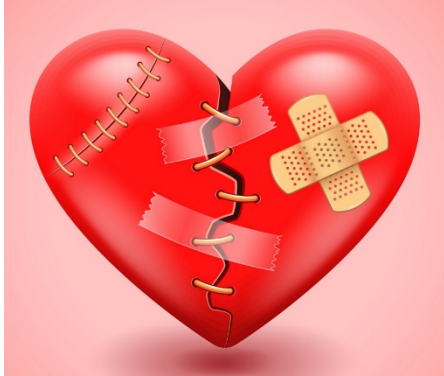


Infidelity – Is it Worth it? How to Avoid an Affair

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A man kisses his wife goodbye and heads to the airport. He is working for the next week out of town. After a long day of travel mixed with calls and emails between stops, he arrives at his destination. He checks into his hotel, then heads out for dinner. Since he's by himself, he sits in the bar at a local restaurant to watch a game on the TV, relax, and get ready for the busy week ahead.

A woman kisses her husband goodbye on the same day, travels to the same city, and ends up at the same restaurant bar as the man. The two have never met before, but fortuitously end up at the same place and by themselves. The man notices her sitting two seats down from him and starts a respectful conversation. The conversation hits a topic of mutual interest and becomes more engaging. What started as small talk, without intention on either person's part, becomes increasingly more interesting and enjoyable. Unexpectedly, their interaction fills an unmet need. They both needed to feel heard and valued. Their conversation continues as does their innate curiosity which produces a bit of excitement. They both feel a bit uneasy, but not enough to overcome the desire to talk more and possibly meet again the next night.

What happens next could be nothing or everything. Statistics reveal that as many as 6 out of every 10 married people have an extramarital affair. Affairs are one of the leading causes of divorce. If statistics on affairs are accurate, an affair has touched you either directly or indirectly. It has happened to you, a family member, or a friend. You also know the consequences. The lies, cover ups, and ultimate confessions are life changing. Affairs impact everything - family, friends, work, finances, mental health, physical health, and reputation.

Regardless of your values or circumstances, when married people have an affair, there are consequences. Even when stopped and forgiven, those offended never think about their spouse the same again. Some struggle to ever love their spouse again. Trust is permanently compromised. Tension replaces tranquility. For the offenders, some have to wrestle for life with a longing that can't be forgotten. They have to resist the allure of fantasy. For the victims, they get a tinge of nervousness every time their spouse goes out of town. They wonder if it might be a secret rendezvous. For both, they have to constantly be on guard for another message, call, or email.

Everyone has vulnerabilities. Neuroscience confirms what most people know—self-control has its limits. Even for the most secure and responsible people, an unexpected set of circumstances can potentially draw a person into a conversation that turns into something more.

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If an affair and the resulting consequences are something you want to avoid, here are ten principles to follow:

1. Leave home happy, especially on a trip out of town. Avoid leaving with unresolved anger and conflict. Make up before you go.
2. Leave home romantically fulfilled. No matter whether your needs are more physical or emotional, don't leave with a big void.
3. Set aside quality time with your spouse on the day of your return home to which you can look forward. Schedule a date night.
4. Limit time away from home to that which your mind and body can reasonably tolerate. Respect each other's emotional and physical needs.
5. When away from your spouse, avoid potentially compromising circumstances such as meeting alone with a co-worker for drinks after work.
6. When communicating with others, whether in person, texts, email, or social media, assume that whatever gets said, will be shared with everyone you know.
7. Dress conservatively when away from your spouse. Save your good looks and attractive wardrobe for your spouse.
8. Confront and address ongoing relationship problems rather than seek affection from others. Resolve the fundamental issue.
9. Appreciate and think about what you have rather than dwell on what you don't, especially when away from home.
10. If you encounter what appears to be a better mate, realize that the nice green grass you are seeing on the other side of the fence is often artificial turf.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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