

Affair Recovery Times

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The Founder's Corner

A New Hope for Couples

For over ten years the Affair Recovery Center has been conducting couples groups as a way of saving marriages rocked by infidelity. Our experience has proven this approach to be invaluable in the recovery process. Over 90% of couples completing the "Affair Recovery Group" are still married and are more satisfied with their marriages today than before the infidelity. The key to this success is about more than the agenda of the group—it is also about the support and the caring concern of others who are in a similar situation. If your goal is to save your marriage, then it's helpful to be involved with others who have already done so as well as those who are traveling a similar path. It can be a tiring process unless you have others to encourage and exhort you along the way.

In addition, we facilitate a process that propels hurting couples through the first stages of the recovery as quickly as possible. If the initial stages are not handled properly, the recovery can stall and couples can fail to come to a point of reconciliation and recommitment. Anger and suspicion can be the dominant elements of the relationship rather than a loving and graceful connection. It may be disappointing to

some, but this is not a process that can be hurried along. In fact, the most common mistake made by marriage therapists assisting couples recovering from an affair is hopping over the affair too quickly before the healing begins, and moving on to regular marriage therapy. While issues in the pre-affair marriage most certainly exist and need to be addressed, there are other tasks that first need to be completed.

Both parties need to feel the other partner is committed to completing a process of exploring viable new possibilities for the relationship. Both parties need to feel safe as they explore what has happened and how each of them has been impacted by those events. Both need to feel that the other person "gets it." In particular, the betrayed spouse needs to feel that their mate is grieved over what their actions have cost them, and they need to witness a willingness to address their mate's pain. Almost always when I ask the betrayed spouse if their mate understands how this has impacted them, they reply "no." It seems almost impossible for the betrayed spouse to let go and begin to lean back into the relationship until they feel their

mate gets it. Both partners need to have a common road map of what this recovery will look like and have common expectations as to what needs to happen; both partners need to develop an understanding of what, why and how this happened; and both parties need to develop a common history of their marriage. This requires honesty on the betrayer's behalf since they are the ones who hold the pieces of the puzzle needed to complete their mates understanding of what has happened. The betrayer needs to be able to experience hope that forgiveness can occur and that the marriage can be saved.

The process of forgiveness needs to be facilitated for both parties, and both must take personal responsibility for their hurtful actions toward their mate. A common understanding about monogamy needs to be developed. Tools for managing anger in the relationship need to be learned and implemented in the fabric of the marriage. A deepening of the marital friendship needs to be encouraged. Boundaries to protect the integrity of the marriage need to be erected, and intimacy needs to be reestablished. These are only a few of the processes we've found to be necessary in healing.

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Points of Interest:

- A new treatment program for couples
- Continuing the story of the recovery journey of Jeff and Bobbye
- The greatest gift you can give your children
- May you all feel the light of new joy and hope this holiday season



Founder Rick Reynolds

Harboring Hope

This month, we continue the story of Jeff and Bobbye, and their journey to recovery.

Jeff's Story (Conclusion):

Compiled by Leslie Hardie

When I was able to, I would schedule a session with a model, which was usually when Bobbye was out of town. I also discovered massages in the classified ads, and found out that the "right" type of massage also included the masseuse bring me to a climax via masturbation. We did not have much money, but I would save money here and there or use credit card cash advances in order to visit a masseuse or schedule a modeling session. After scheduling several sessions, I discovered that one woman was a prostitute and we engaged in sexual intercourse. I ended up having sex with this woman on two occasions. This was about 5-6 years after Bobbye and I had married and this was the first time that I had had sexual intercourse with another women. God started to work on me and showed me that what I was doing was not only wrong and would hurt my wife if she found out, but that it was also damaging to me. A year and a half later I made the decision to come clean with Bobbye and confess to her the whole truth. This is quite possibly the hardest thing I have ever had to do.

My wife is a wonderful woman. Just as God had been working on me, He had also been working on Bobbye preparing her for something major about to happen in our marriage. She knew that something more than just pornography was consuming my life, but she committed to stay with me and try to reconcile.

My Recovery

We knew that we had a lot of work ahead of us and one of the main things we realized was that if we were going to be missionaries, we would have to get our lives straightened out and that I was going to have to seek recovery.

