

# Recovery After Infidelity by Dr Tammy Nelson

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## ***Couples in Recovery after Infidelity – Creating a New Monogamy***

### ***A Teleseminar***

Friday September 6, 2013 with Dr Tammy Nelson

What is the most effective form of therapy for treating affairs? What doesn't work? Why are some forms of affair treatment outdated and even contraindicated? How can couples therapy help couples if done effectively? Can couples really survive the trauma of infidelity?

Using a theoretical model that works, this seminar will introduce a step by step intervention to help couples recover from infidelity, with a purposeful process that gives couples hope for a future that is more than just survival after betrayal, but can create a whole new partnership, in many cases stronger and more intimate than ever before.

Using case examples to illustrate how breaches of monogamy affect sexuality and intimacy participants will learn how to help couples restore (or create) erotic energy after an affair, increase empathy and understanding instead of focusing on forgiveness as the goal, and ways to create a new vision of a new, stronger monogamy going forward.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will be able to define infidelity and how it affects a marriage or committed partnership.

Participants will identify what doesn't work and how psychotherapy can retraumatize clients.

Participants will discover ways to help couples negotiate monogamy after infidelity and how to create a new monogamy agreement.

Participants will identify how sexual empathy heals and will discover whether or not forgiveness is necessary for recovery.

**Dr Tammy Nelson is a sex and relationship expert, an international speaker, and author of several books including, *"Getting the Sex You Want; Shed Your Inhibitions and Reach New Heights of Passion Together"* and her new book *"The New Monogamy; Redefining Your Relationship After Infidelity."* She is a Board Certified Sexologist, an AASECT Certified Sex Therapist, and a Certified Imago Relationship therapist. She has been a featured expert in *Glamour Magazine, Cosmopolitan, Redbook, MSNBC, Healthy Life Magazine, Shape, Men's Health, Men's Health UK, Woman's Day, Women's Health, Twist Magazine, Washington Post* and a source in *Time Magazine*. She writes for the *Huffington Post* and *YourTango* and gives workshops and Intensives for couples and trains therapists**

around the world on issues relating to sex and relationships. She can be found at [www.drtammynelson.com](http://www.drtammynelson.com)

## **Phases of Fidelity Recovery**

### **Phase I - Crisis**

- Establish Safety
- Contract for no decisions yet

#### **Erotic Steps in Phase 1**

- Normalize sex for comfort
- Unpredictability and Destabilizing may increase sexual desire

### **Phase 2 – Renegotiate, Renew**

- Insight into personal vulnerabilities that led to affair
- Tell the story of affair

#### **Erotic Steps in Phase 2**

- Intentional connection
- Sex Date

### **Phase 3 – Reevaluate**

- Assess for permanence or permission to leave
- Create vision of new relationship

### **Erotic Steps in Phase 3**

- Sexual appreciation exercises
- Close Exits

### MONOGAMY CONTINUUM

- Thoughts
- Fantasy
- Desires
- Arousal
- Flirtation
- Emotions
- Action
- Connection
- Sex
- Love
- Detachment



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## SEXUAL EMPATHY

What is it; why is it important; what prevents it and how do we achieve it?

### SEXUAL EMPATHY:

Sexual empathy is *a state of relational safety and connection that allows for exploration of erotic curiosity.*

### WHY BE SEXUALLY EMPATHIC?

Sexual empathy prevents the splitting off of erotic needs from the relationship.

Sexual empathy leads to improved communication and sexual generosity.

What would we ask for if we were totally comfortable asking for what we wanted?

### WHAT PREVENTS SEXUAL EMPATHY?

Fear of our own erotic curiosity and fantasies

Fear that our partner will act out our fantasies

Fear that we will be judged

Fear of loss of connection

Projection

### WHAT IS THE RESULT OF SEXUAL EMPATHY?

Sexual Generosity

Intimacy and Connection

Being open

Being giving

Being willing to change

How do we begin to communicate our erotic needs to our partners?

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## BECOMING A SEXUALLY EMPATHETIC PARTNER

**DIRECTIONS:** Read these directions in entirety. Fill out the questions below and share with your partner.

VALIDATE:

As your partner shares their answers with you, find the places that make sense to you.

Validate after each part, with sentences like:

“Knowing you the way I know you, it makes sense that you would feel this way....”

Ask them to share more about the meaning of the fantasy or desire, until you can validate their fantasy for them.

EMPATHIZE:

Empathy sounds like

“I imagine if you did/had that you would feel.....” and fill in the blank with some emotions that you think your partner would feel if they were to act these desires out.

Know that you are not agreeing to take these into action, and that no fantasies ever have to be taken into action at this point. Right now you are only sharing desires and fantasies with each other.

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### EXERCISE

1. Write down one sexual thing in bed that you love to do.
2. Write down one sexual thing that you think your partner loves to do.
3. Write down one sexual thing that you would like to try with your partner.
4. Write down how you feel now that you have shared about your own erotic needs.
5. Share one thing you appreciated about this dialogue with your partner.

### FOLLOW UP:

What would it take for you to feel ready to take some of your own desires into action with your partner?

What would it take for you to feel ready to take some of your partner's desires into action?

