Infidelity: Lies to the Partner, Lies to the Self, and Lies to the Therapist

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THE TRUTH IS RARELY PURE AND NEVER SIMPLE

Oscar Wilde
INFIDELITY:
THE BETRAYAL OF TRUST OR LOYALTY WHEN THERE IS A REASON TO EXPECT TRUST OR LOYALTY
Everybody Lies
Lies have the Power to Destroy Love

I love you this much
IN THE EARLY STAGES... PARTNERS TELL LOVING LIES
THEN THE DARK SIDE OF THE HONEymoon....

EXCESSIVE CONFLICT AVOIDANCE
Conflict Avoiding Lies

Finessing the topic, afraid the truth will cause a fight
Hiding relevant details of a crucial situation when asked
Lies of omission

Sneaky behavior to cover behavior, desires, wishes that are hard to discuss or to hide shameful behavior
Use of pornography or sexual fantasies
Gambling
Next...
The deep pit couples fall into when they don’t reckon with their differences
- Enormous Self Deception
- Passive Aggressive Lies
- Felony Lies
Lies to Self

It’s not infidelity if it’s only sex
It’s okay if I don’t get caught
I don’t want to hurt my partner’s feelings as an excuse
My partner doesn’t really want to know the truth
My lover has no flaws
My partner was never my soul mate
It’s best for the kids
Self Deceptions

I am a victim, but not a contributor or perpetrator of the distress
Ignore own flaws and limitations
Fool self about own level of development – I’m more evolved than my partner

I’m just expressing my feelings as a rationalization for abusive, chaotic, immature behavior

Saying “I’m committed”, but can’t tolerate being with a real person and will attack other’s vulnerabilities whenever they surface.

Saying I want to heal relationship while making unilateral decisions or being sneaky
JEALOUSY

When someone else gets something you want, you act angry or as if you want to get back at them. Sometimes it can be solved, sometimes it can’t. When you are jealous, you usually aren’t capable of other good feelings. You spend your time and energy being angry, trying to get back at or trying to forget about what just happened. Now that’s jealousy.

11y.o. Molly Pearson
SHE’S JEALOUS OF HIS EX-WIFE
IT IS DESTROYING THEIR RELATIONSHIP

How do you enlarge the scope of the problem to include the jealous partner? Many times they are self-righteous and not interested in enlarging the scope or examining their own role. On the emotional level, they think, feel and believe, the problem is my partner and the solution is lodged in my partner.
Passive Aggressive Lies

Covering tracks
Telling partner you know everything when a lot is still hidden
Deny accountability and hint that partner is responsible for the lies
Saying it is over when ongoing contact exists
Felony Lies

Frequent lies that are purposeful for individual gain

Multiple ongoing lies to hide and cover up. Tell a major lie and others are told to protect and hide the first lie.

Have a child with another partner

Challenge partner’s sanity

Lie about who the affair was with when it is a close friend or family member and others know
FELONY LIES

Having unprotected sex with multiple partners or prostitutes

Lie about health - herpes, aids

Lie about amount of joint resources being given to affair partner

Have children develop an attachment to affair partner saying they are just a friend
Honesty is a Process, not a one-time Revelation
A Process of **Self Development** & **Developing Emotional Muscle**
Introspection

Differentiation

Truth Telling Takes...

Trial and Error

Following Guidelines
Truth Listening Takes...

Courage

Asking High Caliber Questions

Managing Complexity and Ambiguity

Demonstrating “I can take the truth”
Orchestrates Deception

I don’t want to hear

And Not Being a Lie Invitee....

Yells

Pouts/Cold Shoulder
Lie Invitee

A partner behind the scenes who is orchestrating deception. The Lie Invitee is unwilling to listen to the truth.

Some are unaware that they are invoking lies and others are not developed enough to stop it.
Examples of Classic Lie Inviting Behavior

- Fury/Rage
- The Martyr
- Excessive Blaming
- Giving the look
- Desperately seeking reassurance
- Laying down the law
- Long periods of withdrawal
Classic Lie Inviting Behavior
Inhibits Honesty & Differentiation

“I want you to tell me how you feel...
(but watch out if you tell me something I don’t want to hear).”

“Tell me again why...
(but this time tell me what I want to hear).”

“I want the truth...
(but you know I’ll suffer if you tell me).”

“I don’t want to hear it...
(and if that’s the truth, I don’t want to know).”

