

The following chapter is provided free of charge to students of Michael Sytsma, PhD. It is provided with permission, but may not be passed on to non-students.

Counseling Techniques

A Comprehensive Resource
for Christian Counselors

John C. Thomas, PhD, PhD,
General Editor

ZONDERVAN

Counseling Techniques

Copyright © 2018 by John C. Thomas

This title is also available as a Zondervan ebook.

This title is also available as a Zondervan audio book.

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

ISBN 978-0-310-52944-6

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked CEV are from the Contemporary English Version. Copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are from *The Message*. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from New American Standard Bible®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are from the New King James Version®. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation. © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked TLB are from The Living Bible. Copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Any Internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Art direction: Tammy Johnson

Interior design: Name goes here

Printed in the United States of America

Infidelity-Focused Strategies

MICHAEL SYTSMA, PhD
DOUGLAS ROSENAU, EdD

Can you build a fire in your lap
and not burn your pants?
Can you walk barefoot on hot coals
and not get blisters?
It's the same when you have sex with your neighbor's wife:
Touch her and you'll pay for it. No excuses.

PROVERBS 6:27-29 MSG

A better scheme could not have been devised for striking at the heart of marriage than infidelity. Shirley Glass (2003) states that healthy relationships are bolstered by what are considered safe assumptions: exclusive commitment, moral values of monogamy, mutual love, and safety. According to Glass, "Our basic assumptions provide a set of operation instructions for living. . . . We are traumatized when these assumptions are shattered because our safe, predictable world is no longer safe or predictable" (p. 95). Infidelity devastates companionship, destroys trust, and toxically distorts sexual intimacy. Clients presenting for help recovering from infidelity need a counselor able to guide them through their grief and healing journey. This chapter is designed to help prepare you to be just such a guide.

We will begin by defining infidelity and its prevalence, followed by a look at critical concepts in counseling infidelity. The focus of the chapter, however, is to introduce strategies for counseling couples recovering from this common wound. We have seen that affair counseling is different than other types of couple counseling given the trauma and disruptive force to the marital system.

THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF INFIDELITY

Infidelity by the Numbers

By listening to the radio, watching movies or television, glancing at the tabloids, or surfing the online news, we can get the idea that nearly no people are faithful in their marriages. Is everyone having affairs?

Despite being the focus of multiple research studies (for a sample of reviews see Munsch, 2012; Thompson, 1983; Wiederman, 1997), this question is difficult to answer for a host of reasons, including denial, definitions of infidelity, and sample bias. Infidelity appears to be universally common and is the number one reason for divorce in 160 cultures (Betzig, 1989). Hite (1981) reported incidence as high as 66 percent for males, but newer studies seem to suggest that for decades the rate has hovered around 20 to 25 percent for men and 10 to 15 percent for women (Carr, 2010). The latest surveys suggest the gender difference is lessening. Carr (2010) found that younger women (ages eighteen to twenty-four) cheated at a rate almost equal to their male counterparts (12.9 percent for females compared to 15.9 percent for males). This appears to be more of a sociological trend than a generational effect. A 2009 study showed no significant gender differences (23 percent of men compared to 19 percent of women). However, it did show a slight but significant age difference and a significant difference in religious belief, with those who had affairs less likely to see religion as important (Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011).

Beliefs on the acceptability of infidelity also seem to be slightly shifting. A Gallup poll suggests that infidelity is increasingly morally unacceptable, with 91 percent stating that an affair is morally wrong (Newport & Himelfarb, 2013). Only 6 percent stated infidelity was acceptable—this, despite the reported popularity of online affair sites.

The cost of infidelity remains high. Infidelity is still illegal in twenty-one states

(Rhode, 2016). About half of US couples who experience an extramarital affair divorce (Allen & Atkins, 2012). It has been estimated that infidelity is the event that brings 25 percent of couples to counseling, with another 30 percent of couples revealing infidelity during the course of treatment (Wagers, 2003). Daly and Wilson (1988) report that actual or suspected infidelity on the part of a wife is the leading cause of spousal battering and spousal homicide.

Clearly, counselors need to be able to address healing from an affair. About 65 to 70 percent of couples who experience infidelity stay married, with half of those reporting a stronger relationship than before the affair (Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon, 2007). Much of the time this happens with the help of a counselor.

Defining Infidelity

The *American Heritage Dictionary* (2016) defines infidelity as “unfaithfulness to a sexual partner, especially a spouse.” While “an *act* of sexual unfaithfulness” (emphasis added) is one of the definitions, viewing infidelity as a broader state of “unfaithfulness” allows for more than sexual intercourse with someone other than one’s spouse to qualify as infidelity. Couples will often distract from the issue of the wound and offense by arguing about whether the infidelity was an affair. This can include at what level of physical or emotional involvement an affair has occurred. “We didn’t have sex; we just kissed.” “This was only an emotional affair.” But are emotional affairs void of any sexual component? It might be argued that emotional affairs

have the capacity to damage the marital system even more than a casual encounter. When a client is minimizing an emotional affair and seeing it as nonsexual, it is fair to ask, “So, can you imagine the object of your emotional attachment being eighty years old, obese, and unattractive?”

These discussions can quickly become a trap that draws you into the couple’s unhealthy dance (i.e., interactional dynamic patterns) and results in aligning with one spouse over the other. In time, the couple that heals will develop a shared narrative of what happened. Pushing for agreement on that narrative too early can stall the process. Focusing on the healing process tends to be a better choice.

In this chapter, “infidelity” is defined broadly and can include any unfaithfulness that causes a wound in the marriage, including emotional affairs that never culminate in physical sex; addictive/compulsive sexual acting out; brief or more casual sexual hookups; shorter emotional, sexual affairs growing out of a friendship; long-term love relationships, and online emotionally romantic relationships. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus expanded the definition of infidelity beyond the physical to include mind and emotions. A person can sexually adulterate (contaminate by adding a foreign substance) a marriage through thoughts and mental obsessions, not just by engaging in sexual intercourse.

