed couples to be out of their normal lives long enough to make what they hoped would be long lasting changes. (Masters & Johnson, 1982)

They specified treatment to the individual couple, assuming it was a natural function controlled by the body. They introduced the term *spectatoring* which allowed that fear of performance created sexual dysfunction as couples left the experience and lost the connection to the partner, their own bodies and the experience. (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny, 1982)

Removing the blame from which partner was the identified problem or the partner with the dysfunction or lower desire partner, they would help couples see that sex may be only a part of a balanced relationship. This may be a model for erotic recovery after

affairs, even though they did not necessarily intend it as such. (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny, 1982)

Marta Meana says that female desire is not relational, it is primarily narcissistic. It is a yearning for self love, the wish to be the object of self love and erotic need of another. The desire to be wanted by another and be the erotic drive of the partner is the turn on for the woman, and will override her better judgment, and create physical arousal. (Bergner, 2009)

Brown, (1991) says that for men, sexual dissatisfaction is a major complaint in her research and is correlated highly with extramarital sex. She reports that men begin extramarital infidelity with sexual encounters, but that these can lead to emotional connections. She differentiates that women start with emotional relationships and that many times these lead to sexual infidelity.

Affairs, she says, have little to do with sex, however. She claims that affairs are about feelings of emptiness and disappointment, and hope and longing for more in the individual. This would explain why her books do not mention sexuality after the affair, and there is little or no mention of healing the sexual or erotic relationship in the primary bond after the affair. (Brown, 1991)

In Brown's next book *Affairs – A Guide to Working Through the Repercussions of Infidelity*, (1999), there is again very little mention of sex after infidelity. She talks about becoming emotionally vulnerable and developing reasonable expectations if the relationship is to continue after infidelity, but there is little mention of sex. Sexuality is only addressed in terms of pathology, in the chapters on the Sex Addiction as a type of affair, where the sex addict or the sexually abused partner is given permission to avoid

sex because of an abuse background. This narrow discussion of sexuality in the primary bond is regarding pathological erotic connection only.

In *Helping Couples Get Past The Affair*, (2009) by Baucom Snyder & Gordon, only a few pages are dedicated to sexuality between the couple recovering from an affair. Intimacy is discussed in two paragraphs as a deficit in sexual closeness, reflected only as a lack of intimacy. Differences in desire level as an arousal disorder or orgasmic dysfunction is dealt with in one line, and brought up only in its difficulty in being discussed. Regarding sexual desire or the expectation of sexual desire, the inability to resolve these differences can “easily lead to chronic dissatisfaction” is noted. (p 184) They point out that addressing this in treatment is only this was a factor that led up the affair. If so, then steps should be taken to create a vision of a more physically intimate relationship. They emphasize non-sexual contact as a way to reestablish intimacy. With an emphasis on compromise, the authors do not address or provide ways for couples to discuss or address these issues in treatment or privately.

Vaughn (1998), or Bercht (2006) have created a *beyond the affair* network for partners who have been victims of betrayal but they do not mention sex after infidelity as part of their healing steps in their beyond the affair work.

#### STAGES OF SEX THERAPY

Sex therapy can be used in the recovery from affairs, to create or restore long-term passion and facilitate erotic recovery. This must begin with communication skills, reinforced through mirroring, empathy and validation (Hendrix, 1998; Nelson, 2008) This early communication comes after the initial crisis phase of treatment, but may begin

in the secondary stage of therapy and certainly in the final stages of treatment where vision of the relationship going into the future must be established (Scheinkman, 2005) Couples have a greater likelihood of staying together, and for longer periods of time, when they improve their sexual communication skills. (Nelson, 2008)

Couples can be taught a new way of exploring their sexuality together that can provide a structure in which to explore fantasies and desires. This can give them the experience of being seen and heard. (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny, 1982) Paradoxically, experiencing the safety to talk to each other begins to loosen the tension that has been held with the compartmentalization of the secret keeping in infidelity. Although sometimes the secret in and of itself is what has kept the erotic energy and held it in one partner. This must be explored. (Bader, 2002)

In *On Sex and Human Loving*, Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1982) discuss ways that couples can enhance their sexual satisfaction. They give specific suggestions for couples to find fulfillment. First, they say that desire starts in the mind. This means that couples must get in the mood for sex by creating the atmosphere for erotic connection and by expressing affection. They must create emotional and physical connection through both verbal and nonverbal connection.

Second, Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1982) say that it is important to focus on the self as a sexual self instead of as someone who has an occasional erotic urge that is activated by physical arousal. This identification creates the self as a sexual being, and eroticism is then not determined by outside stimulation, including being dependent on a partner.

Third, they encourage both partners to take ownership of their own sexual pleasure, and of their bodies. There is an inference here that women should be in charge of their own orgasms through close communication and self pleasuring. (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny 1982)

Fourth, another important stage they recommend is to talk about sex. “One of the most amazing things to us about sexual behavior is how reticent most people are when it comes to talking about sex with their lovers.” (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny 1982, p 453) When increasing sexual communication, they suggest avoiding criticism but in their work they don’t give specific suggestions other than using code words or signals, which seems indirect and risks misunderstanding for the reader.

They do say in another article, when talking directly about affairs, that there are many things that need to be talked about, not just the affair, but the marriage itself. As the communication improves, the marriage becomes increasingly affair proof. (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1982)

Fifth, they suggest making regular time for sex with a partner, both in and out of the bedroom. Six, making sure that sex is not repetitive and routine; for which they give many specific suggestions, including switching dominant and submissive roles, invitations, experimenting, and trying new things including toys, positions, and play. The authors suggest not getting stuck in the notion that sex always has to end in orgasm or even intercourse. They say that using different tempos and being creative is most helpful. (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1982)

Seven, they report that fantasy is the best aphrodisiac. Encouraging sexual fantasy can lead to erotic desire. Eight, they caution against working too hard at sex, and

nine, not to get angry in the bedroom. Number nine seems somewhat folk-lore driven and does not give adequate substantiated proof that this can lead to long term negative effects for sexual relationships. (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny, 1982)

Number Ten on their list of suggestions and steps toward sexual satisfaction for couples is realizing that sex is more than just mechanicals and physical directions. Number Eleven is to create romance, Twelve, add play to sex and Thirteen realize that sometimes sex has to be scheduled in (this sounds like a repeat of Five) or at least done for the partner even if you are not in the mood. (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny, 1982)

Number Fourteen for Masters, Johnson & Kolodny (1982) even if partners don't agree on what they like in bed is that this is not an indicator that the relationship is not going to work out. They recommend in step Fifteen that sexual problems in the relationship should be taken in stride, unless they persist, at which time they should get help. The authors assure that this is relatively easy and should be pain free. And finally they hope couples will keep their expectations realistic about their erotic life. Knowing that every time won't be perfect is important.

Subotnik and Harris (1999) do claim a direct correlation between the revitalization of the sexual relationship and recommitting to marriage. On page 162 they say directly, "Part of recommitting to the marriage is revitalizing your sexual relationship."

The first stage of this revitalization is to develop open communication with the marital partner about sexual needs. They say that the ultimate key to a satisfying sexual relationship after infidelity is communication about what feels good, about sexual

fantasies and desires, and the feelings in the moment of erotic connection. (Subotnik and Harris, 1999)

In the early stages of recovery they also recommend sensual touch exercises without focusing on intercourse for at least 20 minutes on each partner, without genital touch. The goal is to be receptive and communicate pleasure signals which will allow the partner to understand the needs of the receiver. (Subotnik and Harris, 1999)

This sounds like the Masters & Johnson directive of Sensate Focus exercise, where a couple is directed to begin with two sessions focused on touching their partner without touching breasts or genitals in order to create a heightened awareness of touch sensation, both giving and receiving. This also increases the nonverbal communication skills of each partner and removes the performance demand. (Masters, Johnson, Kolodny, 1982, p 489) This slow approach back to touching may increase safety and trust.

#### EROTIC RECOVERY AFTER INFIDELITY: How and why it can happen

Charny and Parnass (1995) found in their study of 41 cases of infidelity seen in therapist's offices, the majority of the betrayed partners experienced damage to their self esteem and their sexual confidence. This would affect the potential for erotic recovery.

In *Can Love Last? The Fate of Romance over Time* (Mitchell 2002) says "Romance thrives on novelty, mystery and danger" (p27) Combining the erotic with the domestic life of a marriage negates the novelty. Couples become familiar with each other and this eventually kills all potential for mystery. Perel, (2006) in *Mating in Captivity* challenges the concept that there can be a reconciliation of the domestic with the erotic, and wonders if couples can create the tension that is lost in long term monogamy.

To work on the individuals own issues in the sexual partnership, Morin (1995) says they must confront their erotic shadow, exploring how they violate their own values, and they must look at the dark side of their own lust. Some questions he might ask the “victim” or the betrayed would be “how do you pursue your own sexual gratification? How do you manipulate?”

There is an assumption that all people on some level have fantasies, if not actions, that transcend boundaries, and that transcending those boundaries can lead to a good erotic experience. He clarifies that there is a difference between fantasy and action, and that thinking and feeling something are not the same as acting it out. He says that erotic health means that fantasy and behavior are not connected outside of stimulating experience. (Morin, 1995)

For example, sometimes a couples fantasies are the opposite of each other, or at odds. These erotic incompatibilities don't come out until later in the relationship. Morin says about sexual intimacy and passion, “Intimacy is engendered by the desire to know the every detail of the others dreams and fears. Passion, however, is felt when one gazes at the beloved from a distance and appreciates him or her as an individual who can never be fully known.” (Morin, 1995 p 301)

There is a difference in relationships between secrecy and privacy. Secrecy is hiding, privacy is maintaining non-relational space. Secrecy hurts, privacy enhances. Many couples fear secrets, therefore resent privacy. Erotic couples honor sexual privacy, including masturbatory activities, and sexual fantasy, and allow each other an internal private sexual realm that does not have to be shared. (Morin, 1995)

By virtue of the paradox of long term close relationships progressively moving toward a lack of erotic interest, it is noted that in marriages that begin with high levels of conflict, “the highest erotic excitements flourish.” (p 268) Morin claims that positive relationships are not an indicator of erotic intensity. Many times in the most positive relationships couples find that they must work hardest to integrate passion and emotional intensity. “Closeness and sexual desire are not one and the same, but rather two separate, yet interacting experiences.” (p 268)

Morin says that there is a difference between a commitment (wanting to) and an obligation (having to) and that the sexual desire decreases along with the willingness to do so when there is only obligation. Commitments allow fear to decrease so that the experience of pleasure can increase. (Morin, 1995)

Even when there is conflict, conflict can be self discovery, allowing for creative ways to problem solve, redirect energy, and increase the support network, by reinforcing those rituals and celebrations that the couple may have done together. Conflict then may cement the bond of the individuals. (Morin, 1995)

Morin (1995) says that being together and merged may create a bond but intimacy is created when two individuals are separate and willing to “...balance the dual imperatives of individuality and interdependence.” (Morin, 1995, p 275).