As part of our missions training, we had to have psychological evaluations. During one of the sessions with the

counselor, I confessed to him the nature of my addiction. He prescribed that we start going to counseling with a Christian marriage counselor on a regular basis. This was the best thing that has happened not only to our marriage, but also to me. Unlike our previous counseling experience, this counselor knew what to do to heal our marriage and to heal me. He realized that Bobbye's eating was a problem, but that was a secondary problem to the fact that I had violated our marriage covenant.

Since Bobbye was committed to me and I was committed to recovery, we immediately started following our counselor's suggestions and assignments. I began going to Sex Addicts Anonymous meetings, had rigorous accountability with my wife, and began to see some sobriety. After continuing counseling for a few months, we were put into an affair recovery group.

This group gave us the opportunity to see that we were not alone, that others were trying to work their through their betrayal battle and allowed us to be a help to others. We also had a few friends at church who were aware of our situation.

We ended up not being able to pursue our dream of mission work. Because of an acting out incident involving a massage session, shortly before we were to leave for the mission field, it was decided that I was not recovered enough to go to the mission field. Probably the second hardest thing that I have ever had to do, was to make a statement before the church informing them that "due to personal reasons" we were indefinitely postponing our plans to do foreign missions. I knew that it was the right decision, but it was difficult to accept. We did not expect a miracle, but we received one. I did not expect a recovery but day-by-day God works on me to improve me and make me more a man of God.

This group gave us the opportunity to see that we were not alone...

The State of our Marriage Now

God has truly blessed our marriage beyond what we could have asked or imagined. I often think that couples that have not going through an adulterous relationship don't have the level of intimacy that we do. It is a horrible thing that I have done to Bobbye, but we are closer, share more and know more about each other than I feel we ever would have otherwise.

One concrete way that our marriage has improved is our fights. In our early years, we would judge a good

week by whether or not we had one day that we did not have a fight that week. It was more the exception to not have a fight on a given day, than to have a fight. One of the beautiful side benefits of God

working on our marriage is that we now have very few fights and rarely to the level that we once did (ask me about the black eye in my passport picture sometime).

We also now have 3 beautiful and wonderful kids. God has so richly blessed us.

Lessons Learned

About Myself:

I grew up thinking that I was a pretty good kid and judged others harshly. I didn't drink, smoke, cuss and I went to church to boot. I, however, learned that I lie, steal, cheat, lust and hurt the ones I love the most. From this realization, I learned that I am a sinner, saved by grace. I have no room to look down on or judge others. If I ever think myself better than someone else, I need only look in the mirror to be reminded of a man that could still be on a path leading to destruction both in this life and the one to come.

About my Spouse:

I learned that, although she may not be perfect, my wife is the closest per-

The Parent's Place

Your Greatest Gift

By Dr. John Mark Haney

Some of my fondest memories from my childhood revolved around the day the Sears Christmas catalog would arrive in the mail. My brothers and I would take turns devouring the toy pages of this wonderful book to make our wish list for Christmas Day.

In a child's mind, material gifts and Christmas are often synonymous, and some kids have a hard time looking past Tickle-Me Elmo or the Barbie Malibu Dream House to see the real gift of the season. But this article is not about that— it is about what you choose to give your sons and daughters.

When a house has been rocked by marital discord, betrayal, or divorce, parents often feel a keen sense of guilt for subjecting their children to this experience. One way in which they

sometimes address this sense of guilt is to lavish many expensive gifts on their children, the thought being that if the parents were unable to make the kids happy through the family, then at least the children will get what they wanted for Christmas.

While the intent may be very loving, the reality is that material possessions can never substitute for you the parent. Even if you were to clean the shelves of an entire Toys 'R Us, you could not patch up a child's hurt that way. Sure, they might love the toys, but the pain would linger nonetheless.

I once read a story about a *Fortune* 500 executive who left the keys of a Porsche for his son on his eighteenth birthday. While the car was beautiful, all the son could think about was the

fact that his father was away on a business trip on the last birthday he would ever spend living in his parents' house. What the boy really wanted was time with his dad.