Infidelity can also be defined as a fantasy. Unfortunately, fantasies are bigger than real life and, thus, very powerful. Exaggerated by the fantasy, the object of the affair will often possess something the mate doesn’t have or isn’t doing. The affair

partner may love cuddling, kinky sex, or deep conversations, or may seem to really desire the person. The offending spouse internally exaggerates these desired characteristics that seem totally absent in the marriage. A fantasy can be so extremely inviting and deceiving. Real life with kids, fatigue, and familiarity aren’t as exciting. The fact that the people in the affair are sharing secrets is also very bonding and toxic to the marital relationship and a part of maintaining the fantasy. Thus, exposing the fantasy is an important component and strategy.

Finally, since different writers label the various parties in the infidelity, we will call the spouse who was not part of the infidelity the *wounded spouse*, and the unfaithful one the *offending spouse*. The *affair partner* is the third party the offending spouse had the relationship with. You may choose different language in session, and often couples have a preferred language when referencing their roles. What is most important is agreeing on a clear language with the couple so you are not confused in who the “she” or “he” is during storytelling. We also work to elevate language. “Your affair partner” is more detached and clinical than “your mistress.”

Critical Concepts in Working with Infidelity

As with any counseling issue, a few core concepts should be considered in preparing to do this work.

Self-of-the-therapist. Carlson and Sperry (2010) write, “The most effective infidelity couples therapists have achieved LTLR [long-term loving relationship]

stage three experience [“stage three” means they are well differentiated] in their own lives and have worked through their own infidelity experiences and issues” (p. 28). While we don’t believe this level of life experience is required to work well with infidelity, it does speak to the character of counselors who work best with infidelity. You must be able to tolerate a high level of pain in the room and keep the couple focused on healing. Hearing the stories can be very painful to highly erotic for the counselor. If you cannot manage your own emotions, this will come out in session and stifle the couple.

Educate yourself on the theory and practice of working with infidelity. Several professional texts on treating infidelity (i.e., Baucom, Snyder, & Gordon, 2009; Carlson & Sperry, 2010; Peluso, 2007; Piercy, Hertlein, & Wetchler, 2005; Weeks, Gambescia, & Jenkins, 2003) are available that will help you explore treatment models and increase your knowledge of the issues. Many counselors seem to believe some of the common myths discussed by Pittman (1989): everybody has affairs, affairs prove love is gone or never existed in a marriage, the affair partner is sexier, the affair is the fault of the one cheated on, divorce is inevitable after an affair, and there is safety in ignorance about the affair. Educating yourself on these common myths and the truths behind them can help ensure that you don’t derail in guiding the couple.

You would also do well to learn the common phases of infidelity (Rosenau, 1998): inception, pre-discovery, discovery, recovery, resolution. These phases will orient you during the initial assessment.

Awareness of the phases sheds light on some of the issues and tasks the couple still must work through.

Infidelity is varied and complex. The reasons given for infidelity demonstrate the complexity of this topic. Infidelity can occur in decent marriages out of curiosity or a friendship that is romanticized over time. Affairs may be mostly sexual, or they may involve trying to get nonsexual needs (e.g., affirmation, sympathetic listening, adventure) met in a romantic relationship. Infidelity can be symptomatic of midlife crisis or marital dissatisfaction; it can be used for revenge or to end a marriage; or it may be a part of personal problems like addiction. Sometimes affairs are a way of distancing from intimacy and keeping a marriage shallow or living out the patterns of the family of origin. Many have never learned monogamy in dating relationships and are ill equipped to be faithful in marriage.

Components of the infidelity can also be highly varied, including the length and intensity of the affair; intensity of the emotional attachment; relationship of the parties before the infidelity (i.e., affair with a spouse’s best friend); state of the marital intimacy before, during, and after the affair; level of individual health and stability of each affected party; environmental factors (finances, children, work pressures, etc.); nature of discovery and disclosure; and each party’s initial response to discovery/disclosure. Variations in each of these story components (and others) can dramatically change the assessment and counseling approach. Recognizing infidelity as varied and complex helps you approach

each story with an open stance and adapt counseling techniques accordingly.

Infidelity as complex trauma. While understanding the meaning and context of infidelity is important, perhaps the most important core concept is the recognition of infidelity as a kind of complex trauma. Spending time focused on the “why” and details of the infidelity without attending to the trauma is treating a gunshot wound by locking up the guns and putting a Band-Aid on the entry wound. The real threat and damage is the traumatic wound caused by the bullet propelling deep into the body. You must attend to the complexity of the wound if the individuals and couple are going to heal.

The psychological impact of an affair involves multiple losses and trauma to both partners and the marital system. Steffens and Rennie (2006) found that a majority of wives (69.6 percent) responded to disclosure of infidelity with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, with 50 percent reporting moderate to severe symptoms. Spring (2006, pp. 13) identifies multiple areas of possible confusion, grief, and loss with marital infidelity:

1. Loss of identity: personally and within the marriage, with views of the partner's character and healthy roles within the marriage shifting and being doubted.
2. Loss of a sense of specialness
3. Loss of self-respect for debasing self to win the partner back and failing to acknowledge all the wrong that has been perpetrated
4. Loss of control over thoughts, emotions, and the stability of the marriage

5. Loss of a fundamental sense of order and justice: in the world in general and especially in the way the marriage was supposed to play out
6. Loss of religious faith: Where is God in all this trauma, and why aren't people of faith in my life coming through with the help I need?
7. Loss of true connection with others: Who has my back and who can I confide in?
8. Loss of a sense of purpose: Can I be loved, and is all this worth it? This isn't the life and marriage I had envisioned.

Both partners, and especially the one who has been betrayed, are thrown into this complex trauma from which they must heal over time. Grieving must take place with all of the stages in grief (Kübler-Ross, 1969): denial (*I can't believe this is happening to me*); anger, with a thousand questions and “You and the whole marriage are a sham”; bargaining with trying to regain control and make sense of what has happened; depression and intense grieving; acceptance and resolution that can take years.

Grieving is not just for the wounded spouse. The offending spouse will typically experience a kind of grief. For the offending spouse, grief is often a trigger for the wounded spouse, but the counselor must create space for both to grieve. Post-affair counseling truly involves trauma work of processing the story and helping the victims begin to create a new, transformative counternarrative.