Individuation allows for an insecurity that heightens interest, as the individual wonders about the other, creating an increase in the relationship, and the eroticism will then improve. Erotic couples may actually flirt more with other people than less erotic couples, keeping their sexual selves alive outside of the primary partnership. (Morin 1995)

If one loves the partner from a place of deficiency, or is trying to complete the self through the other, versus loving the other from a place of completeness and self acceptance, then there will be less erotic satisfaction. (Morin, 1995)

Morin (1995) says that couples don't normally talk about their sex life in detail with each other, and may need to focus on this as an exercise. He recommends that they use the following rules when talking about their sex lives; never belittle or insult, never compare, never complain to friends, give regular positive feedback, talk when close and feeling good, be a good listener without defensiveness, write notes to your partner, express emotion, know when to keep quiet and remind each other of past encounters.

Perhaps of vital importance is that he reminds couples that they need to make time for sex, and pay attention to their erotic lives and to their partner. "Seasoned lovers make time for sex" (Morin, 1995, p 283)

#### RECOVERY FROM JEALOUSY

If couples are to recover from infidelity they must overcome and integrate safety, trust and recover from jealousy.

Barash and Lipton (2000) have determined in *The Myth of Monogamy* in their chapter on *Undermining the Myth; Males* that there is nothing more stimulating sexually among monogamous mammals than the possibility that the female of a monogamous pair bonded heterosexual couple may have experienced a sexual experience with an outside male. This would negate the idea that jealousy desexualizes relationships for males, but is perhaps an erotic stimulant.

They give the example that even in the bird kingdom; the male oriole will copulate with the female immediately after they hear the song of another male oriole,

indicating the presence of a competitive male in their territory. The significance of this is that perhaps they want to introduce their sperm as quickly as possible to compete with the other male. In ducks, a female will be forced by a non-mate and will immediately be copulated with by their male partner. This is to counter-act the “extra-pair” mating.

Also noted is the male Galapagos hawk’s inclination to immediately line up (as many as five or more at a time) to have sex with a female hawk after she has been penetrated by a male. Males are sexually aroused by a recently aroused female. This is true in rat species as well. (Barash and Lipton 2000)

For human males, the sexual proximity of another male or male competition may indicate sperm competition and may stimulate sexual threshold. As is quoted on page 40, “Many men are sexually aroused by thinking of their female partner having sexual relations with another male. Some even go out of their way to arrange such encounters (although this appears to be rare).” (Barash and Lipton, 2000, p 40)

Female animals mostly have affairs with partnered males, possibly under the biological assumption that the inferior males are still bachelors and offer inferior genetic resources (Barash and Lipton, 2000, p 66).

#### MATE GUARDING

The male tendency to establish and defend their females as well as protect their biological territory and guard their sexual rights to their mate as their exclusive partner is an effort to be the primary sperm donor and the father of all offspring. Out of almost 850 human cultures all but four show signs of mate guarding, where men watched over their women. Men were more intense about their mate guarding when the women were fertile (during ovulation). British research backed this up when they found that the less time a

woman spent with their man the more likely she would have sex with someone else.  
(Barash and Lipton, 2000)

Competition consisted of males in better physical condition – among all species including human. (Barash and Lipton, 2000). (Interestingly, men who were in poor condition were better mates in general – they were more monogamous, and spent more time, money and effort on pleasing their mates.)

Among many species, males can fit their female mates with a natural equivalent of a chastity belt, or a “copulatory plug.” Among many species-including most mammals-part of the seminal fluid coagulates and forms a rubbery mass that is often visible, protruding slightly from the vagina. It used to be thought that these copulatory plugs served to prevent sperm from leaking out. But they also work the other way: to keep other males from getting in. These preventative blocking devices would not be necessary if females weren’t inclined to infidelity. (Barash and Lipton, 2000)

In the world of spiders, males are often attracted by female pheromones, which waft downwind from their web. Males will destroy a female’s web after mating with her. Although not a chastity belt, such actions represents something similar; it is the male’s effort to prevent his mate’s sexual infidelity. By ruining her web, the male drastically reduces the chances that another male will find and mate with the same female. (Barash and Lipton, 2000, p 36)

Another way to prevent infidelity among species is frequent copulation. When the male cannot mate guard he uses his sperm often as opposition to swamp the competition. Mate guarding is preferred, to save the need for copious amounts of sperm production. (Barash and Lipton, 2000)

Resentment about infidelity may interfere with sexual recovery after an affair, as well as the long term boredom and familiarity that is inherent in marriage. In order to facilitate erotic connection, planning and preparation need to happen to create opportunities for new sexual activities. Both partners must be willing and committed to this process. (Subotnik, Harris, 1999)

Although Subotnik and Harris (1999) recommend these *sexual activities* after infidelity, they do not give specific ways to increase erotic connection, and their book only has two paragraphs that deal directly with sexuality.

### PROGNOSIS

According to Gottman, (1999) being caught and revealing indiscretion of any kind honestly will determine how a relationship is repaired. Repair determines outcome. Remorse reflects a willingness to change the relationship and determines the potential to do so. The number of years together does not determine a positive or negative outcome to the relationship.

Going back to Ben-Zeev's theory of monogamy as defined by romantic exclusivity, this exclusivity may negatively impact the idealization of romantic expectation in long term partnership. He recommends a new view of relationship partnering where each sees the other as unique, instead of exclusive. This uniqueness approach to relationships belies the need for rigidity in boundaries, and allows the individual to be celebrated as distinct and different from others, recognized as special. This emphasis on uniqueness versus exclusivity would mean that loyalty shifts to a more flexible and fluid type of exclusivity. The need to feel unique and special may be a

greater emotional need than the need for exclusivity. He claims that this will affect the longevity of the romantic relationship, as it holds greater significance. (Ben-Zeev, 2008)

In *Staying Together, When an Affair Pulls You Apart*, (2006) Stephen Judah notes that couples need to set a new vision for their relationship as a way to move toward a new future together. However, nowhere in the list of things to add to the vision does he mention a sexual relationship. His list of things to include in the vision of the relationship future includes family, finance and work, but not sex. This may be a reflection of an underlying Christian perspective throughout the tenants of the books philosophy.

After infidelity, it is harder to give as generously, and many times couples find that the sexual generosity they may have given in the past has now dried up.

When we feel the initial phases of love, or limerence, we feel generous and giving. Lewis says, in *The Four Loves; The Much Beloved Exploration of the Nature of Love*, "...one of the first things Eros does is to obliterate the distinction between giving and receiving." (Lewis, p 96)

## RESULTS

The original assumption in this research was that "Through erotological recovery, sex therapy can restore the desire phase of the relationship." And that this might also affect the emotional recovery of the partnership after an affair. The assumption was also that affairs happen for many reasons, and that infidelity does not always have to mean the end of a relationship. Depending on whether or not the couple chooses to stay together after the disclosure of infidelity, the question was could they restore their sexual template

or explore and even improve their erotic life? Could this perhaps even prevent infidelity in the future?

The hypothesis as stated was,

Sex therapists and sexologists can focus on restoring relationships despite infidelity using sexual template recovery and erotic methodology designed to reconnect the couple. A damaged relationship can recover and be repaired, becoming stronger, more erotically connected and renewed after an affair.

Research has shown that most of the literature seems to focus on pathological erotic behavior and connection, fantasy and acting out of desires, in terms of the primary partner either in avoidance (what Money (1986) calls hypophilia) or by acting out through erotomania in what Money (1986) describes as hyperphilia or a pursuit of lust with little regard for the primary relationship by creating sexual opportunities outside of the primary monogamous connection.

There is little research or writing about how to help the couple in a therapeutic setting to reinstate their sexual relationship, create intimacy and overcome resistance to eroticism after infidelity. Spring (1998) was one of the few authors who recommended sex as a way to find reconnection after infidelity, implying that it was a way to repair the relationship, and served as an integral part of the relationship contract. Her recommendation that it be used to connect and not to prove fidelity is wise in that according to the research couples will experience confusion about what the sex means. Attaching meaning to sex after infidelity may make the erotic recovery a more loaded experience, creating emotional blocks and confusion for both men and women.

If a partner is interested or disinterested in sex, the story a partner makes up about what this means for them can determine the recovery both sexually and emotionally. They may assume that the amount of sex, the level of arousal or desire is dependant on the emotional fidelity of the partner, and is contingent on the success of the continued relationship.

Furthermore, earlier assumptions included that there were several and varied causes for affairs, and that sex therapy could help certain couples, depending on the reason for the infidelity. Second, that there were predictable stages of affair recovery that affected the erotic function of a relationship, and that sex therapy could help at certain stages to reintroduce sexual connection, reestablishing erotic connection and perhaps renew the relationship. And third, there were predictable and concrete stages of sex therapy identifiable throughout the treatment to help couples with erotic sexual template recovery after infidelity. The theory was that all monogamy falls along a continuum. The expectation was that some of the research would support this hypothesis.

## FINDINGS

### Earlier ASSUMPTIONS

CAUSE. One of the assumptions on this topic was that there would be several reasons that couples have affairs, and therefore there would be many ways that couples could use sex therapy to recover from the breach of fidelity, depending on the cause of the affair.

The findings on the cause of affairs matched the earlier assumption, in that there are several reasons and causes, although not all research confirmed that there are

identifiable causes. The categories have been limited and integrated to the findings below, narrowing down the categories to the following causes for infidelity:

Developmental needs seem to fall under two broad categories, one for growth of the self and one for sexual growth:

**Self**

Individuation  
Attachment Issues  
Self Esteem  
Collusion

**Sex**

Sexless Marriage  
Excitement/Boredom  
Power/Domination  
Sexual Dysfunction

There may be other reasons that couples have affairs, but these are the general categories that assimilated the current research. Each category effects how sex therapists may help couples to sexually connect after infidelity.

Affairs seem to be covered under a multitude of developmental needs. In *affairs of the self*, partners may unconsciously and implicitly be acting out earlier childhood wounds, as they build the self that they need to create in relation to the *other*; a sexualized object that is split off from the *good* object that has become parentified in the primary partnership.

