BEGINNING TO RESPOND TO BETRAYAL TRAUMA

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“EVERYTHING FEELS CHAOTIC. I CAN'T THINK. I CAN'T FOCUS. WHAT HE'S BEEN DOING IS CONSTANTLY ON MY MIND.”
“Everything feels chaotic. I can't think. I can't focus. What he's been doing is constantly on my mind.”

“I have a hard time not imagining his behaviors.”

“I start thinking about my appearance and then my thoughts snowball until I feel so worthless I can't function. I just crawl in bed and live in a black abyss all day.”

These are the consuming thoughts experienced by so many women who have discovered their partner's sexual secrets. While feeling out of control is normal, learning steps to regulate overwhelming thoughts and emotions can relieve a lot of stress and pain. In this ebook you will find four steps that can help you start to work on your own healing process.
UNDERSTANDING THE CHAOS
Chaos: A condition or place of great disorder or confusion.
It's important to remember that addictive habits and behaviors rarely make sense because the brain has literally become changed, damaged and altered. Our brains are not built to safely see or experience the intensity and diversity of things that viewing pornography and other betraying sexual behaviors offer.

The first step to responding to the chaos that has consumed your life is to understand the nature of addiction. Dealing with a partner's sexual addiction can feel different than other addictions. It can feel like all the winds and storms are coming directly at you; it feels like it is a personal attack.

However, it is helpful to group pornography/sex addiction with other familiar addictions because pornography/sex addiction creates some of the same problems and difficulties as caused by other addictions. For example, individuals struggling with any form of addiction often have difficulty in the following areas:

- Staying focused
- Being in control of their lives
- Looking beyond themselves (e.g. reaching out to others, connecting with others, having empathy)
- Avoiding compulsive behaviors
- Establishing stability in their lives
- Being honest
- Planning for the future

Many people who know others with addictions will often ask, “Why don’t they just quit?” “What are they thinking!?” “Why would they hurt me like this?”

The answer to these questions comes from understanding the severe power of addiction. Stopping an addictive behavior is extremely difficult. In fact, overcoming an addiction will likely be the most
grueling and arduous challenge a person will ever accomplish in their lifetime.

A few years ago, I sat in a meeting where the speaker taught me a valuable lesson about addictive habits. He said, “Have you ever wondered why we roll up weeds and smoke them? Or why we drink stinky fermented barley?” He continued by saying, “Most addictive behaviors don’t make sense to the addict or their loved ones.” In essence, he was saying that people caught up in addictions do things that don’t make sense; ultimately, they have lost control of themselves and have become servants to the powerful tyranny of addiction.

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Over time, the brain becomes not only wired to these actions (through intense hormonal and electrical change in the brain), but dependent on them. In other words, addiction damages the brain and thus makes no logical sense to those of us with healthy functioning brains.

When your partner acts out sexually, it feels like a personal attack. Many women think to themselves, “If only I were better, prettier, weighed less, (or a hundred other things) he wouldn't have this problem.” These types of thoughts turn your partner's addiction into your problem rather than recognizing the truth about addiction: it is the addict's problem. Addiction is addiction. You have not caused this to happen in any way. And no matter what you do, you cannot eliminate or control this problem. Your partner must proactively make the changes necessary to rewire their own brain.

It's also imperative that you learn to recognize your loved one's pornography viewing and other sexual behaviors as an addiction, not solely a desirable hobby of his. Recognizing it as an addiction will help you to release yourself from personal blame. It may be helpful to:

- Study addiction—you will realize that addiction often has predictable outcomes
- Learn more about your partner's addiction history and patterns
- Pay attention to your own emotions
• Learn how to slow your anxious mind

We have found that trauma recovery for the wife is improved when the husband is actively involved in his own recovery. See our sister company, Addo Recovery, at www.addorecovery.com to find available programs for husbands.
GET HELP IMMEDIATELY
Do not try to deal with these issues alone.
Do not try to deal with these issues alone. Researchers have discovered that early intervention to trauma can help reduce the long-term consequences.

