

Treating Couple Infidelity Utilizing Gottman Method Couple's Therapy

Mark R. Reynaud, MA, LPC-S, LMFT-S

Sound Relationship House Model

- Build Love Maps
- Share Fondness and Admiration
- Turn Towards
- Positive Perspective
- Manage Conflict
- Make life dreams come true
- Create Shared Meaning

Trust and Commitment: The Walls of the Sound Relationship House

- The original SRH model did not consider that the processes building a strong relationship house are simultaneously building a strong foundation of trust.
- Trust – a feeling of safety and security in a relationship, allowing for increased vulnerability/openness of partners.
- Trustworthiness – a partner's willingness to sacrifice for the relationship.
- Commitment – a gradual process in which partners come to compare the relationship favorably to others with increased frequency.
- The Trust Metric – Based on game theory.

Betrayal: The Secret Relationship Killer

- Committed relationships are a contract of mutual trust, respect, nurturance, and protection.
- Betrayal – any action (or inaction) that may violate the contract of a committed relationship.
- Building Blocks of Betrayal: Deception and yearning
- The Aton of Distrust: Turning Away

Forms of Betrayal Other Than Sexual Infidelity

- Conditional commitment
- Nonsexual affairs
- Lying
- Forming coalitions against your partner
- Absenteeism or coldness
- Withdrawal of sexual interest
- Disrespect
- Unfairness
- Selfishness
- Breaking promises
- Physical and emotional abuse

Building Trust

- Trust is built in relationships by:
 1. Constantly working on building the marital friendship
 2. Ability to process negative events
- Trust is built in small amounts through the skill of attunement:
 - A – Awareness of partner’s negative emotion
 - T – Turning toward partner
 - T – Tolerance
 - U – Understanding
 - N – Non-defensive responding
 - E – Empathy

Why Cheaters Cheat

- Research indicates that most affairs are not about sex/lust or relationship unhappiness.
- Affairs are about ending loneliness and drudgery.
- The Cheaters Cascade:
 1. Primed by lack of sharing the true self and making negative comparisons
 2. Secret keeping
 3. Walls and windows are reversed
 4. Deceiver trashes the partner
 5. Potential cheater begins to distrust the partner
 6. Line crossed

Recovering from Infidelity

- Phase 1: Atone – Rebuilding can’t begin without the cheater’s continual expression of remorse, even in the face of skepticism.
 1. Confession
 2. Behavior change, transparency and verification
 3. Understanding what went wrong
 4. Explore cheater’s reason for return
 5. Exact a high cost for future betrayal
 6. Begin to forgive
- Phase 2: Attune
 1. Couple must learn to handle conflict so it doesn’t overwhelm and create new distance.
 2. As part of new commitment, couple “goes public” to those closest, establishing the new relationship as real
- Phase 3: Attach
 1. The ability to attune must reach the bedroom.
 2. Without sexual intimacy, the relationship can’t begin again

Resources:

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (2012). *What makes love last: How to build trust and avoid betrayal*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Gottman, J. M. (2011). *The science of trust: Emotional attunement for couples*.
New York: W.W. Norton and Company.