Infidelity as sin. Adultery, defined as sex with another man's wife or betrothed

(Marsh, 2016), made it to God's top ten list of "Thou shalt nots" (Ex. 20:14) in Scripture. It is an offense against God (Prov. 2:17) and against the spouse (Prov. 6:34–35), and it was a sin punishable by the death of both parties in Old Testament times (Deut. 22:22). Various Scripture passages speak to the sin and destruction adultery brings on an individual and society (i.e., Prov. 6:32–35). Christ and the New Testament reaffirm adultery as sin (cf. Matt. 19:18; 1 Cor. 6:9), and while Jesus chose not to condemn the woman caught in adultery (John 8:11), he affirmed that what she was doing was sin and also expanded the definition of adultery to include lustful desire (Matt. 5:28).

While Scripture doesn't speak directly to nonsexual infidelity in marriage, it does regularly draw comparisons between adultery and God's people turning away from him in idolatry and apostasy (Jer. 3:6–9; Hos. 1:2–3). God is serious about his covenant with us and calls us to be pure in our pursuit of him. Thus, it is reasonable to maintain the analogy and see any breach of the sacredness of the marital bed (Heb. 13:4) as missing the mark, defilement, or sin.

CASE STUDY

Geri was surprised when her close work friendship with Hank included a passionate kiss on the stairwell to the underground parking lot. After disclosing this to her best girlfriend, she realized an emotional affair had been slowly building for some time. When she confessed the relationship, Geri's husband Cam forgave

her and didn't want her to quit her job. She broke off the friendship with Hank, was able to transfer to another work group, and agreed to keep any interaction with Hank totally business and would tell Cam. The marriage slowly healed though an innocent trust had been lost.

Cam was surprised at Geri's reactions when she was using his computer and discovered a sexually explicit email he forgot to erase. His affair with Jan began while on a business trip at the hotel bar. He didn't think he would get a free pass just because he was drunk and the woman had been the aggressor when they met, but he thought Geri's emotional affair four years earlier would make her more understanding. When Cam told Geri about meeting the woman and since then meeting up with her three times, Geri collapsed in tears, and then intense anger followed. "How could you? Wasn't I enough for you? Do you love her? I thought we had a good sex life. Are you planning on leaving?"

He wondered if the accusations and interrogation would ever end. He saw the affair as a sexualized friendship with no real love feelings. It began casually and remained very casual and was easy to end. Both Cam and Geri realized they weren't going to rebuild trust on their own until they sought counseling.

Over the course of months of counseling, Geri and Cam realized that her emotional affair, though four years old, had never been entirely dealt with and healed. Both were surprised at their intense roller coaster of feelings as they worked to reconcile. Disclosure, honesty, and working on trust helped. They had good days, and

then something would trigger the hurt and anger, with both wondering if this would ever end. Slowly trust was rebuilding, and lovemaking began again with deeper meaning. Though their naive innocence was lost, they were creating a sacred commitment that had never existed before.

STRATEGIES, INTERVENTIONS, AND TECHNIQUES FOR COUNSELING INFIDELITY

Working through affair recovery requires you to attend to many critical issues that are unique to affair counseling. We have found the following strategies helpful in facilitating healing in those who have been affected by infidelity.

Initial Sessions and Assessing

The first couple session is critical in setting the path for healing. Couples present for counseling at various stages of the healing process (from hours after first discovery to years in), but the initial process remains fairly constant.

Session one. The first session should be with both spouses whenever possible. Often spouses will want to schedule the first session alone, but this is often an attempt to create an unhealthy alliance with the counselor. Having the couple present allows you to assess the current state of the system better as you watch the interaction around the story. Moreover, it starts the couple on a healing journey together.

After the normal first session ritual (informed consent, introductions, etc.), ask the wounded spouse to tell the story from wherever they believe the story be-

gins. Beginning with the wounded spouse has several advantages. One is to hear where the wounded spouse is in the process. If still raw, intensely angry, crushed, those feelings will likely show as the story is told. You will also be able to see whether the wounded spouse is able to contain, or not be overwhelmed by, the story and emotion. Second, you will hear the story from the wounded spouse's perspective. What do they believe went on? What was their experience of the journey? Effective counseling at this point requires that you are not afraid of the pain in the room. A well-differentiated counselor will absorb a lot more pain, allowing it to be expressed. Therapists who are afraid the pain will crash the system will often not allow it to be fully expressed.

It is common for the offending spouse to want to correct or take over the story. Honor that concern, observing any patterns of where they seek to do this, but gradually shift back to the wounded spouse's perspective. Occasionally invite the offending spouse to speak up if the story gets too disparaging or if you see the offending spouse checking out of the session.

In addition to assessing the story and the state of the wounded spouse, another task in the initial session is watching how the offending spouse handles hearing the emotion of the wounded spouse telling the story. Work to be very gracious in your interpretation, but watching a spouse be visibly sorrowful is a hopeful sign. A spouse who is blaming, overly defensive, or generally unrepentant means a rougher journey, more work on the counselor's part, and poorer prognosis.

Doing all of the above will help you assess the strengths and weaknesses of the marriage at hand. One strategy I [Mike] often use is quite direct. After hearing the story, I simply ask in a very caring, curious way, “So, why are you choosing to fight for the marriage when this is what he (she) has done?” Similarly, in a caring tone I ask the offending spouse why they are choosing the marriage and not the affair partner. Questions this direct, when asked with tender tone, invite the couple to really consider why they are choosing the healing path (or dealing with other issues in the affair). Sometimes the answers are weak or uncertain, but whatever the answer, you have a better sense of the resources currently available in working toward recovery.

The final strategy of the initial session is that of providing realistic hope. Clients arrive after an affair in chaos and uncertain of their future. They need to experience a counselor who is confident and hopeful. You are not giving them an unrealistic hope, however.