Here are a few valuable resources you can use to get appropriate help:

- Journal
- Talk with a trusted friend or loved one who will console rather than judge you and your spouse.
- Attend a 12-step support group.
- Find a professional counselor who specializes in treating sexual addiction and betrayal trauma.
UNDERSTAND HOW NEGATIVE SELF-TALK WILL INCREASE CHAOS
Your healing progress will improve as you gain a better understanding of how good you are and discover the reality of your valuable self-worth; negative self-talk prevents that from happening and hinders your recovery. Shifting from debilitating thought patterns to healthy thought patterns is critical to your long-term healing.
Chapter 3

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

If you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts about yourself, it may help if you pay attention to the frequency of the negative thoughts, and how they are influencing your emotions. You will find that these negative thoughts arouse your sympathetic nervous system and may launch you into a cycle of feeling more agitated and upset.

As you go through the emotional discovery of your partner's behaviors, at some point, you have probably told yourself:

“I'm not good enough. My husband doesn't want me. If I were better he wouldn't have done this.”

“Why didn't I see what he was doing earlier? How did I miss the signs?”

“What is wrong with me? Why can't I focus on anything else?”

We often think thoughts like these because we believe that somehow if it is about us, then we can fix it. Thoughts like these trick us into believing we have more control than we do over other people, and ultimately lead us to feel bad about ourselves.

In order to avoid self-harming thoughts, let's reconsider the three statements above and look at a healthier replacement alternative.

**Alternative/Replaced Thought Pattern**

“My husband's behavior is not a consequence of how good, or not good, I am. I am not lacking.”

“It's normal to feel upset and betrayed that my husband hid this behavior from me. It is not my fault he has fallen prey to this addictive behavior.”

“It may take time to overcome these painful thoughts, but I am strong and can do hard things.”

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Your healing progress will improve as you gain a better understanding of how good you are and discover the reality of your valuable self-worth; negative self-talk prevents that from happening and hinders your recovery. Shifting from debilitating thought patterns to healthy thought patterns is critical to your long-term healing.
IDENTIFY THE GRIEVING AND LOSS PROCESS
When we fully move through each of the stages without rushing, shaming or blaming ourselves, we can move into a recovery place at a natural pace.
Chapter 4

IDENTIFY THE GRIEVING AND LOSS PROCESS

Many women report that one of the most painful things they experience is related to what has been lost. Initially, they imagined their marriage one way and it turned out to be completely different.

The fourth step as you begin your path of healing from trauma is to allow yourself to grieve. It is therapeutic to allow yourself to grieve the loss of what you thought your marriage was, who you thought your spouse was, and the dream you had for your marriage. These are major disappointments for you and can merit just as much grief as the death of a loved one.

Many women report that one of the most painful things they experience is related to what has been lost. Initially, they imagined their marriage one way and it turned out to be completely different. This loss is not due to death, but instead, this loss is accredited to the secrets and hidden behaviors of your spouse. It is bereavement over the trust and connectedness expected between partners. It has been suggested that there are five aspects of the grieving process. While you may not feel all of these, at some point, you may experience many of these feelings.

- **Denial**: feelings that this couldn't be happening; this can last for weeks, months, or in some cases even years
- **Anger**: intense feelings and outbursts of anger
- **Depression**: feeling down, blue, sad
- **Bargaining**: desire do anything to make the pain go away
- **Acceptance**: coming to terms with your experience

As you bounce between some of these steps, allow yourself to feel the full weight of them. If you are feeling one of these emotions try to
recognize these feelings for what they are, stages of grief, and allow yourself to feel them without running from them or denying them.

When we fully move through each of the stages without rushing, shaming or blaming ourselves, we can move into a recovery place at a natural pace.

In summary, today we offered four steps to help you begin to process chaos and trauma. The four steps are:

- Understand the chaos
- Get help immediately
- Understand how negative self-talk will increase the chaos
- Identify the grieving and loss process

Resources
Bloomforwomen.com - Bloom specializes in Betrayal Trauma. If you or someone you know is involved in an unfaithful relationship and needs help, Bloom may be a valuable resource for you. Click here to watch the video.

Additional Reading
- How Betrayal Trauma Manifests Itself
- The Ways Betrayal Trauma Alters the Mind and Body
- The Power of Journaling
- How Excessive Adrenaline And Cortisol Can Damage The Body
Dr. Kevin Skinner is the Clinical Director at Addo Recovery, LLC and has been serving individuals for 18 years. He has created online assessments for more than 250,000 individuals that center on relationship intimacy and pornography addiction. These assessments serve as a helpful guide to people working toward recovery.

Dr. Skinner’s newly developed Compassion Model is a therapy style that helps people develop greater compassion. It changes how individuals feel about themselves and others and is a great healing tool for individuals and couples.