



Affair-Proofing Your Marriage

When you walked down the aisle and pledged to love and honor your spouse and to forsake all others, you both meant it. At that moment in time, neither of you had any intention of being unfaithful to each other.

Unfortunately, the reality is that marriages often fail to maintain an environment that affair-proofs the marriage. Life gets busy and complicated with children, jobs, and responsibilities. It is inevitable that arguments will happen, personalities will clash, hurts will go unresolved, romance will diminish, flaws will become more pronounced and irritating, and the newness will wear off. Since these things happen to all marriages, what can be done to prevent these inevitabilities from making the partners susceptible to an affair?

Most of the time, people don't set out to have an affair; instead, life circumstances put two people together in an environment where they need to spend time together to do something else. When they spend more and more time together, they develop an emotional connection. At some point, they abandon their values, inhibitions, and caution and decide to enter into an affair even though they know they are risking getting found out and the cost will be great.

Signs Your Marriage is Putting You and Your Spouse at Risk

Obviously, the best prevention is to have a great marriage; yet, even good marriages have times when the couple feels less emotionally and physically connected, but there are certain signs that show that your marriage is dealing with more than the normal marital ups and downs and is instead at risk of one or both of you having an affair:

- You are becoming more and more distant.
- You live separate lives.
- You don't talk about your problems at all.
- You find yourselves avoiding sexual intimacy.
- You feel "stuck" in the marriage.
- You find yourself dreaming about being single or married to someone else.
- You regularly list your spouse's negatives in your mind and avoid listing the positives.
- You are noticing other people of the opposite sex and wondering what it would be like to be with someone other than your spouse.

Boundaries that Affair-Proof Your Marriage

It is crucial that you and your spouse have boundaries in your business and personal life that affair-proof your marriage. These boundaries will decrease the chance that either of you will develop a deep attraction to someone other than each other.

- If you have to travel on business with a person of the opposite sex, try not to go alone; instead, invite your spouse or others to come along.
- Don't invite a person of the opposite sex to your hotel room when out of town.
- Don't share problems in your marriage with a person of the opposite sex; instead, find a person of the same sex or a counselor to confide in.
- Talk about your children and your spouse positively around friends, acquaintances, and co-workers.
- Don't share your fantasies, emotions, and dreams with someone of the opposite sex that you feel attracted to.
- Don't spend time alone frequently with a person of the opposite sex that you could be attracted to.
- Don't ignore the warning signs of an emotional attachment to a person of the opposite sex. Pay attention to your feelings and thoughts and proactively respond before the feelings deepen.
- Don't ignore the warning signs in your marriage; instead, deal with them and work on your marriage.

Signs You Are Becoming Emotionally Attached

If you find yourself attracted to someone and are wondering if you are at risk of having an affair, here are the signs that signal an emotional attachment that is putting you in danger of being unfaithful to your spouse:

- You are enjoying the company of this person more and more.
- You are thinking more negatively about your spouse than before.
- You and this person are sharing your spouses' negative qualities with each other.
- You are thinking about this person when you aren't with him/her.
- You feel "understood" by this person in a way that is different from how your spouse "understands" you.
- You feel listened to and appreciated by this person and ignored and unappreciated by your spouse.
- You are finding excuses to spend extra time together.
- You are lying to your spouse or other people about this person and your time together.
- You feel more "alive" with this person than you have in a long time.

What to Do to Deal with the Attraction

If you find yourself emotionally involved with someone, you have to deal with it as soon as possible. Emotional and physical attractions have a life of their own and can quickly get out of control. There may be a point that you lose your resolve and give in to it. Don't wait until it is too late.

Here are some dos and don'ts:

- Don't tell the person you are attracted to about your feelings. This is often the time that affairs heat up and become sexual. When both people express their feelings for each other, the lure of the secrecy and the temptation of forbidden fruit along with the thought of having to end your emotional entanglement is often the match that lights the fire and turns an attraction into a full-blown affair.
- Do remind yourself how much you loved and felt loved by your spouse when you were first married. Remind yourself that an affair has passion because it is new. The newness will also wear off and you will see this person's faults and have problems with him/her too.
- Do change your environment to avoid being with the person as much as possible. If the temptation is serious enough, you might even have to make a decision to change jobs or other circumstances to not be around this person. This is a difficult choice and can only be done when you remind yourself that you do not want to hurt your spouse and children and that your marriage is the most important thing to you.
- Do fast forward the movie. Imagine yourself getting involved sexually with this person and your wife, children, co-workers, friends, boss, and others finding out. List the consequences and imagine the pain you and others will feel.
- Do remind yourself that second marriages have difficulties related to ex-spouses and step-children, as well as financial problems related to splitting assets and making support payments. They are not less difficult and complicated, but more difficult and complicated than your present marriage.
- Do consider whether telling your spouse will help to jumpstart first aid for your marriage. Although this seems risky, there is nothing like disclosing your attraction to someone else to stir up the passion and grab the attention of your spouse. This disclosure can illustrate to your spouse the importance of dealing with issues that have been swept under the rug for too long.
- Don't tell your spouse if he/she is abusive and it will result in emotional or physical harm to you or the other person.
- Do seek professional help to deal with the issues in your marriage. If your spouse refuses to go, get help for yourself. It is critical that you identify the underlying issues that are contributing to your attraction to someone other than your spouse.
- Do get an accountability partner that you will be honest with that will help you deal with the temptation and your commitment to be faithful to your spouse.

Fidelity is so important to the foundation of a marriage that Jesus stated infidelity was the only true grounds to dissolve a marriage (Matthew 5:32). The Apostle Paul stated that the sexual union of two people gave them a spiritual connection similar to marriage (1 Corinthians 6:16a). Intimacy with someone other than your spouse is a serious matter. Allowing yourself to get involved in an affair is a choice that is filled with pain not only for your spouse but for you. Ignoring the signs that your marriage is at risk for either you or your spouse having an affair is dangerous; instead, affair-proof your marriage starting today.