In the *individuation* affair, the assumption is that the reason a partner may go outside of their primary partnership committing sexual infidelity is for developmental integration. One way this may be explained is that infidelity in some couples is an adaptation that happens in their implicit monogamy agreement, as a coping skill to create

differentiation when there is fear of identity loss. Extending out beyond the self expanding the boundaries of the relationship may be a way to create space in a relationship where there is fear of merging.

Similar to individuation, as the *attachment* to the primary partner threatens the sense of self, the affair person moves outside of the circle of attachment to individuate and separate, enacting an adolescent phase of development that may not have been cemented in late adolescence. This re-do may have been interrupted sexually and erotically if there was trauma or a lack of integration of the erotic self at this phase of development.

In the *Sexual Growth* affairs, within long term committed partnership, both explicit and implicit, the relationship becomes less erotic and more desexualized, and the partner who needs to *remember* his sexuality turns toward an attraction to a less personalized outside object that can be eroticized, since there is no emotional connection.

Both men and women, although reporting being happy both sexually and emotionally in their current partnership, may seek out extra marital sex for erotic variety, or because their partner is not providing sexual opportunity, or because there is something in their sexual cathexis that is not being fulfilled in the primary relationship. This may restore, reclaim or keep the sexual template alive if there is a fetish or paraphilia that they are acting out with an outside partner and that they cannot bring home to their spouse or primary partner.

If there is to be erotic recovery in the primary partnership after infidelity, then this erotic interest must be addressed within the relationship. Sexual empathy is, by its definition, the capacity for one partner to understand, validate and hold the space for a

partners fantasies and desires, even when they are different than their own or even distasteful or disturbing to the partner. Most couples do desire erotic fulfillment and want to connect erotically to their partner. What remains to be seen is if partners can tolerate outside sexual attachments and still feel the primary bond of exclusivity in their committed relationship. Some gay male relationships seem to have allowed this open style of relationship, and this may reflect a cultural shift toward a more open style of marriage for heterosexual relationships as well. More research needs to be done on a longitudinal level to determine tolerance, jealousy, and sexual openness in committed long term couples.

#### STAGES of AFFAIR RECOVERY

Another assumption was that there would be available research that showed that there were predictable stages of affair recovery that affected the erotic function of a relationship, and that sex therapy could help at certain stages to reintroduce sexual connection, reestablishing erotic connection and perhaps renew the relationship.

There are several predictable phases of affair recovery. The research is generally reflected in three stages of recovery: Most writing on affair recovery says that the first stage covers the areas of establishing safety, addressing painful emotions and normalizing trauma symptoms. The Recovery Process is Stage 2 and includes insight into what vulnerabilities led to the extramarital infidelity and telling the story of the affair. Stage 3 is the Final stage and includes the integrations of the meaning of the affair into the present, moving into the future, and healing and forgiveness.

Most research and books on infidelity do not go beyond forgiveness. The assumption is that the betrayed party should forgive as part of the therapeutic process,

and this implies that the topic might never be brought up or discussed again, except in certain instances. The forgiveness process is an ending that sounds mysteriously like “happily ever after” without addressing the realities of life after sexual and emotional infidelity. What happens after a partner is unfaithful and a couple chooses to stay together, and how do they integrate a sexual life together, perhaps recovering erotically or starting over? There is no research that shows that anyone has explored eroticism or sex therapy as part of this process.

As a result of this research, this author has developed the following Phases of Fidelity Recovery to include erotic recovery:

### **Phases of Fidelity Recovery**

#### **Phase I - Crisis**

Establish Safety

Assess for domestic violence, suicidality

Assess for co-morbidity (e.g., addiction, abuse, mental illness)

Stabilize family

Address painful affect

Normalize trauma

Contract for no decisions yet

Close exits for finite period

#### **Erotic Steps in Phase 1**

Normalize sex for comfort

Re-claiming Sex

Mate Guarding

Sex for Connection without expectation

Reduce Expectation or Meaning of Sex

Allow for Insecurity

Predict Emotional Volatility

Unpredictability and Destabilizing may increase sexual desire

#### **Phase 2 – Renegotiate, Renew**

Insight into personal vulnerabilities that led to affair

Tell the story of affair  
Dialogue about meaning of affair  
Figure out what it meant about me  
Figure out what it meant about you  
Figure out what it meant about us

**Erotic Steps in Phase 2**

Erotic exercises  
Intentional connection  
Safety can decrease eroticism but increase trust  
Sensate Focus  
Communication exercises  
Sex Date  
Erotic commitment

**Phase 3 – Reevaluate**

Assess for permanence or permission to leave  
Create vision of new relationship  
Grieve old marriage/partnership  
Negotiate fidelity for new partnership  
Acknowledge fluidity  
Integrate meaning of affair with self/other/us

**Erotic Steps in Phase 3**

Reparative and corrective communication  
Sexual appreciation exercises  
Erotic Fluidity  
Monogamy contracts renewed often  
Sexual empathy  
Fantasy Assignments  
Close Exits

As couples in long term partnerships lose interest and curiosity in their partners they also lose the longing and attraction that goes along with wanting and desiring a new partner. (Stoller,1986; Metcalf) Falling into desire and lust for a new partner is a logical step in the desire phase of relationship. In limerence stages of relationships one is curious about a partner and longs for what one doesn't know and cannot have. As one finds a settled committed partnership with that person the distance between them, in

which the attraction grew, closes, and the longing disappears, or lies dormant. Then one may begin to long for something else outside of oneself that one cannot have.

## STAGES OF SEX THERAPY

The research should also show that not all affairs indicate the need for the end of a relationship. Erotic connection after an affair might differ depending on the type of affair, the stage of affair recovery, and that there are predictable and concrete stages of sex therapy identifiable throughout the treatment to help couples with erotic sexual template recovery after infidelity. Theoretically all monogamy falls along a continuum. I expected some of the research to support this hypothesis.

There are no predictable stages of sex therapy after infidelity in the research. No authors or therapists, either marriage therapists or sex therapists, have focused on combining sex therapy as a specialty area after infidelity. The assumption that this area would be delicate and sensitive due to the complications of the betrayal, shock, anger, and questions about the continuation of the relationship all play a role in determining whether or not sex therapy can help the couple.

Therapists may have a natural hesitancy to talk to a couple about sex while they are in the crisis phase of treatment. Couples are stabilizing and may not want to work on their erotic recovery. They might not feel safe. At the same time, couples are often embarrassed to admit to their therapists that they are having sex during the initial phases after affair disclosure. This should be normalized and talked about in treatment.

There are stages of Erotic Recovery after infidelity that developed as a result of the research here. This combines the work of affair recovery with what may have been intuitively assumed might impact positively by sex therapy at each stage.

These stages can be combined in the following ways:

## EROTIC RECOVERY PHASES

### CRISIS PHASE:

When there is disclosure of an affair, suddenly, aside from the initial shock and crisis of betrayal, there is also new curiosity and discovery about the primary partner. Questions like the following are common during this phase: *How could they do this? I feel like I don't even know you. I have no idea how you could do this to me. Who are you?* These questions, albeit painful, are the beginning of a new curiosity and wondering. They are also the experience of a new sense of differentiation. The partner is once again seen as the other, and no longer a narcissistic extension. Now they are desired and adored by another, and that part of them is longed for as well. The betrayed sees that they were sexual and erotic with another and they long to know that part of them for which they were not privy. This can trigger new erotic and sexual longings for the betraying partner.

At first this is a distressing and disturbing experience for the partner who is going through the infidelity. They may wonder how they can be attracted to or experiencing such intense sexual desire and perhaps even a new found sexual intensity for a betraying partner. And yet many times couples will find that the affair triggers a new and explosive sexual connection. This re-claiming sex helps them not only to find their way back to each other, but also to find a new erotic connection. This sexual energy is not indicative of whether or not the couple will survive and stay together long term. Many times it is a stage of the affair recovery. Research needs to be done to know if this stage of recovery can be used to perpetuate deeper and more in-depth treatment strategies.

In the initial phase of disclosure after infidelity, the betrayed partner may become obsessed with finding the evidence to support and accuse their partner. When the betrayed partner is encouraged to be investigative rather than a detective about their partner's affair, there is more empathy and a greater likelihood for recovery for the betrayed partner (Perel 2009). When the betrayed partner searches for phone records, emails, receipts in pockets, they only increase their own anxiety and decrease their level of trust for their partner. When they become curious about how the affair affected their partner and what meaning it had for their partner's sexual template then they can begin to trust and relax.

A new empathy can result from asking questions like:

*What did you long for that this affair did for you? How did you manage to balance two partners in your life? What was it like for you to get your sexual needs met by someone else? What did they give you that you needed? What did you feel like when you were with them?*

Rather than asking repetitive details about the specific sexual acts that recreate wounding and are devaluing and debasing in the treatment, the therapist can direct the partners to begin a process of communication that can interweave with a level of sexual communication as well. It might include fantasies and desires from both partners. It might sound like;

*What I always longed for...*

Perhaps there are parts of the erotic life that the partners continue to enjoy during the treatment. There is a lack in the literature about ways to comfort the couple and normalize this experience for them. There is also very little information about how to

begin to integrate new things that both would like to try. Perhaps both have sexual desires that they have been afraid to talk about. Without a language in which to express these desires, the impulse to try new things may be interpreted as a wound in that it may be what the partner experienced with the outside partner, or learned from a sex worker or during a sexual fling.

#### RENEGOTIATE/RENEW PHASE:

Paradoxically, experiencing the safety to talk to each other about sex begins to loosen the tension that has been held with the compartmentalization of secret keeping inherent in infidelity. Couples can be taught a new way of exploring their sexuality together that can provide a structure in which to explore fantasies and desires. This can give them the experience of being seen and heard.

In this second phase of recovery, the narrative of the affair can be discussed with the couple, in ways that address both the emotional and sexual impact on the relationship. As couples rewrite their implicit monogamy agreements, there is a need to make their stories and the meanings that they assigned to the infidelity clear to each of them. This can lead to increased empathy and connection.