“How can you be so insensitive...
(and have an opinion that’s so hard for me to hear).”
Toughest Infidelity Cases
Felony Liar with a Lie Invitee

Partner who has told Felony Lies is with a Partner who denies being a Chronic Lie Invitee

Enormous Clinical Challenges
**Confrontation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Definition</strong></th>
<th><strong>Types of Confrontation</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Technique used in therapy to recognize shortcomings and their possible consequences</td>
<td>Soft, Empathic, Gentle/but Tough, Indirect, Hard/Tough, Bombshell</td>
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The Art of Confronting Lies

It is an art to build confrontations over time
It is an art to make gentle and tough confrontations
It is an art to know
    What to Confront
    When to Confront
    How to Confront
6 Types of Confrontation

Soft Confrontation - Gently bring up the issue
Empathic Confrontation - You verbalize avoided emotional states
Gentle, But Tough - Confrontation makes explicit and exposes dysfunctional thoughts or rationalizations and excuses.
Indirect Confrontation - Talking to one partner when confrontation is directed at the other partner.
Hard/Tough Confrontation - Designed to create anxiety or discomfort.
Bombshell - Confrontation is either so forceful in what is said or how it is said that it is impossible to ignore
1st Session

I had an affair. She discovered a gift I bought for the other woman. She was mad. I said I’d break it off. After a few weeks I thought this is silly because I want a divorce so why does it makes any difference what I do. I started to lie more and more. She was suspicious and I just kept adding one lie on top of the other.

What do you think and what do you do?
When You First Hear About the Lies

What Type of Lies

- Loving Lies
- Conflict Avoidance
- Passive Aggressive
- Felony Lies

They are a Window into what is Wrong

- Is it innocent/common
- Is it a developmental issue
- Is it a character issue
  - Narcissism
  - Sociopathy

Different Types of Lies
Take Different Types of Confrontation
Ellyn: I’d like to know about the lies you thought were no big deal and the worst lies?

Sam: That I was going to prostitutes. I convinced myself I wasn’t betraying the marriage because I didn’t have any emotional attraction to them. I talked myself out of believing it really was a betrayal. And that I wasn’t really going outside of the marriage.

Sam: I said things to my wife like you are just making stuff up. You’re a crazy person.
Confronting Self-Deception

Ellyn: You’re telling me you felt unloved. What stopped you from telling her how much her love mattered?

Sam: I just told myself we were incompatible and if I said something, we’d split up. I gave little hints. I didn’t want to risk her anger. The thought of leaving the kids was too unbearable so I said it’s better not to get into it.

Ellyn: Is there something you would rather have done than rationalize?

Sam: I should have had it out with her; but that is when I became corrupt. I thought I could pay for her (his mistress), not worry about AIDS and not get emotionally attached.
Confronting Conflict Avoidance

Ellyn: Having a mistress was that going to change your anger with your wife?
Sam: I didn’t want to risk her anger.
Ellyn: I am talking about your anger.
Sam: I have a personality problem. I run away from anger.
Ellyn: Yet continue to act in ways that will make you angrier.
Therapist Observes
- Unfolding circumstance in couples life
- Unfolding interaction in office

Act>Test>Regroup
Evaluate based on unfolding interaction
Backup/Recalibrate
Start again

Make a decision
- Decide on the type of confrontation
  - soft
  - touch
  - indirect
  - empathetic
  - hard
  - bombshell
- Decide who should make it:
  - therapist
  - partner
- Have some idea as to how far you will take it.

Take time to analyze, synthesize, think
- Can partner make it or you?
- How much time is left in session?

Therapist takes into account
- Culture/Gender
- Couples History
- New/Old Information
- Your Mood
- Client’s Accessibility
Let’s Back Up

Expect to use this sentence often
Confrontation Skills (1)

Prepare early
Don’t confront when you are angry or frustrated
Don’t react to the problem of the day
Be descriptive / not judgmental
Develop firmness
Select for impact

Use good timing
Expect pushback
Describe the pain
Know when to increase and when to decrease anxiety
Ask how behavior affects the spouse
Amplify future pain
Confrontation Skills (2)

Have evidence
Be prepared for impossible questions
Repeat your empathic embellishment of their situation

Keep confronting regression
Give a way to change
Stroke progress
Links to Articles/Resources

Couples Institute Website
www.couplesinstitute.com

A collection of free articles on challenging clinical issues
http://www.couplesinstitute.com/therapists-blog/

Online Training Program
www.couplesinstitutetraining.com/developmentalmodel

The Couples Membership Site
www.thecouplesinstitute.com

How to get the most from couples therapy
http://www.couplesinstitute.com/couples-blog/