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## CREATING A NEW MONOGAMY AGREEMENT

By Dr Tammy Nelson

Creating a new monogamy agreement is crucial after infidelity. Mostly because our implicit assumptions about what is acceptable and what our expectations are within a marriage is based solely on our beliefs and not on what we have promised to do out loud. Making an explicit agreement is like renewing your vows only without following a standard predetermined text. A new monogamy agreement should be renewed every five years or even more often if necessary.

Some of the questions to ask in your new agreement will be based on your cultural beliefs, your religious upbringing, and your adherence to traditional sex roles, family history and personal moral values.

Remember, your implicit monogamy agreement, the one you never talked about may have included things like, “We promise to be faithful until one of us grows tired of the other,” or “I know you won’t cheat, but I probably will,” or (traditionally a woman’s vow) “I’ll be faithful, but you won’t because you’re a guy,” or “We’ll be faithful except for a little swinging when we go on vacation, “ or “All gay men fool around” or “we’re lesbians, we probably won’t have sex forever.”

The trick is to establish and continually revisit rules so that they’re confining enough to keep the couple in a monogamous relationship--according to their own terms--but loose enough to encourage growth and exploration for their marriage and for each person individually.

Specific Guidelines to follow may include topics from each stage of the monogamy continuum:

The monogamy continuum includes the following: (thoughts fantasies desires arousal flirtation emotion action connection sex love detachment thoughts fantasies etc)

So the questions to ask yourself when creating your monogamy agreement might look like the following:



### **EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NEW MONOGAMY AGREEMENT**

1. Thoughts - If I have sexual thoughts about other people do I share them with you? If those thoughts may lead me down a path closer to acting on them, when do I talk about them? Is it necessary to share every time I think of someone else or see them as attractive? Some religious couples feel that they have cheated in their hearts if they imagine being with someone else. If they covet thy neighbor's spouse, should they share or keep it to themselves? In some cultures sharing anything that may be about an interest outside of the relationship is only hurtful and should be avoided at all costs. SO part of your monogamy agreement may be to NOT tell when this happens.

2- Fantasies - What if I have fantasies of someone else, should I share them with you? Can we share them and get off on them together? Gay male couples are more open to this shared experience of turn on and may feel less threatened than a straight couple or lesbian couple. There are studies that show that gay men can handle opening their relationship sexually as long as they remain emotionally monogamous to each other. (See Shernoff) What if I have fantasies of someone else in bed? Should I keep them to myself? Would it be hurtful or helpful?

3. Desires - What if I desire another? Or desire a type of sex that I am afraid to share or am convinced that you will not like? Do I share it? Do we commit to acting out each other's sexual and romantic desires no matter what? What kind of conversation would that be if we were to have it? Do we share sexual fantasies regularly, perhaps doing the Fantasy Dialogue at least once a month? (See Fantasy Dialogue – it talks about what they appreciate sexually, what they like and would like more of and what they would like to try.)

4. Arousal – Should we talk about it every time we become aroused? What if I become aroused by someone else? When do we have a discussion about arousal?

5. Flirtation - What are our “rules” about flirting> is it ok to flirt with someone at work? How about with each other's friends? Can we flirt while we are together with other people or only when we are alone> Can we confront each other about the others flirting and what would be a safe way to do that?

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6. Emotion – If I become emotionally connected to a friend of the opposite sex ,or even the same sex, what is alright with you about how much time we spend together, do we have to talk about it every time I see that person? Do I have to tell you every time I email them? Should our emails be transparent or private? Should you be friends with this person as well? When do I know I have crossed the line to perhaps thinking about moving the relationship into something more physical? When do we talk about that? Is it ok to spend time with my emotional friend and when does it become an emotional affair? Is it fair to share with that person about our problems or difficulties? Can I share anything with them about you or does that feel uncomfortable?

7. Action – If I start to take actions that may be threatened or risky to our monogamy agreement, how do we want to handle that? If I start texting, face booking, or IMing with this person is it a risk to our relationship? If we meet for lunch, for hobbies or for weekends? If I share personal issues with them while we are together? Can I kiss this person? Hold hands?

8. Connection - If I begin to feel connected to someone outside of our relationship how do we manage that? How do we deal with jealousy? What are our guidelines for opening the relationship up to others?

9. Sex - Can I make love with this person if we don't have intercourse? Should I call you first? Do we have to always take action with someone while we are together either participating or watching? DO we have an agreement that we can do it while we are traveling only? Can we have sex with someone else, if they are a woman? Man? Gay? Straight? Can we have sex with another couple? And who initiates taking things into action? How do we talk about it and process it? Talk before, after? How often are we going to have sex with each other? Will we try to have adventures every week? Month. Year? Will we have sex after childbirth, on vacation, or somewhere other than the bedroom? How often are we going to have sex? What happens if we don't have sex for a week or a month? Do we tell each other when we masturbate?

10. Love – Can we love more than one person at a time? Can I love someone else and still love you? What if I have feelings for someone I used to love? Are they off limits? Do those feelings get pushed underground or stay in our relationship as an open and transparent experience? How do we handle jealousy?

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11. Detachment - If I become detached emotionally from you how do we talk about it? If I become detached from the experiences we are having with others, how do we decide to stop or not? How do we come back together to try and reconnect?

Your answers should be worded in the present. This is a vision for your monogamy and should be described as if it is happening now. “We are having sex once a week. We are open to trying new things. We will talk about it immediately if one of us wants to have sex with someone else. We will discuss it before, during and after and process each of our feelings including jealousy.”

For:

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