

20

MOST COMMON MISTAKES OF THE HURT SPOUSE

By Leslie Hardie, LMSW

All Rights Reserved

Copyright 2008 by Leslie Hardie

Published in the United States of America

20 MOST COMMON MISTAKES OF THE HURT SPOUSE

By LESLIE HARDIE

After the discovery of an affair or other sexually inappropriate behavior, it is easy for the hurting spouse to make a series of mistakes. Listed in this eBook are some of the most common ones we see in our practice.

We hope that this information will help guide your actions. We also offer it to you to find comfort in knowing that you are not alone. These are *common* mistakes. Avoiding them can help tremendously in recovery but you are far from the first to have made any of the mistakes in this book.

The 20 Most Common Mistakes

1. Believing that once your spouse agrees to end the affair or the behavior, it is truly ended.

Quite often the betrayed spouse is somewhat naïve and actually believes that his or her mate is able to effectively “flip a switch” and stop the behavior or talking to the affair partner. It is a lovely thought, but very unrealistic. Recovery may involve seeking out helping professionals as well as support groups. It takes time. Most people need help getting out of an affair .

2. Demanding that your spouse pledge 100% commitment to the marriage right at the moment of disclosure.

Even if your mate is willing to make such a pledge it does not really mean anything. Your spouse may mean it in the moment, but not realize how big of a problem they actually have. Addicts cannot just stop using. People in emotionally entangled affairs have trouble disengaging.

3. Bludgeoning your spouse with God's word or with guilt, thinking that this will be helpful.

Your spouse already knows that what they have been doing is wrong, even if they will not admit it to you. Pointing such things out will usually only serve to push them away.

4. Drawing too much security from changed phone numbers and email addresses.

Although these measures can be helpful, they are not sufficient. They will not keep an unfaithful spouse from getting a new phone, a calling card or opening a new email account.

5. Believing that you can keep your mate safe and away from temptation.

As tempting as it may be to make sure your mate is always safe, it is impossible. You can try to be with your mate 24/7, but unless you work together, it is not near possible. Honestly, it is not even possible if you work together. One of you may have meetings or errands that the other one may not be a part of.

6. Trying to compete with the affair partner, pornography, or other behavior.

The affair or sexual behavior is not necessarily due to a deficiency in the marriage or sexual relationship. Even if it is, you cannot compete. A marriage and an affair are two entirely different kinds of relationships.

7. Trashing the affair partner.

If your spouse is having some ambivalence (one foot in the marriage, one foot out), this will hit the wrong side of the ambivalence and can push your mate away. It often will put your mate in the position of defending the affair partner and serves no good purpose.

8. Trying to convince your spouse that nobody will ever love him/her as much as you do.

If your spouse is in an emotionally entangled affair, chances are good that he or she may already believe this is not true. It may even encourage an “I’ll show you I’m not such a loser” attitude.

9. Using your children or grandchildren as pawns.

Perhaps even unwittingly, you have used your children or grandchildren to manipulate your mate into staying or using them to punish the unfaithful partner if they leave. This will only hurt your children. You do not want to force an unfaithful mate to stay if they are determined to leave.

10. Beating up the unfaithful mate with guilt, shame, or the opinions of others to keep them from leaving.

In all likelihood, regardless of whether they will admit it to you, your mate already feels guilt and shame over what they have done. Threatening to expose your mate will only increase the guilt and shame. It will not keep your mate home.

11. Making threats.

You might find yourself threatening your mate because you believe that threats will make your spouse “see the light” and convince them to “fly right.” Similar to item 10 above, threatening increases shame and guilt, but it does not increase desire or will to stay. Coercion from a mate can actually keep the unfaithful spouse from hearing God.

12. Trying to drive the affair partner off by personal confrontation.

Confronting the affair partner to make him or her feel guilty usually only encourages the affair partner to think that in the end, your spouse will leave you. It may give the impression that the affair partner has all the power and actually encourage the affair partner to believe that the affair will turn into a long-term relationship.

13. Contacting the affair partner and then believing them.

It is interesting how often a hurting mate will believe that the affair partner is going to tell the truth and sorrowfully see the error of his or her ways having realized the pain he or she has caused. Quite the opposite, it is not uncommon for the affair partner to lie and manipulate the situation.

14. Believing there is a simple formula or a set course to fix the problem.

It would be nice if there were. Each type of affair has its own set of challenges with a different set of solutions that are not linear or stepwise, but are unique to each situation and couple.

15. Believing that the threat of exposure will be enough to convince your mate to quit the behavior.

More people may know already than you might realize. Some of them perhaps have even offered your unfaithful spouse support or encouragement in the affair or behavior.

16. Trying to get all the unfaithful spouse's friends on your side.

You might be hoping they will help your unfaithful mate to "wake up and see reality." Some of your spouse's friends may come on board. This does not mean that your spouse will listen. Others may believe the unfaithful mate is correct in leaving someone so controlling if you try this approach.

17. Trying to "woo" your spouse back and expecting instant gratitude and immediate results.

Wooing can be more effective with certain types of affairs, but in any case, it will not produce immediate results. For example, a man with a sexual addiction may be grateful for the efforts, but it will not solve the problem.

18. Believing that you, the faithful spouse, are "blameless" and the only one who has things to forgive.

Even if you were a good spouse, no one is perfect. Your unfaithful mate probably has hurts and things for which he or she must forgive you. After dealing with the pain of the affair, it will be helpful to look at the marital relationship

19. Believing that your unfaithful mate will find you more appealing if you get attention from others.

Your mate may find you more appealing if you get attention from others or they may not. Your mate may actually feel relieved if it leads to the thought that you will not be alone if your marriage ends. Either way, it does not bring healing or restoration to your relationship. Your marriage becomes a power struggle.

20. Believing that if you, the faithful spouse, should or can do the same thing.

In this emotional time, you may feel a desire to show your unfaithful spouse how it feels to be so betrayed and that if you do, your spouse will ultimately come humbly back. It may bring them back. It may not. I have clients who have tried

this approach, only to find their lives *far* more complicated. Now they have the pain of their mate's infidelity and the guilt from their own unfaithfulness. Some have ended up becoming pregnant.

Conclusion

Again, do not panic if, on reading this list, you could picture yourself doing many of these actions. It does not mean that there is no hope. It does not mean that your marriage is doomed. It means that you are hurt and you are human and that you need to pursue healing. There is nothing the nearness of God cannot heal. To begin the healing process, a great next step is joining **Harboring Hope**.

Harboring Hope is 12-week online course designed to help you heal from the wounds of betrayal. Harboring Hope is unique in that I designed it (yes, I am a hurt spouse too) and it anonymously joins you with other betrayed spouses in a small group through a weekly conference call. To my knowledge it's the best resource available for those who want freedom and hope. We encourage you to take action- begin the healing process today.

Next Step

To begin to learn how to forgive and start the healing process, go to www.AffairRecovery.com/Harboring-Hope

About the Author

Leslie Hardie, LMSW, is a licensed therapist who received her Master of Science in Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin. She has experience working with individuals, couples, and families. Leslie is a veteran group leader, having many years of leading sessions with such programs as Bible Study Fellowship, the Community of Hope, and training sessions on grief and loss. She developed the Harboring Hope group which she currently leads at the Affair Recovery Center both online and on-site. Leslie resides in Austin with her husband John and their children.