Counselor: *I am truly sorry for the events that have your marriage, and each of you, in this much pain. Unfortunately, this type of wound is very familiar to me, which means we know how to treat it. If you are willing to stay on the journey, you can heal quite fully. Your marriage is forever changed, but it can grow from this point into the kind of marriage you both really want and others deeply admire.*

Part of providing realistic hope is mapping out the expected recovery path. This

path is discussed below for the purpose of this chapter and shared with the couple at this point.

Next, move forward with individual sessions. Occasionally this plan needs to be disrupted to provide additional containment for a couple who are highly fragile or where the possibility of violence is suspected (see below). If these are suspected, prioritize your treatment plan and the presenting problems well and provide stabilization before progressing. Otherwise, the strategy of assessment moves forward with the next two sessions.

Session two. Assuming the tasks were adequately addressed in session one, the second session should be with the offending partner. I schedule a double session (two hours) to unpack the whole story. I do this individually for a couple of reasons. First, I am going to ask very direct, probing questions. The wounded spouse does not need to hear the questions or the discussion that follows, which will only deepen the wound. Second, I intentionally and carefully avoid asking the offending spouse to bring anything into the first session that isn't true. My focus is on the wounded spouse's story, and I rarely ask the offending spouse to verify the information. I do not want them to feel the need to lie in front of their spouse about something they may need to defend later with me. In an individual session, however, I will invite them to be totally transparent regarding where they are currently at.

The strategy here is to chronologically unpack the development of the affair relationship. For classic “one night stands,” this will be a bit shorter, but every

relationship has a narrative, even if the story is how they made themselves susceptible to the one night stand. Asking how the offending partner initially met the affair partner, what their first impression was, and why they pursued or allowed the relationship to continue is a start. Thoroughly explore all aspects of the relationship.

Fully unpacking the development of the relationship has three primary purposes. First, the counselor and client are able to understand how the affair developed. Later this is useful in marriage counseling to provide guardrails for preventing future infidelity. Second, the client faces the story all at once. Due to the denial and minimization that tends to be an inherent part of an affair, they likely haven't faced it all at once. Telling the story to you facilitates them viewing it as a whole and preparing for full disclosure with their spouse. Finally, it allows for a bit of a confessional experience. If you can establish a safe setting for the client to truly unpack the story without your condemnation, the confession can be healing.

Session three. The focus of the third session is to accomplish three main tasks with the wounded spouse. Since you have sorted through the details of the affair with the offending spouse, it may become clear that the wounded spouse is still largely in the dark. Learning what the wounded spouse does and doesn't know is important in charting a path forward. Sometimes the wounded spouse reveals they have inside data that discloses a much larger story than has been told. They may be holding that information to test if the offending spouse is coming clean. The next task is

to assess how much resolve the spouse has toward working on the marriage. This is a continuation of the "Why are you willing to work on this?" question. Sometimes you realize they are simply gathering data to use in a divorce. Other times they are quite unhealthy, preventing them from leaving no matter what damage was done. Whatever the case, it is important to understand the setting you have before you. A final task is to allow them to express their pain. Sometimes they have been telling the world, but often profound shame prompts silence. Having a place to begin to exhale the poison is valuable.

While the above lays out strategy for the initial three sessions, there are a number of valuable strategies that may be utilized anywhere in the healing journey.

Setting Expectations

Normalizing the typical recovery process early in therapy has value. Couples often have unspoken expectations that recovery from infidelity can be a quick process. Clients have often reported that they were told by other therapists that if the wounded partner would just forgive the offending spouse, healing would automatically occur and the infidelity would be a thing of the past. Unfortunately, this totally disrespects the sanctity of the marriage and the intensity of the trauma. Leading a couple to believe that the wound can be healed quickly is as irresponsible as leading them to believe that grief from the death of a close friend can be healed quickly with a few steps.

Somewhere early in the counseling process (often the first session) I ask the couple

how long they believe it will take to heal from the infidelity. After assessing their beliefs, I let them know my experience.

Counselor: In my experience, the normal healing process takes three to five years. This doesn't mean you will be devastated for that long. The first three months tend to be very painful and chaotic—lots of anger, sadness, and hurt. Then, the next nine months look like a volatile stock market with lots of quick ups and downs but a steady trend up. The year anniversary is hard again, but the next two years are a slow growth. There will still be rough spots with an increasing number of good days versus bad days. You will also spend time during this stage addressing weak spots in the marriage and growing it strong. By year three, the infidelity is becoming part of the story of your past. It will be easy for a trigger to open it again, but it is quite containable. By year five, the infidelity should be something you are not proud of, but it is in the past. It will still be tender but will not define your spouse or your marriage. Triggers will be quickly managed by both of you.

Tell the couple that counseling will be more frequent in the beginning but will taper off as they progress. Volatile couples in the early stages may need to meet more than once a week for containment, whereas couples in the later stages may attend counseling only monthly to quarterly, if at all.

Also point out that the offending partner will heal long before the wounded

partner. This gives the wounded partner permission to experience grief and encourages the offending partner to be patient and contrite. Depending on how emotionally intertwined the infidelity was, the offending partner may reach the point of rarely thinking of the affair partner within weeks. The only time they think of the infidelity is when the wounded partner brings it up. Point out that this is normal for differential healing to take place, with the offending spouse glad to be out of the sinful secrecy and wanting to move on, while the offended spouse needs time to sort through the chaos. If their physician told them they had an 85 percent blockage in their heart and needed immediate bypass surgery, they would not expect life to be "normal" for a long time—maybe never. Healing can be full and complete, but life will be very different for months while they go through the recovery process. Recovering from infidelity can be very similar.

Providing Hope

Providing hope is a strategy that sounds easier than it is. The anger and hurt that are a natural by-product of infidelity must be countered with hope. Infidelity need not end in divorce. God is in the forgiveness and redemption business, even with very destructive sins. Geri didn't understand how her Cam could ever betray her and wondered if the marriage was all a sham. Cam felt relieved to have the secret out but wondered if the damage was so great that at best he would forever be on probation as the "infidel" who cheated. In the midst all this trauma, fear, and hurt, the counselor need-

ed to step in and provide hope that would permeate the post-affair counseling process.