The therapist can direct the couples to discuss through dialogue in the sessions; **directed emotional attempts to reconnect** that would sound like:

*What did the affair mean to you (sexually)?*

*What did the affair mean to me (sexually)?*

*What did the affair mean to us (sexually)?*

In this phase of renegotiating, sex may be resumed or re-started. This mutual desire for sex does not have to have the same meaning. One partner may want sex for

emotional connection while the other may want only physical release. This expectation is realistic and should be normalized. Sex can be directed as a gift that they offer each other, as a selfish way to get their needs met in the moment, or as a way to bond through gratitude. What it is not is an entitlement due to the explicit monogamy agreement of their relationship. Sex may be a way to express a wish to continue the relationship or it may be a way to increase intimacy through the crisis and drama of the first stage of recovery. Building on the work that the couple did in the earlier stages of treatment, sex can now be something that can and should be addressed directly and with precision. Both outer directed interventions, like exercises both in the office and at home can be used, as well as inner directed insight oriented discussion about how sex has played a part in the relationship in the past and how this has contributed to the infidelity is important as the couple moves through renegotiation.

Keeping in mind that not all relationships fail as a result of infidelity (Levine, 2005) must there still be what he calls persistent pervasive remorse? This seems complicit with the idea that the betrayed partner must, in response to the persistent pervasive remorse, then provide forgiveness in order to move on in the relationship. If the affair creates a new and more erotic and connected relationship, does the betraying partner need to perpetuate the remorse?

It is the trauma of detachment that creates affair crisis, not always the sexual infidelity. Attachment theorists emphasize dependency needs as normal and healthy to couples, defining them as effective or ineffective dependencies, and not as psychologically or developmentally pathological. Healthy dependency includes autonomy and not self sufficiency. Therefore it would seem that affairs are a natural

response to over dependency. Infidelity can be one way of breaking free from over dependency and restabilizing health, restoring equilibrium to the marital system. This fight for autonomy through self sufficiency may be developmentally similar to the separation and individuation needs of adolescence and may be why infidelity is sometimes perceived as a narcissistic need. This may be true, but then it also true that there is a collusion in partnerships that become over dependent, to find a way for at least one of the partners to break away and detach, so that each may resume a sense of self and be more effectively dependent, more autonomous and “confidently” separate.

Separation distress may be predictable when one partner is looking for emotional connection, and the other is withdrawing to protect themselves from criticism. This pursue and withdraw cycle can be acted out in the bedroom, where sex becomes the power that is used to negotiate distance. This pursuer/distancer cycle only lasts until the pursuer stops pursuing. When the pursuing spouse gives up and begins to withdraw they have already begun detachment. At this point it is too late; the detachment has already begun as a move toward not only independence but individuation and a move toward characterological growth.

Distress in couples is predictable and only a part of a separation process, perhaps part of a predictable developmental continuum acted out in several predictable patterns or exits, only one of which is affairs (one may be porn, addiction, withdrawal, depression, etc) signaling distress at the breach of attachment.

Revisiting the implicit monogamy agreement that was created at the time of the explicit commitment includes making new monogamy agreements. As a result of this research there have emerged what appears to be two levels of monogamy commitment

that affect couples. The first is the **explicit monogamy agreement**, the commitment a couple makes in public to their friends and family, their community. This is many times a legally binding agreement, signed and witnessed, and filed. In it the couple pledges their monogamy, a legal term, and/or their sexual fidelity as well as their emotional commitment.

However there also seems to be a second level of commitment, what I would call the **implicit monogamy agreement**. This is where the expectation of fidelity is either talked about verbally or not discussed at all. The implicit monogamy agreement can be verbally negotiated or not at all negotiated but expected, as if the couple should be able to read each other's mind, that there is an implication that fidelity means the same to both people. Sexual fidelity then is an expectation that is reached through a combination of cultural, familial, media and other expectations that come with an individual's history into the relationship and continues with an unspoken vision of how monogamy looks in partnership.

This monogamy agreement, although implicit, may match a partner's implicit understanding yet may never be verbally acknowledged. This agreement may include an expectation of sexual infidelity, and the unconscious acting out of the probability of being a victim. This may inherently create a distance in the relationship, heightening sexual tension and increasing the level of erotic arousal. More research needs to happen to discover other reasons that non-disclosed levels of implicit agreements may occur, the collusion of this unconscious drama and how the couple's sexual templates line up with their implicit monogamy agreements.

The implicit monogamy agreements include sexual fidelity and non-monogamy, either negotiated or assumed, in relation to sex with or without the partner, masturbation, pornography, internet, prostitutes, happy ending massage, same sex partners, multiple partners, sex with the partner present, sex with others with the partners permission, sex with others without the partners permission, sex with others if the partner is physically disabled, ill or pregnant. It also includes assumptions about the emotional stability of the partnership.

Sometimes as couples grow apart it is because over their development as a couple they change as individuals and in their roles in the partnership. Their original attraction is based on an implicit agreement that their roles would remain fixed, yet they change as their developmental needs change, it is ultimately hard to adjust, and the attraction may wane.

Morin (1995) says that spouses may agree passively to monogamy and value sexual fidelity without behaving in accordance with their explicit commitment. They may have an unspoken implicit agreement that contradicts the explicit agreement. Explicit agreements are many times understood as not being legally binding (people sign marriage contracts promising to stay together forever yet half of all marriages still end in divorce). This would imply that the implicit agreement in a relationship is almost more important and binding than the explicit agreement.

Morin (1995) says “Couples are usually not in as much agreement about the details of their commitment as they assume...” but couples need a commitment on some level to decrease their fear, allowing their experience of pleasure. If the explicit agreement is the obligation (the have to) and the implicit agreement is the commitment

in reality (the want to) then the explicit agreement is not really the binding commitment. The binding commitment or covenant is what in many cases remain unsaid. In the face of no information, we will fill in another story. We may project that the partner is committing to the same definition of monogamy that we are, or we will assume that there is the same expectation of monogamy, or we will commit to keeping it secret, (for example, there may be beliefs as in: *If this doesn't work I will get divorced, or if this doesn't work I will cheat.*)

Therapy at this stage of treatment can help to begin a discussion about discovering and making transparent the implicit agreements. These agreements must then be renewed on a regular basis if there is to be an expectation of monogamy for a long term relationship. If we know there is no precedent for long term monogamy based on desire, then we must create a new set of rules to determine how fidelity is to be negotiated. This negotiation must be discussed in a transparent way, disclosed using insight and language that is mutual and affirming.

The monogamy agreement is also developmental in nature and can change over time. This developmental change is fluid and flexible yet follows a predictable pattern, based on the stages of sexual development in partners (Nelson 2006). This developmental integration may conflict with the original explicit or implicit monogamy agreement, but is not a separate agreement. More rigidly adaptive couples may struggle sexually and emotionally with the changes that naturally occur as they grow and change over the life of a relationship. For couples where attachments are less stable an affair may mean they are incapable of restoring or returning to any type of erotic connection after a disruption that happens during a change in a developmental life cycle (such as

after a baby or empty nest). They may also not be able to form long lasting bonds after the breach of infidelity, particularly if they do not understand why the affair happened in their developmental life cycle as a couple. Sometimes as couples grow apart it is because their developmental agreement, their original attraction, is based on an implicit covenant that their roles in the relationship would be fixed – and as they change as developmental needs change, it is hard to adjust to the new roles and the expectations that they bring, and the attraction may wane.

In the next phase of erotic recovery as it coincides with affair recovery and integrates sex therapy, couples will reevaluate their connection and instead of deciding to go back to their old relationship, they must commit to begin a new one. This includes envisioning a new future, integrating the meaning of the infidelity into their relationship and negotiating for unpredictability and fluidity. Living with this uncertainty and knowing there is no guarantee of fidelity beyond a daily decision to remain faithful to a partner can be anxiety producing for couples. This anxiety however, can also create erotic fluidity, a new attraction, as it reactivates the initial distance and longing from the limerence phase of new love. Acknowledging fluidity means that sexual appreciation is based on erotic presence, not on an expectation and assumption that the partner will always be available and is therefore taken for granted. A new level of awareness and appreciation must be cultivated at this level, it will not happen naturally.

Sex therapy Exercises for couples at this stage may include the following: (see list below and see attached for detailed handouts.) These are all handouts that can be given to couples at this stage of therapy, and either used in the session, guided by the therapist, or used at home as homework. The exercises are designed (by this author) with gentle,

directive instructions that may assist couples that are feeling wounded and sensitive after an infidelity has breached their relationship, and who may be cautious about going back into any erotic adventures.

Exercises:

**Exchanging Fantasies**

**Appreciating Your Partner Sexually**

**Sensual Full-Body Contact**

**Learning the Language of Arousal**

**Discovering Where Your Fantasies Fall on the Erotic Curiosity Spectrum**

**Sex Date**

More research can be done on the efficacy of these worksheets with couples, both on format use, how they effect the erotic and emotional connection of the couple and if they help to facilitate connection and sexuality after infidelity.

The idea that couples needed to renew and renegotiate their monogamy agreements, making them explicit, revisioning their sexual life, can be facilliated with the use of sex therapy techniques focuses on making the erotic connection a priority. The earlier hypothesis was that both sex therapists and couples therapists will provide skill sets and exercises as well as case examples to show how this has been successful with couples. This did not prove to be true. However, the exercises above have been adapted to integrate Infidelity Recovery with Sex Therapy.

## PROGNOSIS

The survival or sexual strength of the relationship of a couple is not determined by their level of conflict, anger, hurt or betrayal. Reactivity, breaking away, anger, hostility, may all increase erotic attraction and renew a feeling of limerence in the relationship. Stoller (1986) discusses sexual and erotic attraction as a form of hostility, as its opposite is boredom. This hostility, latent in long term relationships, may now be overt and can translate into new erotic possibilities in the post-infidelity relationship. These treatment possibilities in the second and third stages of therapy would include integrating the idea of hostility and sexual ruthlessness into the sex therapy with couples, encouraging them to channel their anger into their erotic relationship.

The capacity to reconnect sexually is dependant on the levels of honesty that have been breached and how a couple can integrate the betrayal of dishonesty. While there is a need for hostility manifesting as sexual ruthlessness, this must be balanced by emotional safety. Depending on how couples perceive romantic monogamy, as exclusivity or uniqueness, (Ben-Zeev 2008) this safety may be created through more fluid and flexible monogamy agreements. When one partner can perceive the other as unique, each can feel special in the relationship, possibly decreasing the need for exclusivity in the long term.

## HYPOTHESIS

The implications from the research are several. First, that domestic life and the challenges of living in long term committed partnerships will inevitably lead to decreased sexual interest in the primary partner. Sexual intensity will decrease over time as it

correlates with heightened levels of intimacy. However, the quality of intimacy may improve with communication, sharing fantasies, and safety even as the novelty and idealization of the limerence stage of the relationship fades.