Of course, I am in no way advocating abolishing gifts for your children! I still love to give and receive presents. What I am encouraging, however, is that you keep the buying in perspective, and don't use guilt as an excuse to spoil your children. The very greatest thing you can do for them is to be the best parent you can be, whether married or single, and invest quality time with them. God's Grace manifested through a parent's love can heal any hurt over time, and I promise you that G.I. Joe cannot say they same. May God grant you and your family a blessed Christmas season.



Harboring Hope (continued from page two)

son to Jesus that I have every met. Her capacity for forgiveness is second only to Jesus. She cares for me more deeply than anyone else. Because she cares more deeply, the pleasure that I might find outside my marriage is nothing compared to the pleasure that Bobby can give.

About God:

I discovered that God really is a God of love. He not only forgives, He forgets, but He also provides the way that we

can be healed (*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed- James 5:16 NIV*).

About Marriage:

I talked about this before, but I discovered that confession builds intimacy. In a relationship where the other party is willing to forgive and love you, the more you know about that person, the closer you become. Most people realize this on a superficial level, but I am

talking about the deep really dark secrets. If someone can still love you after confessing them, your relationship will only grow and blossom. Don't get me wrong, honesty can be the hardest thing you do, but the rewards are seen a hundred fold.

Always remember, we are fighting a battle that has already been won. We know that Christ has defeated Satan and sin.

Next month: Bobby's Story

New Hope (continued from page one)

In the past we have assisted couples through a 12-week group process that helped our clients complete these tasks. We felt that it was far better to help couples develop a sense of direction and hope for their marriage in the first three months rather having them become stuck and struggle for three years. While this process has worked great for those couples living in Austin and the surrounding areas, it has not

been an option for all who live elsewhere until now.

Beginning in January 2005 we will be conducting weekend intensives for couples recovering from affairs. This new program will be called EMS (Emergency Marital Services), and in it we will incorporate all the primary elements of our traditional "Affair Recovery Groups" into a two-day event. In addition we will continue to provide

specialized support for participating couples when they return to their communities.

We are extremely excited about this new and unique approach in assisting couples recovering from affairs. If you or someone you know could benefit from this weekend then please call at 512-272-9158 and talk to Stephanie. We would love to be a part of your recovery process.



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**AFFAIR RECOVERY
TIMES**

*A Community of Hope and
Healing*

We're on the Web

www.affairrecovery.com



Affair Recovery Center is a community of counseling professionals and couples. Our professional counselors are dedicated to the restoration of marriages crippled by infidelity. Our organization includes numerous couples who have experienced the abundant blessings of reconciliation and renewal.

Our mission is to offer hope, support, and recovery for couples and individuals who have suffered the pain resulting from infidelity, betrayal, or sexual addiction.

From the Editor's Desk

As we close out the last edition of our newsletter for 2004, allow me to extend our warmest wishes for you and those close to you. We realize that many of you who read this newsletter do so because of things that have happened that if you had been given the choice, you never would have wanted to experience. For many of you, this means that you are not feeling an overwhelming sense of joy as you contemplate Christmas.

As I mentioned last month, the holidays can be a source of acute stress for couples

in the best of circumstances, and they can be downright catastrophic for couples experiencing a period of upheaval.

What can make this situation even more challenging is that most of the holiday television commercials and specials would have you believe that everybody is happy during the period that lasts from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day. For individuals or families that are



Dr. John Mark Haney

not, the result can be frustration and depression.

So as we finish out the year, I would like to reiterate a message of hope, regardless of where you are in your life. If we can look past all the holiday glitz and glitter, Christmas is really all about our Savior coming into the world to offer hope to the hopeless. May His Light shine in your darkness, and may 2005 bring healing and health to you. God bless....

The Bulletin Board



On January 8-9, 2005, the Affair Recovery Center will begin offering our EMS (Emergency Marital Services) weekend intensive seminars that cover the same material as our 12-week recovery groups that have helped countless couples. Call us or log on for more information, to register, or to request a brochure. Weekend lodging information is available.

The professionals at the Affair Recovery Center offer numerous seminars for groups and organizations. Call us or visit us online for a list of lengths and topics. We can also tailor a seminar or retreat to your needs.