In addition to the reality that they had chosen to be in the counselor's office, the counselor watched closely for any signs of affection, commitment, or caring during their sessions. Those provided hope as they became "toe holds" to begin to build on. One powerful technique was to end a session by pointing out the ways Cam and Geri cared for each other even in the midst of expressing their trauma. Presenting vision can be a powerful way to provide hope.

Counselor: You can exit this marriage anytime you want, but I believe if you hang on through the trauma of this early recovery you can learn to grow strong. You [*addressing the offending spouse*] can learn a contrition, repentance, humility, and selflessness that is not typical in humans. You [*addressing the wounded spouse*] can learn a grace, mercy, forgiveness, and acceptance that is truly Christlike.

First Corinthians 13:13 says, "These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." After an affair, hope may be the greatest of these. Skilled counselors learn how to have and speak hope into the trauma.

Risk Assessment

We are listing risk assessment as a separate strategy, but it begins in the first session and continues through the entire course of healing. As stated in the introduction, infidelity is one of the leading causes of violence in marriage (Nemeth,

Bonomi, Lee, & Ludwin, 2012; Rhode, 2016). Experienced therapists may ask outright if there have been any physical expressions of anger or if there is the potential of such. Getting a truthful answer can be tricky as couples will sometimes collude to keep this information from the counselor. Threatening to leave counseling or the relationship if the violence is revealed is one way this happens. While you cannot know what the couple is unwilling to reveal, it is important to ask and assess.

If you suspect the potential of violence in the home, a safety plan and agreements should be discussed. Sometimes it is prudent to work on an immediate structured separation to help ensure the safety of all parties. This especially holds true when there are children in the home, as safety plans must include plans for their safety. Depending on the level of threat suspected, you may need to consider mandated reporting.

In addition to threat to the offending or wounded spouse, sometimes the risk is to self. Either may experience urges to harm self. The offending spouse may seek to do so out of guilt or he or she may have urges to self-harm to avoid the pain or to punish the wounded spouse. Being trained and supervised in a model of suicide prevention like the collaborative assessment and management of suicidality (CAMS) approach (Jobes & Linehan, 2016) can be important in working with couples with a high level of pain.

Structured Separation

While the experienced counselor recognizes common patterns, each couple and

individual responds to trauma differently. While many couples struggle to stay together, some couples will have separated immediately after the discovery of infidelity or will separate as intensity grows. Separation may be to another bedroom, friend's home, or apartment. We have learned to accept whatever the couple has chosen but also to help bring structure to that separation. Conversely, when a couple is highly reactive and doing damage to each other or the risk of violence is present, you may need to recommend a structured separation.

While the definition of *separation* is varied and accurate data makes estimates tenuous, it is estimated that 79 percent of couples who separate divorce within three years (Tumin, Han, & Qian, 2015). With this awareness, you may push for couples to end the separation too quickly. Despite the reason for choosing the separation (i.e., management of pain, punishing, fear of violence, etc.), it may have value beyond what you can immediately see. So instead of pushing to end the separation, we recommend adding structure to it and utilizing it as a strategy (Granvold & Tarrant, 1983).

Setting up a structured, or therapeutic, separation provides enough physical distance that the reactivity can begin to settle. Spouses are not always on high alert or being regularly triggered by each other. In a structured separation, time together is planned and purposeful. This can include time for meaningful processing, interaction with children, and fun dates to rebuild. Boundaries are established and unhealthy patterns are shifted.

Establishing the Rules

One strategy that can work very well is establishing a set of "rules" for the couple to follow. Because much of their life is in chaos, having the directive of "rules" that must be followed can be comforting. Further, it strengthens hope (*If we follow the rules, we can get better*), and provides for ongoing protection for the marriage (even if fallible). Further, the couple require the change of marital patterns that allowed the infidelity to survive. Toward this end, ask clients to agree to a couple of core rules. Wait until after the assessment to request the following rules. The couple must be ready first. If the infidelity is continuing, there is no sense in asking for the rules to be followed.

Absolutely no contact with the affair partner. The first rule is quite straightforward but is often difficult for the offending spouse. Clarify by going back through the ways the affair partners made contact (identified in session 2) and discussing how to close these pathways of communication. This often means changing phone numbers, blocking calls, shutting down secret email accounts, blocking emails, canceling hidden phone accounts, and so forth. Then ask, "If they wanted to reach you just to make sure you were doing okay, how would they connect with you?" Work on closing those pathways also.

The reality is, contact almost always occurs after agreeing to this first rule. Hence, tell them to expect the affair partner to reach out at some point. If they truly cared for each other, they will want to make sure the other is okay. An important strategy at this point is to plan for just such

an event. This includes what to do with unsolicited phone calls, texts, or emails arriving from the affair partner. My strategy includes stopping the communication, bringing the spouse into the middle of the relationship, and giving the spouse some power and control—all reversals of the pattern undermine the infidelity.

Counselor: So, Sue, how would you handle it if an unknown number calls your desk and you pick up the phone and hear his (affair partner's) voice on the other end of the call?

Wife/Sue: I'm not sure. I don't want to be rude.

Counselor: Given the choice of being rude to him or protecting your marriage, can I invite you to protect your marriage? [*Wife nods reluctantly.*] The moment you hear it is his voice, you need to say, "I need to hang up now. Please don't call again," and hang up. You may feel horrible, but know it's the right thing to do. Next, you immediately call your husband. When he answers, tell him exactly what happened. "I answered an unknown call and heard his voice. He was saying . . . I said . . . I hung up the phone and called you." Can you do that?

Ensure that the wounded spouse is on board and coach them in how to be grateful without punishing their honesty. This can be done in a similar vein for emails, texts, and other types of communication.

Be truthful in all things. The next rule is to break the pattern of the infidelity by requiring total transparency. The nature of infidelity is lies, fantasy, and deception.

Living such a life requires a lack of integrity. To break these patterns, assist clients to realize the value of openness, honesty, and transparency in everything. Be aware that counselors disagree on whether complete honesty is wise. Research does suggest that keeping secrets in marriage damages the relationship. Further, there are a number of clinical advantages of truthfulness. For example, Atkins (Atkins, Eldridge, Baucom, & Christensen, 2005) found that couples who pursued truthfulness and full disclosure improved at a greater rate and showed better overall progress. This rule is consistent with biblical teaching that lauds truthfulness (cf. Zech. 8:16–17; Eph. 4:25) and sets deception as destructive and against God (cf. Ps. 101:7).