The levels of frequency and desire in long term partnerships eventually decline as well. Arousal is not as frequent as in the initial idealization phase and decreases over time. When couples idealize the other, during the romantic phase or in limerence, the initial lack of familiarity that is inherent in a new relationship creates desire. If, as some theorists have decided, desire mirrors mood states, then it stands to reason that as mood improves after affair recovery through therapy, the attention will return to the primary partnership.

The implications of the attachment studies also supports the idea that attached couples do better when connected, but that partners will turn toward an outside stranger to find comfort from pain and threat, and that the primary partner may actually make the experience of pain and threat worse in the moment. This brain study gives adequate evidence to support a reactive drive toward infidelity for couples in conflict.

Couples who experience the over merging and loss of self in a relationship can sometimes have a reactive need to separate and redefine the self as an individual with separate needs and desires. This can lead to infidelity as a way to individuate and differentiate from the other, which can cause the end of the relationship or in some cases may actually create a new sense of longing and desire for the partner.

Morin says that some couples fight to “restore their individuality and separateness, opening up a desire-enhancing gap between them.” (p 131) This need for differentiation may have been created for many reasons including the disclosure of an

affair or the boredom of sexual ennui. Morin says, “As they pull back from each other to stake out their positions, they regain the perspective necessary to see afresh what drew them to each other in the first place.....This disagreement reestablishes the otherness that is the basis of all attraction.” (p 131)

Affairs can then be seen as a way to establish health and stability in relationships at times instead of a pathological response to partnership. The lack of differentiation is not stimulating sexually, but may be comforting. There may come a time when the balance shifts too far toward the merge of the individual for what appears to be the good of the whole system, as togetherness creates a solid attachment in the couple. But in order to create true intimacy and maintain sexual and erotic desire, the couple must remain individuals, separate and dependent at the same time. Integrating those split off parts that a partner once longed for in the other takes the pressure off of the projection.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the research, the recommendation is a staged and phased course of sex therapy treatment that corresponds to the affair recovery, dependent on the cause of the affair, and the capacity for the couple to follow the affair recovery protocol.

The object of sex therapy, according to Masters & Johnson (1983), is to treat couples rapidly without extending treatment over long periods of time. Their intensive formats included a rehab model of treatment every day for two weeks, where the couple would be seen outside of their normal lives to integrate real and lasting change.

This model can be integrated to treating infidelity. Short term affair recovery does not seem highly effective. There is no precedent for erotic recovery after an affair. Using a step by step treatment plan that integrates exercises, insight oriented therapy, and

sexual intervention techniques, couples can schedule a program, tailored to them and their unique situation, anywhere from three hours to two weeks, depending on their needs and diagnostic risks. This intensive format would allow for all three phases of affair recovery, as well as integration of erotic recovery to include all sex therapy interventions that the couple would need to feel solid in their relationship, including transitioning back into everyday life upon discharge.

A sample Intensive format is attached as an example.

#### NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

More research needs to be done on the unconscious collusion in couples around affairs and infidelity. Further exploration of the implicit monogamy agreement as a way to explore the verbalization of unconscious projection and collusion needs to be researched in terms of relationship awareness. Interestingly, Charnay and Parnass (1995) found that 89% of betrayed spouses were either unconsciously aware of their partners infidelity or were in collusion with them, even if they claimed they were opposed to the affair behavior.

More research also needs to be done on how affairs affect the efficacy of sex therapy, dependent on how many episodes of infidelity have occurred. Levine (2005) mentions that a couple is less likely to become sexual the more episodes of infidelity there are in a partnership. There must be research to determine the validity of this statement, as there is no reference for his study.

Also, research on different types of infidelity and their effects on relationships is perhaps the next step in this field. This paper did not deal with internet addiction,

pornography, web chats, etc. This type of infidelity has its own unique issues and is going to be more relevant given the advances in technology in this century.

#### CONCLUSION:

CS Lewis in his book, *The Four Loves; The Much Beloved Exploration of the Nature of Love* (1960) quotes Plato as saying that *falling in love* is the “mutual recognition on earth of souls which have been singled out for one another in a previous and celestial existence. To meet the beloved is to realize “we loved before we were born.” (p.108) However, this idealization in this culture regarding the falling in love stage of relationship is seen as the whole of relationship. It is disputed by Lewis not as a comfort and as a romantic ideal but only a way to increase doubt and fear in relationships. Lewis disputes that by saying we agree to Plato’s theory of love as divine recognition of a soul mate, we are then only embarrassed by the realization that heaven knows no better than us how to manage the unhappy and seemingly mismatched partnerships that so many times end in affairs and divorce.

Lewis (1960) describes marriage as the fastest way to kill off the erotic energy in love. “The deliciously plain prose and business like intimacy of married life render it absurd. So does the affection in which Eros is almost invariably clothed. Even in courtship I question whether anyone who has felt the thrust for the uncreated or even dreamed of feeling it ever supposed that the beloved could satisfy it.” (p, 102)

The real danger, he goes on to say, is “...not that the lovers will idolize each other but that they will idealize Eros himself.” Perhaps this is the best explanation for what leads people into affairs and infidelity, the idolizing of the erotic intensity of limerence and the unknown or unrealized, the uncreated.

“Can we be in this selfish liberation for a lifetime? Hardly for a week. Between the best possible lovers this high condition is intermittent. The old self soon turns out to be not so dead as he pretended – as after a religious conversion. In either he may be momentarily knocked flat; he will soon be up again; if not on his feet, at least on his elbow, if not roaring, at least back to his surly grumbling or his mendicant whine. And Venus will often slip back into mere sexuality.” (Lewis, 1960, p. 114)

But these lapses will not destroy a marriage between two “decent and sensible” people. The couple whose marriage will certainly be endangered by them, and possibly ruined, are those who have idolized Eros. They thought he had the power and truthfulness of a god. They expected that mere feeling would do for them, and permanently, all that was necessary. When this expectation is disappointed they throw the blame on Eros or more usually on their partners. In reality however, Eros, having made his gigantic promise and shown you in glimpses what its performance would be like, has “done his stuff.” It is we who must labor to bring daily life into even closer accordance with what the glimpses have revealed. We must do the works for Eros when Eros is not present. This all good lovers know, though those who are not reflective or articulate will be able to express it only in a few conventional phrases about “taking the rough along with the smooth,” not “expecting too much,” having “a little common sense,” and the like.” (115)

And of Eros, Lewis goes on, (p 115), “But he may live on, mercilessly chaining together two mutual tormentors, each raw all over with the poison of hate-in-love, each ravenous to receive and implacably refusing to give, jealous, suspicious, resentful,

struggling for the upper hand, determined to be free and to allow no freedom, living on *scenes.*”“

Committed partnerships, although not naturally monogamous, are a glimpse of the divine, as we sense in the erotic desire we feel for a partner the love that is inherent and universal. The pain of betrayal is the deepest cut and disappointment in the dream of that love. Desire revived is a reminder that love and Eros co-exist and are eternal, although they are a moody couple.

## **EXAMPLE: INTENSIVE FORMAT**

**Day One: Erotic Recovery**

**Day Two: Early Communication**

**Day Three: Bring Back the Sex You Want—The Next Steps**

**Day Four: Adding Risk to Your Relationship**

**Day Five: Sexual Empathy: Passionate Closeness**

**Day Six: Sexual Communication**

**Day Seven: Moving from Sexual Curiosity to Erotic Action**

**Day Eight: Being Sensually Generous**

**Day Nine: Sexual Anatomy**

**Day Ten: A Lifetime of Passion**

These steps above are modified from Nelson (2008) to include affair recovery as well as sex therapy.

Steps of Erotic Recovery Program:

- Step 1 – Vision a new sex life
- Step 2 – Self compassion and forgiveness
- Step 3 – Fantasy
- Step 4 –Grieve Original Marriage
- Step 5 – Receive/Give Pleasure
- Step 6 –Take chances, Begin changes
- Step 7 – New life plan

These steps above are modified and expanded from Morin (1995) to include affair recovery as well as sex therapy.

See exercises attached for program

**Attachment –**

**Exercises for Couples**

## **Exercise**

### **Phases of Fidelity Recovery**

#### **Phase I**

Establish Safety

Stabilize family

Address painful affect

Normalize trauma

Contract for no decisions yet

Close exits for finite period

Explore why and how the affair was revealed.

Assess for domestic violence, suicidality

Assess for co-morbidity e.g. addiction, abuse, mental illness

#### **Phase 2**

Clarify motives and meanings of affair

Insight into personal vulnerabilities that led to affair

Tell the story of affair

Move couple from blame to understanding

Dialogue about meaning of affair

Figure out what it meant about me

Figure out what it meant about you

Figure out what it meant about us

Move from crisis to opportunity

**MONITOR THE IMPATIENCE OF THE UNFAITHFUL.**

**HELP THE BETRAYED PARTNER TO SHIFT FROM A DETECTIVE APPROACH –  
WHERE WERE YOU? WHAT DID YOU DO? DID YOU MEET AT THE HOTEL?  
DID YOU DO WITH HIM WHAT WE DO? ...**

**TO AN INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH.: “ HELP ME UNDERSTAND WHAT THE  
AFFAIR HAS BEEN FOR YOU? DID YOU THINK OF US? HOW? , HOW COME  
YOU WERE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE DESIRE THERE THAT YOU FELT YOU  
HAD LOST? WHY NOW? WHAT PROMPTED IT? DID YOU WORRY ABOUT  
NOT COMING BACK? WHAT DID IT MEAN FOR YOU?**

**DISCUSS SHARED SENSE OF LOSS.**

**MANY OF US WILL MARRY MORE THAN ONCE, SOME OF US WILL DO IT  
WITH THE SAME PERSON. “ YOUR FIRST MARRIAGE MAY BE OVER, DO  
YOU WANT A SECOND ONE WITH EACH OTHER?**

**ADDRESS THE FEARS OF THE HURT PARTY AND THE GRIEF OF THE  
UNFAITHFUL.**

### **Phase 3**

Assess for permanence or permission to leave A

Affair forces marriage to re-evaluate itself

Create vision of new relationship

Integrate meaning of affair with self/other/us

Grieve old marriage/partnership

Are you glad we made it through?

Do you think it was beneficial or permanently damaging?

I'm still hurt but it helped us

Negotiate fidelity for new partnership

Acknowledge fluidity

## **Exercise**

### **Exchanging Fantasies**

In this exercise, we will create a safe space to talk about sex.

Remember, appreciation is the doorway into a more connected and intimate sex life with your partner.

For this exercise, you will need at least thirty-five minutes of uninterrupted private time together. Find a quiet place where you can sit comfortably facing each other in chairs, on the floor, or on a bed and maintain eye contact for the entire exercise.

You might want to turn down the lights, put on soft music, light some candles, and put on comfortable and sexy clothes. Setting the right mood is a great way to get started, and can help lead to increased passion later on.

Make sure you have nowhere to go after this exercise. Many times it can lead to lovemaking, but do not put pressure on each other to make that happen.

### **Step One**

First, we'll start by again sharing appreciations and continuing to mirror each other. This is a basic dialogue skill, and one we will continue to use. This may feel awkward, but you may feel safer with this structure.

Try to stay focused on the exercise for the duration of both sending and receiving.

First, choose who will be the sender and who will be the receiver. The sender is the first one to talk and the receiver is the first one to listen.

This exercise may be difficult - you are talking about your sex life, and being very specific. If you are courageous, trust the process, and follow the structure, you will find that you can stay in the dialogue with your partner without difficulty. You may feel

anxious or embarrassed. Don't be afraid to share those feelings with your partner before or after your dialogue.

Senders will "send" over one thing they appreciate about their partner. The receiver will simply mirror back what the sender says.

For example:

Sender: "One thing I appreciate about you is how kind you are."

Receiver: "One thing you appreciate about me is how kind I am."

### **Step Two**

Senders will send over one specific thing about your sex life that they like. The receiver will mirror back what the sender says.

For example:

Sender: "One thing I appreciate about being in a sexual relationship with you is how open you are to trying new things."

Receiver: "So one thing you appreciate about being in a sexual relationship with me is how open I am to trying new things."

### **Step Three**

Finally, senders will say one thing they may have fantasized about. The receiver will simply mirror back exactly what the sender sends over.

For example:

Sender: “One thing I have fantasized about but possibly not shared before is having sex on an airplane with you.”

Receiver: “One thing you have fantasized about but possibly not shared before is having sex on an airplane with you.”

#### **Step Four**

After the senders have sent over all three steps, receivers will validate what they’ve just heard. Validation means that you share with your partner how it makes sense to you that he might be feeling or fantasizing these things. You don’t have to agree with his thoughts and fantasies, and you don’t have to agree to do them, or ask questions. Hold all those thoughts and ideas for now. Instead, let your partner know you understand where he is coming from.

In response to the first three steps in this exercise, validation might sound like this:

Receiver: “So, knowing you the way I know you, it makes sense that you would appreciate my kindness because I know it means a lot to you when people are thoughtful.

Receiver: “It also makes sense that you like how open I am to trying new things because I know you love to experiment.”

Receiver: “It also makes sense that you would fantasize about X because of X.”

#### **Step Five**

After validation, the sender empathizes with the receiver. Showing empathy for our partners goes a long way to helping them feel understood. Empathy does not mean that you agree with what they are saying or that you are promising to participate in anything.

Instead, it shows that you understand their emotional state. Sharing with your partner how you think he or she might feel might sound like:

Receiver: “I can imagine that if you were to act out your fantasy you would feel excited and turned on. Did I get that feeling?”

Sender: “Yes, and I would also feel loved and appreciated by you.”

Receiver: “So you would also feel loved and appreciated by me.”

Sender: “You got me.

Now that you have done this exercise, how do you feel? Can you tell your partner what it was like for you? You do not have to disagree, agree, argue, compromise, or commit. Just sit with what you heard. You can ask questions, but try to soak up the appreciation for now, and read on.

## **Exercise**

### **Appreciating Your Partner Sexually**

This exercise includes writing and sharing. Have something to write on and a pen or pencil. You will write a short list and then share what you wrote with your partner. Have a comfortable place to write and enough light to see.

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down for at least thirty minutes. Allow yourself to make eye contact with your partner, sitting close enough so he or she can see your eyes, and reach out to hold your hand if it feels appropriate in the moment.

Know that this exercise may make you feel embarrassed, or even bring up some shame. Take a deep breath when you feel this way. Notice how your pulse quickens and your heart races. Remember that this happens during sex, too, and can be an exciting and sexy part of the exercise. It's okay to feel nervous. Try to stay with your feelings and honor them.

#### **Step One**

First, take out your paper and pencil and think about the things you appreciate that your partner does in bed. List three of these things.

#### **Step Two**

Next, list three things you would like more of.

#### **Step Three**

When you are both ready, decide who will be the sender first and who will be the receiver. Share your answers with your partner. For example:

Sender: "So, one thing I really appreciate that you do in bed is X."

Receiver (mirrors): “So one thing you really appreciate that I do in bed is X.”

Repeat until all three things have been mirrored.

#### **Step Four**

Validate and empathize with one another. For example:

Receiver (validating): “So, it makes sense that you would like those things because of X (empathizing), and that when I do that it would make you feel X.”

#### **Step Five**

Switch. Receivers become senders and send three things they appreciate that their partner does in bed. The receiver mirrors these three statements, then validates and empathizes with them.

#### **Step Six**

Repeat the process, with senders sending over the three things they would like more of, and with the receivers mirroring them after each statement, followed by validation and empathy.

Notice what happens when you are through with sharing this exercise. What do you feel toward your partner? How are you feeling about what you shared? If you are feeling any embarrassment, share it with your partner now using the Imago dialogue. For example:

Sender: “I am embarrassed about X.

Receiver: “So you are embarrassed about X. Is there more?”

Just mirror and ask whether there is more until the embarrassment has been talked through. Now switch if the receiver has any embarrassment about what the sender shared.

Notice what happens now that you have shared your embarrassments. What do you feel toward your partner? How are you feeling about what you shared? What are you feeling in your body? Do you feel any sexual stirrings or physical longings for your partner?

## **Exercise**

### **Sensual Full-Body Contact**

One way to begin to build up passion is to enjoy physical contact in a new way.

Experiencing each other in a sensual way, feeling the body of your partner, and being mindful of how he feels against you can increase the sexual feelings you have.

For this exercise, you will need at least forty minutes of uninterrupted time together. This exercise asks that you are totally naked with each other. There may be some awkwardness or discomfort at first, but the easy part is that you start back to back, not face to face. Know that being naked is a natural part of sexuality, and that your comfort level in your body will contribute to your erotic connection with your partner. The more comfortable you are in your body, the sexier you will feel.

You can do this exercise with the lights on or off. Try it first with the lights on low, or with candles lit. Make sure the room is warm enough so neither of you gets too cold to stand together naked. Make sure you have a comfortable floor to stand on.

#### **Step One**

Stand back to back with your partner, preferably naked. Notice what parts of your body are touching. See whether you can get more of your body parts to touch. Can you press tighter against each other? Is there a way to press up against each other's whole body?

#### **Step Two**

Now turn around without losing contact. Touch each other's body as much as possible as you slowly turn around.

### **Step Three**

Now feel the front of your bodies touching. See whether you can get more of your body parts to touch. See whether you can press together and get your whole bodies to touch. Can you press tighter against each other? What other parts need to touch to add more togetherness? What parts feel the most alive?

### **Step Four**

Tell each other exactly where you think your partner can move closer to you. Tell your partner where you like to feel him close to you. Ask your partner to rub against any parts of you where friction feels good. Close your eyes and feel the texture of each other's skin.

### **Step Five**

Now separate slowly. Feel each body part leave the contact of your partner's body. Notice what the space feels like.

### **Step Six**

Reconnect. Take your partner's hand and place it where you want more contact. Press his or her hand using all of yours—palm, fingers, the pads of your fingers—on that area. Connect with all of your hand. Feel the heat and energy from your partner's hand. Move your hand closer and make more contact.

### **Step Seven**

Slowly remove your partner's hand and feel the disconnect.

### **Step Eight**

Switch.

## **Step Nine**

Continue moving your partner's hand over your body. Move your hands over your partner's body now. Feel the heat and energy coming off your partner's body. Notice which areas of her body are cool, warm, soft, or rough. Notice with curiosity and openness and without judgment the different private parts of her body and also the more public parts that show every day. See whether you can appreciate her parts in a new way, as if you are seeing them with your hands. Feel the passion and the energy rise.

## **Exercise**

### **Learning the Language of Arousal**

Learning how to communicate with your partner about the arousal levels in your body begins with identifying your own arousal patterns. And then you need a language to communicate this to your partner. You also need a way for your partner to understand and translate what you are saying.

In this exercise, your partner will help you find the parts of your body that trigger the greatest levels of arousal, and will help you pinpoint the areas where you like the most concentrated touch. Your partner will also help you figure out what type of touch you like the most in those areas. How wonderful that you have someone to share this information with! Remember to appreciate your partner for his or her willingness to go on this exploratory journey with you.

For this exercise you will need at least sixty minutes of uninterrupted time. Make sure the children are taken care of or asleep and that your phone is turned off. Make sure the room you are using is warm enough and quiet enough to be able to hear each other speak in a low tone of voice. Set the atmosphere by lighting candles, putting on soft background music, and making the bed with soft or silky sheets.

You can do this exercise with sexy and comfortable clothes on, or you can be naked, either taking turns or both of you disrobing before you begin.

In this exercise, your partner will touch you and you will respond verbally, using a number system to specifically identify how sensitive each section of your body surface feels. Numbers 1 to 10 will reflect how something feels as your partner touches you, with

1 meaning there is hardly any sensation and 10 meaning that the arousal and sensitivity level is at its peak.

### **Step One**

Decide who will be the sender and who will be the receiver, and remember you get to switch, so you will each have a turn. Receivers will be the first to be touched and to express their reaction to each touch. You will use the number system to have a language to accurately describe the sensations and to give your partner clear information about the sensitive arousal map of your body.

Receivers should lie down in a comfortable position that they can sustain for at least thirty minutes. Senders should find a comfortable place to sit or lie with their prone partner, where they can reach all parts of their partner's body with little effort.

### **Step Two**

First, receivers should tell their partners how much they appreciate them for doing this exercise with them. It might sound like: "I really appreciate you helping me find the sensitive areas of my body and helping me find a way to express that information to you."

Your partner, the sender, can mirror this back. "So you really appreciate that I am helping you find the sensitive areas of your body and helping you express that information to me."

### **Step Three**

Now ask your partner to help you find the parts of your body that are most sensitive to touch. The sender now gently touches each area of the receiver's body, choosing small or large areas and caressing each spot until the receiver identifies a number of sensitivity.