Doing "Good Therapy"

It may seem strange to list this as a strategy, but the greater the pain and damage, the more important basic skills become. In our experience, there are two "good therapy" strategies that are worth highlighting.

Modeling and teaching active listening skills. All couple counseling requires the counselor to help each partner empathize with a different reality—to objectively walk in someone else's shoes. This is especially important in counseling the trauma of an affair. You can utilize the model you are familiar with; however, modeling and teaching active listening skills are important strategies in effective infidelity counseling. Active listening during infidelity recovery involves greater self-awareness and the ability for both the offender and the wounded to understand and communicate their feelings while learning to empathize

with a very different reality and experience. Empathy does not entail agreement. It is about understanding and acknowledging the other's feelings and reality.

Guiding active listening during session can also slow the process down and make it more manageable. It also short circuits much of the normal escalation. After the wounded spouse has verbally vomited their pain all over the offending spouse, the normal human response is to defend self.

Counselor: Cam, your wife is expressing a lot of pain and anger. Normal humans have difficulty hearing that level of pain, especially when it's directed at them. I'm wondering if you can tell me what you heard? What is her heart saying?

This invites him to step back, review what she said, and put it into his own words. This slows the process down and asks for empathy. In time, Cam can be coached to reflect it to her instead of the counselor. This works well with the wounded spouse also.

Counselor: Geri, your husband has just made some very important statements about his feelings for you versus his feelings for his affair partner. Those can be hard to hear at this stage of recovery. Could you tell me what you heard him say?

Systemic understanding and second-order change. Every marriage has a dance, a system; and sexual infidelity dramatically alters the system's functioning. The reader may be aware that first-order change

doesn't alter the structure of a system while second-order change qualitatively alters the systemic order. Thus, only second-order change yields any forward movement toward healing. "Good therapy" works to understand the present marital dynamics and effect second-order changes.

Cam regretted his affair, or as he described it, "his stupid mistake." But he couldn't understand why Geri was so upset over a casual, meaningless hookup. He began counseling to emphasize the importance of forgiveness in a good marriage.

Counselor: Cam, I appreciate you coming in, and I can see that you love Geri and want this marriage to work. As I'm listening to Geri, there are levels of hurt and betrayal that include, but go deeper than, this one-night affair. She doesn't think you "get it" yet, but I know you want to understand. I'm looking forward to helping both of you build that intimate marriage you both want as we explore the pattern illustrated by the affair more carefully.

As therapy progressed, Cam began to experience real remorse and could see more clearly a real lack of appropriate boundaries in his flirting with women that had continually betrayed Geri beyond the "one nighter." What he thought was going to be a two- or three-session excursion, turned into a year of couple counseling as he and Geri worked through many issues they had never addressed. Cam was amazed at how different his marriage was, and he had experienced what he called from his corporate background "a true paradigm shift."

Healing the Wound before Attacking the Disease

It is not uncommon for one spouse or the other to want to focus on the “why” of the infidelity or to focus on the dysfunction of the marriage. While these issues are important to know and address, dealing with them early in the journey short circuits the grief process the couple must work through. Keeping the couple focused on the current wound is a strategy that our experience has shown facilitates a more complete healing.

To assist in understanding this principle, we encourage couples to consider someone showing up to the emergency room with both a cancerous tumor and a deep cut to their leg that has severed a major artery. While the cancer needs to be treated, if they don’t treat the artery first, the individual will not survive long enough to treat the cancer. Infidelity is like a cut to a major artery. Even if the ER doctor spots the cancer, her focus must be the wound that is killing the patient. As recovery proceeds, the cancer that was threatening the marriage, and often set up the infidelity, will reveal itself more in the couple’s relational patterns. These cancerous causes or setups may be wounds that occurred in the mother and/or father relationship, or low self-esteem, or wanting better sexual intimacy. Keep in mind that this is not the time to treat the cancer; the couple stays in intensive care. Resist clients’ attempts to redirect to “causes.”

TV personality Dr. Phil McGraw once applied a common catch phrase of his to dealing with affairs, “You can’t make sense out of nonsense.” Translating that into our Christian perspective, none of the causes

will ultimately be satisfactory reasons for infidelity—because affairs and infidelity are contrary to a covenantal marriage. Even the offending spouse will ultimately see the flimsiness of their reasons.

Acknowledge the Possibility of an STI

One of the very real risks of infidelity is contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). While research on risk is sparse, risk of STI is obviously higher in infidelity than in monogamous sex, but it is even higher than openly nonmonogamous individuals (Conley, Moors, Ziegler, & Karathanasis, 2012). Clearly addressing this very real risk early in the process is vital because the couple will often live in denial that STIs could be an issue. Sexually transmitted infections are often asymptomatic. They are a real threat to the health of the family and the wounded spouse who is choosing to stay in the marriage. The fear can be removed in days with a clean lab report, and if there is an STI, a plan can be made for curing or managing the infection. Testing will include at least the most common STIs: HIV, herpes, HPV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis, and syphilis (Mayo Clinic, 2015). Some physicians and couples may adjust this list or test for additional STIs (i.e., hepatitis) depending on the risk factors. Testing can be anonymous and quick at most health centers, as well as by those who specialize in this testing. For clients who are uncomfortable in discussing STIs with their personal physician, this is a welcome alternative.

One strategy is to point out how STIs

provide an interesting example of the infectious nature of sin and the far-reaching consequences of transgressing God's chosen plan for marital fidelity. Rarely do spouses have an affair to cause damage, but sin damages. STIs pose a legitimate risk to both spouses. Though God forgives sin, the consequences often remain, especially with viral STIs.

Rebuilding Trust

A primary task and strategy is the restoring of trust and honesty to the relationship. According to Rosenau (2002), "The process of forgiving and letting go and rebuilding trust and respect takes time. Partners don't forgive and immediately forget—they slowly let go as trust is earned" (p. 351). One strategy for helping the wounded spouse sort through trust is in drawing and sorting through the following grid (table 26.1). In this grid, the first column identifies the wounded spouse's options, and the top row identifies the offending spouse's options.

In the ideal, the truth would be told and trusted. In this ideal, there is hope for the marriage to grow through the damage. On the opposite side, if the truth isn't told and there is no trust, the marriage will eventually end. If the truth is told and the spouse doesn't trust, the marriage is stuck. Therapeutic progress will stall and the couple will bog down without growth.

The fear is that trust will be given in spite of the offending spouse's dishonesty. In this scenario, any healing is built on lies. When the truth finally comes out, the damage will be extensive and can permanently break the relationship.

In sorting through this grid, point out that the only choice the wounded spouse has if they want to grow in the marriage is to trust. When they complain, "This isn't fair," consider quickly pointing out, "None of this is fair, but it is how it works." Give permission to withhold trust for a season knowing they are stuck until they choose to trust. The offending spouse can rarely *prove* he or she is telling the truth. Mention that if the offending spouse is continuing to lie (not following "the rules"), the truth will eventually be discovered. Their spouse is likely extending all the grace they have, and further disclosure may break the marriage at that point.

Guide a Full Disclosure (Confession)

Carter (1990) addresses the critical nature of a full disclosure: "If sin can be explained away, then it can be seen as less deadly than it is. However, true healing requires a total admission of wrong" (p. 158). Harvey (1995) lists potential questions for the wounded spouse to consider during the offending spouse's first confession: With whom did you have an affair?

Table 26.1. Offending and wounding spouses' options

Options	<i>Tell the Truth</i>	<i>Don't Tell the Truth</i>
<i>Trust</i>	Hope/growth	Growth until discovery
<i>Don't Trust</i>	Stuck	No hope

How and when did you meet? Who else knew of your relationship? How many times did you have sex? Where did you have sex? Did you ever have sex in our house or bed? Has the relationship been severed? How do you feel about him/her now? Has there ever been anyone else? Is there anything else that I should know? (pp. 113–114). Not all questions may be appropriate for all couples, while many other questions might need to be added.

Clients have often started the confession prior to counseling. You must guide from that point on. Unfortunately, the offending spouse often gives out the confession in dribbles of information (the installment plan) and keeps destroying trust with each new revelation. Trickle disclosure is the most damaging type of disclosure. You can encourage a thorough disclosure by helping the offending spouse write up a careful confession that will be shared with the wounded partner.

The questions that follow the full disclosure also need to adhere to “the rules” (see above). Questions need to be honestly answered without details that can generate constant triggers or create nightmares. Guide the couple to progress to more “process” questions and not “detail” questions. Process questions are those that discuss the marital dance/system and promote understanding and healing. For example, What can we do to become intimate companions again? How did the love for someone else grow? Where is our sex life now? How can I help build trust more? are more process questions. Detail questions that focus on when, where, how many times, and what positions tend to create vivid nightmares

and are counterproductive as the imagination runs wild.

Most wounded spouses easily bog down in detail questions that ultimately highly wound them. One helpful metaphor is that of viewing the body but not endless autopsy. Remember that when we sin something dies (James 1:15). A major loss or death has occurred with an affair, and the dead body needs to be viewed and acknowledged through a full disclosure. At some point after viewing the body, the wounded spouse needs to be encouraged not to constantly exhume the body, doing endless autopsies. While driven by many factors, it is not healthy individually or as a couple.

Many affairs go undiscovered, with clients and counselors wrestling with what is most helpful to do. Confession and disclosure break the power of secrecy, relieve guilt, and allow the adulterous spouse no longer to feel like an *imposter* (*If my mate knew, would he or she still love me?*). These benefits are forfeited if disclosure never occurs, and the individual flaws and cancers in the marriage are never addressed. We strongly encourage confession even of past affairs and the difficult work of restoring the marital intimacy. Client and counselor can pray about this, and on rare occasions the confession may occur just between the client, God, and the counselor.

Healthy Penance vs. Punishment

Encountering a need for punishment and vengeance by the wounded partner is not unusual. Punishment is generally destructive to the relationship and to the individual punishing. Nevertheless, the wounded partner may have a desire

to see the offending spouse hurt and pay a cost for their offense. Here, a strategy of *penance* can be helpful.

Penance, with intentional acts of restitution, is a scriptural idea. After his conversion, Zacchaeus stated that he would pay back four times the amount to anyone he had cheated as a tax collector, and Christ saw true penance and repentance in this act (Luke 19:8–9). Ezekiel 33:14–15 encourages that if a person will “turn away from their sin and do what is just and right . . . return what they have stolen, follow the decrees that give life, and do no evil—that person will surely live.”

An adulterer has stolen intimacy and commitment from his or her partner. Restitution in kind seems appropriate. Restitution not only heals what has been damaged but also the one who has cheated. The offender can grow through penitence, making real changes in his or her life and marriage relationship. The offending spouse has incurred a great debt. Penance can mean investing time, money, and energy to rebuild the marital intimacy that has been so damaged by infidelity.

Penance is temporary to avoid it devolving into punishment. It is human to want to seek retribution and balance the scales. Often the wounded spouse will want the offending spouse to suffer as much as they have suffered. This never works because the offending spouse will never feel the same pain but will moderate the pain through the filter of their own very different reality—and usually feel abused rather than gain greater insight into their mate’s suffering. Scripturally, the concept of vengeance is ineffective in

promoting systemic change. It is also a sin. “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:19–21).

Challenge wounded spouses to avoid being infected and sinning because their spouse engaged in sin. This is giving the infidelity too much power. The sacrament of penance versus the human tendency for punishment can make a profound difference in the recovery process by allowing a “payment” for the sin without exacting punishment.

Helping Them Choose Their Role

Another helpful strategy is understanding the roles each partner can and cannot assume for healing to take place. Both spouses have unhealthy roles they can default into and hinder the healing journey. The wounded spouse often moves into a controlling role by attempting to manage behavior (theirs or spouse’s) or understand every detail of the story. The role of detective can be especially corrosive for the wounded spouse as can being the accountability partner for the offending spouse. Instead, we encourage them to keep the focus on their tasks of healing the trauma, forgiving, leaning into the marriage (if safe), and being centered.