Start on the outer parts of the body, furthest from the center of the torso. For example, starting with the hands or feet and moving inward will increase the arousal and sensitivity for the receiver as the touch gets closer to the more sensitive genital and nipple areas. Receivers should relax, close their eyes, and feel each touch and caress. As the sender gently touches and caresses every part of the receiver's body, the receiver responds with a number from 1 to 10 to show how sensitive that area is. For example, the sender may touch the receiver's ankle. The receiver relaxes into the touch and decides how sensitive the area is, with 1 being little sensitivity and 10 being highly stimulated and aroused. After being touched, the receiver might say, "That's a 4." The sender then mirrors back, "So this is a 4." Then the sender moves on to another area of the receiver's body.

The sender may want to try adjusting the touch and intensity of the caress. Perhaps the light touch on the receiver's ankle is a 4, and then the sender deepens the stroke and makes it a more massaging caress and the receiver now shares that this feels like a 6.

After varying the intensity of the strokes, from tender and gentle to firm and assured, vary the speed. Most people do not like simple repetitive movements over the same area for a long period of time. This can feel irritating.

Notice what speed or variety works the best to increase the level of sensitivity.

Notice that as you progress from the outer parts of the body to the inner parts of the body (closer to the center of the body) that the sensitivity level may increase.

#### **Step Four**

Now try to identify specific feelings associated with being touched on certain areas of your body. The sender should touch you gently or firmly in different areas. Senders should try to remember what the receivers responded to in the first part of the exercise. Did they feel more sensitive with a lighter stroke or a firmer caress?

The receiver can now say an adjective or descriptive word describing how it feels to be touched in each area. For example, if the sender touches the receiver's knee, the receiver could identify a feeling or reaction, such as, "That feels nice and soft." The sender mirrors: "So that feels nice and soft."

If the sender touches a genital area, or more sensitive skin, the receiver might say, "That feels wonderful."

The sender then mirrors, "That feels wonderful."

Senders might try to think up words beforehand so that they have some in mind when the receiver begins to touch them.

### **Step Five**

When you are through with each part of your partner's body, front and back, switch.

(Another variation on this exercise: Combine this exercise with another. The receivers should be totally naked while the senders remained clothed. Receivers take turns identifying their levels of sensitivity by number, and then use feeling words as the sender touches different areas of their body. Save the "switch" for another night.)

If this exercise leads to lovemaking or erotic connection, great. If not, that's okay, too. Know that you have just discovered a huge amount of valuable information about your partner's arousal and her body's map of sensitive areas. You can use this

information next time you make love or anytime you need a language to describe your body's response.

**Step Six**

Talk about any feelings that came up for both of you, and how it felt to do this exercise.

**Step Seven**

End with an appreciation for each other, both as the sender and as the receiver.

This exercise is a great way to work through some of the inherent shame attached to expressing and communicating sexual responsiveness. It also allows for a deeper level of intimacy and connection with your partner. Intimacy is a great aphrodisiac, and it can help keep the passionate part of your relationship alive for years to come.

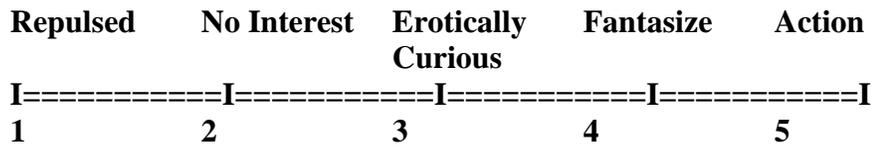
## Exercise

### Discovering Where Your Fantasies Fall on the Erotic Curiosity Spectrum

Below is a list of common fantasies that fall on both ends of the erotic curiosity spectrum.

Sit with your partner and fill out this exercise separately, but in the same room.

Go down the list, and mark each item with a number from 1 through 5. When you are through, share your responses with your partner.



1. One means you are repulsed by the idea.
2. Two means the idea holds no interest for you.
3. Three means you are erotically curious about it.
4. Four means you have fantasies about it.
5. Five means you would like to turn this fantasy into action.

#### Examples of fantasies:

- Watching two women have sex \_\_\_\_\_
- Having sex with two women \_\_\_\_\_
- Having sex with a man and a woman \_\_\_\_\_

- Having sex with your partner and another couple —
- Multiple partner sex —
- Having sex with a group of strangers —
- Being seduced by an older woman —
- Watching a woman masturbate —
- Masturbating in front of partner —
- Being dominant with a woman —
- Being dominated by a woman —
- Receiving oral sex —
- Receiving oral sex from your partner —
- French kissing partner after blow job —
- Partner swallowing after blow job —
- Sex with a call girl or stripper —
- Sex with a celebrity —
- Sex with someone you know (not partner) —
- Receiving anal stimulation —
- Having anal sex —
- Tying up a woman and having sex with her —
- Forcing your partner to have sex —
- Forcing another woman to have sex —
- Being forced to have sex —
- Being filmed during sex —
- Talking dirty —

- Double penetration —
- Watching pornography with partner —
- Acting out pornography scenes with partner —
- Anonymous sex with a stranger —
- Sex with an old boyfriend/girlfriend —
- Sex with another woman —
- Sex with two men —
- Sex with a group including partner —
- Sex with a group of men —
- Sex in front of your partner with someone else —
- Being dominated by your partner —
- Being spanked —
- Having toes sucked —
- Sex with vegetables or fruit —
- Sex with food (e.g., whipped cream) —
- Sex with vibrators and dildos —
- Masturbating with vibrator in front of partner —
- Sex outside or in public places —

**Domination Fantasies**

- Dressing up in leather —
- Role-playing with costumes (e.g., stripper, cowboy, doctor) —

- Wearing boots or high heels \_\_\_\_\_
- Tying up your partner \_\_\_\_\_
- Putting handcuffs on your partner \_\_\_\_\_
- Putting a collar on your partner \_\_\_\_\_
- Pinching your partner with clothespins \_\_\_\_\_
- Using a cane, riding crop, or whip to threaten \_\_\_\_\_
- Using a cane, riding crop, or whip to inflict sensation \_\_\_\_\_
- Blindfolding your partner \_\_\_\_\_
- Having partner lick boots \_\_\_\_\_
- Urinating on partner \_\_\_\_\_
- Sex doggie style \_\_\_\_\_
- Playing the master role \_\_\_\_\_
- Slave weekend\* \_\_\_\_\_

**Submission Fantasies:**

- Dressing up in plastic \_\_\_\_\_
- Dressing up in rubber \_\_\_\_\_
- Dressing in women's clothes (for the man) \_\_\_\_\_
- Being urinated on \_\_\_\_\_
- Playing the slave role \_\_\_\_\_
- Being handcuffed \_\_\_\_\_
- Being tied up \_\_\_\_\_

- Being strapped down —
- Wearing collar —
- Having hair pulled —
- Submitting and thanking partner —
- Being caned or whipped —
- Being spanked —

\*Slave weekend is when you and your partner stay in the roles of master and slave for two days, without breaking role

Talk with your partner about what came up for you, what it feels like to hear his or her answers, and how you feel now that you have read and talked about your fantasies.

## **Exercise**

### **Sex Date**

Make a date with your partner for sex. Four days prior to the date, use small acts to create anticipation for the big night. For example, show your partner physical affection at least three times the first day. Attempt to connect on the second day by whispering in your partner's ear the things you want to do to him or her on your sex date. On the third day, bring home a surprise. This can be something like a card or small token gift. The surprise might be something you can use on your sex date.

The fourth day is the big day, so create an atmosphere in the bedroom that will remind both of you that this is a sacred, erotic space for you to play safely in together. Light candles, put fresh flowers by the bed, and put soft sheets and blankets on the bed. Make an extra effort to pick out music your partner will like.

When the big night comes, keep your expectations open and reasonable. If the evening goes well, then great. If it doesn't live up to your expectations, remember that this night can be anything that works for you and makes you feel connected to your partner. Massage, communication, and sharing fantasies can make this an important night of sensual pleasures.

## **SEX WORKSHEET #4**

**GOAL:** To establish safety and openness in a sexually intimate relationship, by establishing appreciation and moving into fantasy, teaching ways to ask for sexual needs and deeper levels of intimacy. This exercise allows for advanced communication skills, leading to sexual and emotional connection.

Find a comfortable place to sit and take time to answer the following questions, either alone or with your partner in the room. Find a safe place to talk and discuss answers with your partner.

**A. Three things I appreciate about being in a relationship with you:**

**B. Three things I appreciate about being in a sexual relationship with you are:**

**C. Three things I like sexually that I would like more of:**

**D. One thing I would like to try next time we have sex is:**

One thing I appreciate about my partner right now:

Some of these exercises have been adapted from Getting the Sex You Want by Tammy Nelson (Fair Winds Press, 2008)

## REFERENCES

- Abrahms Spring, Janis *After the affair: Healing the pain and rebuilding trust when a partner has been unfaithful*. New York Harper Collins Publishers\* (1996)
- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy -  
[http://www.aamft.org/families/consumer\\_updates/infidelity.asp](http://www.aamft.org/families/consumer_updates/infidelity.asp)
- Atwood & Schwartz *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy* (2002)
- Bader, Michael, *Arousal; The Secret Logic of Sexual Fantasies*, New York, Thomas Dunne Books, (2002)
- Barash, David and Lipton, Judith *The Myth of Monogamy; Fidelity and Infidelity in Animals and People*. New York: W.H. Freeman and company\* (2000)
- Baucom, Donald H., Snyder, Douglas K., Coop Gordon, Kristina, *Helping Couples Get Past the Affair* New York, The Guilford Press\*(2009)
- Bennett, Jessica Newsweek Web Exclusive *Only You. And You. And You. Polyamory—relationships with multiple, mutually consenting partners—has a coming-out party*. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/209164/page/1>\* ( Jul 29, 2009)
- Ben-Zeev, Aaron *Proclaimed monogamy with clandestine adultery*, Psychology Today, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/node/2450>, Nov 21 2008
- Ben-Zeev, Aaron *Love-Online: Emotions on the Internet*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2004)
- Ben-Zeev, Aaron *Can Uniqueness Replace Exclusivity In Romantic Love?* Psychology Today, July 19 2008
- Bercht, Anne, *My Husband's Affair Became the Best Thing That Ever Happened to Me*, Trafford Publishing (2006)
- Bergner, Daniel *What Do Women Want? A new generation of postfeminist sexologists is trying to discover what ignites female desire* The New York Times Magazine\* (Jan 25 2009)
- Berman Jennifer, Berman Laura, Drs, *For Women Only; A Revolutionary Guide to Reclaiming Your Sex Life*, Henry Holt, NY, 2001
- Blasband, D. & Peplau, L. *Sexual exclusivity versus openness in gay male couples*. Archives of sexual behavior, 14, 395-412, 1985