For the offending spouse, common roles they step into are the defensive blamer, guilt ridden “infidel,” or impatient victim

(“Are you not over this yet?”). These roles do not reflect true brokenness and contriteness. They impair their mate from moving through the pain. Instead, we encourage them toward being transparent, repentant, committed spouses.

Rebuilding Sexual Intimacy

The sexual part of the marriage can be profoundly impacted by an affair and typically requires special attention in the recovery process. You can encourage a level of sexual oneness and lovemaking that exceeds anything ever experienced in their prior marriage. Following are some guidelines for the counselor that promote dialogue and healing:

Attend to the trauma. Remember that affairs are traumatic, especially to the one who has been betrayed. They are often traumatic to the offending spouse also, for they experienced a kind of sex not present in the marriage. As stated above, both must work through their own grieving process, and you can facilitate this in the sexual relationship also. Each individual and couple will respond to the trauma slightly differently. Some jump into high frequency, intense sex while others shut totally down and refuse any sexual contact.

We seek to normalize their reactions and help guide them toward healthy sexual connection, reminding them that either response is only temporary as we follow the best trauma model for that couple. Counselors can provide hope and guidance as they help the couple “pray for the wisdom and courage to do that which initially feels uncomfortable. Talking and being vulnerably transparent can build trust and safe surrendering. Trying things, moving

forward and then backing up, processing, growing, and healing is a process for most couples” (Rosenau & Neel, 2013, p. 88).

After Geri discovered Cam’s affair, she recoiled at even a hug and couldn’t imagine ever wanting to make love again. At the suggestion, they went on a sixty-day sexual fast in which they would refrain from genital sexuality and focus on healing. After many difficult sessions and hours spent talking, Geri felt forgiveness creeping in and was seeing changes in Cam that were new to their nine years of marriage. As trust slowly returned, minimal physical affection was appreciated as long as it didn’t go into flirting or more overt sexual approaches. She still remembers the day she asked him to kiss her on the mouth and they started becoming lovers again. As she looks back now, their lovemaking is more intimately connecting than ever before, and she is more open and uninhibited.

Making needed changes. You have an important role in helping a couple talk through how an affair has changed their sex life. In an honest manner, confront and draw it into the open. Are there activities or places that may be off-limits now that weren’t before? Did the offending spouse learn something in the affair they wish to bring into the marriage? Can the wounded spouse participate without being triggered each time? Couples must explore what can be reclaimed and what to grieve the loss of. Here again, an affair can be a catalyst for change with new attitudes and some new behaviors.

Meaning making. A helpful exercise is to encourage a couple to discuss what they want to express through their lovemaking and sex life, both individually and as

a couple. Playfulness? Pursuit? Seduction? Openness and lack of inhibition? What do they want their sexual relationship to look like in the future, and how can they get it to stay there? This is also an opportunity to enhance a sex life and maybe for the first time in their marriage truly make love rather than just have sex. The effects of post-affair counseling as couples learn to be transparent and communicate openly can be quite dramatic in enhancing their sex lives.

The Resolution Phase and Relapse Prevention

Couples working on recovery slowly reestablish the equilibrium and deepen the intimacy of their partnership. The primary strategy of containment is less critical as the couple settles into the marriage. Triggers are still prevalent, but the couple has learned to manage them better. Now comes the final resolution phase of an affair as the healing process merges back into the humdrum of routine existence.

Making deeper systemic permanent change is not easy. The continued emotional and spiritual growth is hard won, as both partners continually resist sliding back into old patterns and ruts. Encourage couples to flag warning signs that they are in danger of relapse and to self-monitor. Some key warning signs when their newly found growth and intimacy starts to lapse:

- Making love infrequently, not flirting and pursuing each other
- Avoiding conflict and stockpiling anger
- Neglecting spirituality: no prayer, poor church attendance, etc.

- Keeping secrets or tiptoeing around some issue
- Canceling date nights and lacking in time alone together

Affair prevention will notice these warning signs and make needed adjustments. Think with clients about what might be a continued chink in their armor. What type of person and situation would be most seductive? Help the couple never to allow complacency and to constantly repair marital fences, maintain close same-sex and couple friendships with those who also value fidelity, never keep secrets, discipline their sexual thought lives, and grow ever closer to Christ and his wisdom.

CONCLUSION

Petersen (1984) teaches couples to affair-proof their marriages by continuing to prioritize the intimate oneness of their covenant relationship. It is important to “focus on, and stay true to, what is at the center, and like planets around the sun of our marriage, the other elements of our life will find their right places. Be faithful, stay faithful, have faith—and happiness will happen” (p. 204). Through the counseling and recovery process, marital partners are creating a new and improved relationship that is being nurtured by transparency, trust, respect, and a bonding sexual intimacy. It’s a “God thing.” The amazing Trinity can always trump Satan and even work through human sin and stupidity to bring a marriage to a better place. The number one consequence of an affair on a marriage that has worked through the recovery process: a better marriage!

RECOMMENDED READING

- Baucom, D. H., Snyder, D. K., & Gordon, K. C. (2009). *Helping couples get past the affair: A clinician's guide*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Carder, D. (2008). *Torn asunder: Recovering from an extramarital affair*. Chicago, IL: Moody.
- Carlson, J., & Sperry, L. (2010). *Recovering intimacy in love relationships*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Carter, L. (1990). *The prodigal spouse*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Harvey, D. R. (1995). *Surviving betrayal: Counseling an adulterous marriage*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Pittman, F. (1989). *Private lies: Infidelity and the betrayal of intimacy*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Rosenau, D. (2002). *A celebration of sex*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Rosenau, D., & Neel, D. (2013). *Total intimacy: A guide to loving by colors*. Atlanta, GA: Sexual Wholeness Resources.
- Shriver M., & Shriver, G. (2009). *Unfaithful: Hope and healing after infidelity*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

See textbook for bibliographic resources.