- Brecht, Anne *My Husbands Affair Became the Best Thing that Ever Happened To Me\**
- Brown, Emily *Patterns of Infidelity and their Treatment* Brunner Mazel, New York, 1991
- Brown, Emily *Affairs: A guide to Working Through the Repercussions of Infidelity*. San Francisco, Jossey Bass, Inc., 1999
- Charny, Israel, Parnass, Snan *The impact of extramarital relationships on the continuation of marriages*, Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, Vol 21: 2; 100-115, 1995
- DeSalvo, Louis, *Adultery*, Boston, Beacon Press Secondary Reference, 1999
- Druckerman, Pamela , *Lust in Translation: Infidelity from Tokyo to Tennessee* Penguin, New York, 2008
- Ellis, Havelock, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. New York Random House, 1898
- European Federation of Sexology on culture and sexology; *Global Sex*  
<http://www.europealsexology.com/index2.htm>
- Farbman, Suzie, *Back From Betrayal* Michigan, Croften Creek Press, 2004
- Flanigan, Beverly, *Forgiving the Unforgivable* New York, Wiley Publishing, 1992
- Fisher, Helen *Anatomy of Love*, New York Ballantine Books, 1992
- Fisher, Helen *Anatomy of Love; The Natural History of Monogamy, Adultery and Divorce*, New York, WW Norton, 1992
- Fisher, Helen, Talk, Psychotherapy Networker Conference, Washington DC, 2007
- Friday, Nancy, *My Secret Garden: Women's Sexual Fantasies*, New York, Trident, 1973
- Getz, L and Carter, C., Social organization in the microtus ochrogaster populations. *The biologist*, 62: 56-69, 1980
- Getz, L and Carter, C *The mating system of the prairie vole, microtus ochrogaster, field and laboratory evidence for pair bonding, behavioral ecology and sociobiology* 8:189-194, 1981
- Glass, Shirley P. *NOT "just friends": Protect your relationship from infidelity and heal the trauma of betrayal*. NY, Free Press, 2003

- Gottman, John, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*, New York, Crown, Inc., 1999
- Granzig, William *The Sexual Template and Erotology* presented at the Asia Pacific Conference of Sexology, Mumbai, India, November 23, 2004
- Gordon, Kristina Coop, Baucom, Donald H., Snyder, Douglas K. *An Integrative Intervention for Promoting Recovery from Extra-Marital Affairs*; Journal of Marital and Family Therapy: 30: 2, 2004
- Hendrix, Harville, *Getting The Love You Want*, New York, Henry Holt & Co, 1998
- Herman, Judith, *Trauma and Recovery*, New York, Basic Books, 1992
- Hite, Shere, *A National Study on Female Sexuality*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 1976
- Johnson Susan *Emotionally Focused Therapy and Attachment Theory*, Imago International Conference, Albuquerque New Mexico, October 2009
- Johnson, Susan, *Attachment Theory; A Guide for Couple Therapy*, 2003
- Johnson, Susan and Whiffen, Valerie, *Attachment Processes In Couple and Family Therapy*, New York, The Guilford Press, 2003
- Judah, Steve *Staying Together When an Affair Pulls You Apart*, 2006
- Kaplan, Helen Singer *PE: How to Overcome Premature Ejaculation*, (New York, Brunner/Mazel, 1989
- Kinsey, AC, Pomeroy, W. Martin, C, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Philadelphia; Saunders, 1948
- Kinsey, AC, et al *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Philadelphia; Saunders, 1953
- Laura Kipnis, *Against Love: A Polemic* Pantheon Books: New York, 2003
- LaSala, M., *Extradyadic sex and gay male couples; comparing monogamous and nonmonogamous relationships*. Families in Society; The Journal of Contemporary Human Services; 85, 405-412, 2004
- LaSala, M., *Monogamy of the heart; a qualitative study of extradyadic sex among gay male couples*. Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services, 17, 1-24, 2005
- Levine, Stevin B., *Demystifying Love: Plain Talk for the Mental Health Professional* Brunner-Routledge, New York, 2006

- Levine, Stephen, *A Clinical perspective on Infidelity, Sexual and Relationship Therapy*  
Vol 20 2 May, 2005
- Lusterman, Don David, *Infidelity A Survival Guide*, California, New Harbinger Press,  
1998
- Knapp, J. J. *Some non-monogamous marriage styles and related attitudes and practices  
of marriage counselors*. *The Family Coordinator*, 24(4), 505-514., 1975
- Masters, William, Johnson, Virginia, Kolodny, Robert, *Masters And Johnson On Sex and  
Human Loving*, Boston, Little Brown & Co, 1982
- McCullough, Derek, Hall, David *Polyamory - What it is and what it isn't*, *Electronic  
Journal of Human Sexuality*, vol 6\*, Feb 27 2003
- Mead, Margaret *Male and Female* New York HarperCollins, 1949
- Mitchell, Stephen, *Can Love Last? The fate of romance over time*. New York, Norton (tb)  
2002
- Morin, Jack *The Erotic Mind, Unlocking the Inner Sources of Sexual Passion and  
Fulfillment*, New York, Harper Collins, 1995
- Langer, Gary, Arnedt, Cheryk, Sussman, Dalia; *ANALYSIS of POLL: American Sex  
Survey; A Peek Beneath the Sheets*, ABC News, Primetime  
<http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/PollVault/Story?id=156921&page=4>, Oct. 21,  
2004
- Lehmiller, Justin *Secret Romantic Relationships; Consequences for Personal and  
Relational Well-Being*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No  
11, 1452-1466, 2009
- Levine, Stevin B., *Demystifying Love: Plain Talk for the Mental Health Professional*  
Brunner-Routledge, New York,.\* 2006
- Lewis, CS *The Four Loves; The Much Beloved Exploration of the Nature of Love*,  
New York, Harcourt, 1960
- Love, Dr. Pat, *Hot Monogamy*, Dutton Books, 1993
- Love, Patricia, Stosny, Steve, *How to Save Your Marriage Without Talking About  
It*, New York, Broadway, 2008
- Lusterman, Don-David *Infidelity: A survival guide*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 1998

- Maheu, Marlene M. & Subotnik, Rona B. *Infidelity on the Internet: Virtual Relationships and Real Betrayal*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2001
- Masters, W. and Johnson, V., *Human Sexual Inadequacy*. Boston: Little and Brown. (1970)
- McCarthy, Barry; *Rekindling Desire; A Step by Step Program to Help Low Sex and No Sex Marriages*
- McKay, Judith, *Global Sex; sexuality and sexual practices around the world, (16:1) Sexual and Relational Therapy\** 2001
- Metcalf, Kathleen *Transforming Affairs*. (This paper was prepared for the symposium, "An Investigation of Modern Love" hosted by the Durrell School of Corfu.\*
- Money, J. *Lovemaps; Clinical Concepts of Sexual/Erotic Health and Pathology, Paraphilia, and Gender Transposition in Childhood, Adolescence and Maturity*. New York: Irvington., 1986
- Morin, J., *The Erotic Mind; Unlocking the Inner Sources of Sexual Passion and Fulfillment* New York: Harper Collins. (1995)
- Nelson, Tammy, *Getting the Sex You Want, Shed Your Inhibitions and Reach New Heights of Passion Together*, MA Fair Winds Press, (2008)
- Neuman, Gary *The Truth About Cheating; Why Men Stray and What You Can Do To Prevent It*, New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons (2008)
- Ogden, 2008; Whipple, Hite, (1976)
- O'Neill, Nena and O'Neill George, *Open Marriage*, New York, M Evans and Company 1972
- Mitchell, Stephen, *Can Love Last? The Fate of Romance Over Time*. WW Norton and Co., New York, 2003
- Mullen, Shannon, *The Best You'll Ever Have*, Crown Publishers, NY, 2004
- Ogden, Gina *Return of Desire A Guide to Rediscovering Your Sexual Passion*, Boston Trumpeter Books, 2008
- Perel, Esther, *Mating in Captivity: Reconciling the Erotic and the Domestic*. Harper Collins, New York, 2006
- Perel, Esther, and Nelson, Tammy. *The New Monogamy, Love, Sex and Fidelity, Part One, Teleseminar, Fall, Four Part Series,*

- <http://www.tammynelson.org/teleclasses/> 2009
- Person, Ethel, S. MD, *Male Sexuality and Power*, Psychoanalytic Inq. 6:3-25, 1986
- Philips, Adam, *Monogamy* Pantheon Books, New York, 1996
- Pittman, Frank, *Private lies: the betrayal of infidelity*. NY. W. W. Norton, 1989
- Reibstein, Janet & Richards, Martin Sexual Arrangements: Marriage and the Temptation of Infidelity, Scribners, New York, 1996.ch6
- Sabini, John and Green, Melanie, *Emotional Responses to Sexual and Emotional Infidelity: Constants and Differences Across Genders, Samples and Methods*, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, Vol 30, No 11, 1375-1388, 2004
- Scheinkman, Michele, *Beyond the Trauma of Betrayal: Reconsidering Affairs in Couples Therapy*, Family Process, 44:227-244, 2005
- Shernoff, Michael, *Negotiated Non-Monogamy and Male Couples*, Family Process, 45:407-418. 1996
- Solomon, Steven and Teagno, Lorie, *Intimacy after Infidelity; How to Rebuild & Affair Proof Your Marriage*, New Harbinger Publications, 2006
- Stoller, Robert MD, *Sexual Excitement; Dynamics of Erotic Life*, Pantheon Books NY, 2006
- Subotnik, Rona & Harris, Gloria, *Surviving infidelity: Making decisions, recovering from the pain*. Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams Press. 1999
- Tennov, Dorothy, *Love and Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love*, Scarborough House, 1999
- Vaughan, Peggy, *The monogamy myth: A personal handbook for recovering from affairs*. New York: Newmarket Press. 1998
- Wagner et al, *Prevalence of extradyadic sex in male couples of mixed HIV status and its relationship to psychological distress and relationship quality*. Journal of Homosexuality. 39, 31-46, 2000
- Weil, Susanne, (2003) *The Extramarital Affair: A Language of Yearning and Loss* Clinical Social Work Journal, 31:1, 2003, 2003
- Ziskin, J., & Ziskin, M. *Co-marital sex agreements: An emerging issue in sexual counseling*. The Counseling Psychologist, 6(1), 81-83. 1975