

How to Break Free From The Affair!

19 Live Infidelity Coaching Sessions

With Dr. Robert Huizenga – The Infidelity Coach

Broken Promises, Broken Spirit, Broken Body

Workbook portion of audio tape with Julie

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Part 1: Summary of Julie's Circumstances

My husband had (is having) a two year affair with a woman no one respects. Told me at one point she was his best friend. For the past 2 1/2 years I have asked him, told him I couldn't live with, etc. thinking I have done all I can do to try to understand whatever it is he is needing from this woman (which I never will). I left in September '06 after about making myself sick. At that time, he told me I got his attention and he was embarrassed and ashamed and would never have put up with what I have. Well, that didn't last long, only until she got rid of her new boyfriend. He still calls her constantly and spends a lot of time with her. I try not to check on him anymore and tell myself it doesn't mean anything, but when he spends nights, buys Valentines, etc. I feel it does mean something. We have been together for 34 years, I am 54 years old. We have acquired a lot together and I really don't feel like starting over, but I cannot get peace of mind. Maybe it shouldn't matter and I should let it go, but I don't know how. I really need help, maybe just someone to talk to?

I think my most pressing questions are: How can I trust anything he tells me when he said he would not do this again after he knew he hurt me the way he did, but continues. I really don't think he can love anyone. Second, how can I really forgive and put this behind me, I can't talk to him; he just thinks I should trust him. And the one that I know only I can answer, is do I stay or go?

Part 2: Dr. Huizenga's Review of the Coaching Session

1. Particular marital patterns start with hope and enthusiasm but along the way become problematic. Such was the case with Julie and her husband.

Julie was a compassionate caring person raised in a stable loving family. The opposite was true of her husband. He was an angry person suffering low self-esteem, coming from the "wrong side of the tracks."

Julie believed that a little love, well, maybe a great deal of love and caring would help him and the marriage would thrive. She believed she could change him and make him happy.

Her goal was to rescue him and thereby create a wonderful marriage.

Not only was Julie compassionate, she was also determined. Not many things would stand in her way. Even when he became physically and verbally abusive, she hung in there and tolerated his behavior with the hope, of course, that things would change.

Please believe that from my experience with thousands of couples over the past 3 decades this is a tenacious pattern.

2. Julie could not understand his behavior and was hoping in the coaching session that understanding would bring her new insight and perhaps new ways to save the marriage.

And, of course, there is no rational understanding of his behavior since his actions are based on internal, unconscious fears and thought distortions.

Julie's mode of operating: be kind, supportive and caring and it will be reciprocated. Didn't work.

Her husband's mode of operating: Keep someone "close" through intimidation.

Each was living in a radically different internal world.

3. Julie described a roller coaster relationship which characterizes a marriage struggling with an "I Can't say No" affair.

Although Julie's situation does not fit nicely with all the characteristics of this kind of affair there are enough points that jump out to make it worth consideration.

I describe the roller coaster ride in this kind of affair in [Break Free From](#) the Affair as a promise-failure cycle:

A promise/failure cycle ebbs and flows with the inability to say no. After an "acting out" episode the person usually experiences guilt/fear and promises to self or others, "I won't do it again." This will last...until the "urge" is acted upon again. The spouse may be aware or unaware (but sense that something is not "right") of the "roller coaster" and succession of broken promises.

Others are used or seen as objects for personal gratification. No true intimacy is developed.

Sexuality is often confused with other needs or connected to unresolved past pain or trauma. A child who experiences confusion around sexuality or sexual abuse of one form or another, may carry along that confusion and attempt to "work that through" in a marriage or extramarital affairs..."

Julie would leave. He would apologize and make promises to change. Time would elapse and the pattern would repeat.

4. Should Julie stay or go? Julie left before, but she had no well-thought out strategy to make that move effective.

There was a part of Julie that truly wanted to leave. This was the mentally and emotionally exhausted part of her. She had given and continued to give which only reaped his abuse.

The final few minutes of the session focused on developing a well-thought out exit strategy. Where was her support? What kind of safety net could she build? What was her time line?

With one step at a time, each step crafted with respect, care and power, Julie would begin to exit the relationship. Her stance and action gave Julie the hope for rebuilding her self-esteem and life. Ironically it also held the only hope for rebuilding the marriage.

However, please understand that rebuilding such a marriage would demand a time line that minimally would be measured in months but most likely in years.

Part 3: Comments from Peers – If Julie's situation is/was similar to yours, list 2 things you said or did that were helpful.

- ▶ I hear so much of my own ambivalence about my marriage in Julie's voice. I am married 30 years now, and I am 51. It is so very difficult to face a different life from what I have known all these years. I also, early in the discovery phase of my husband's emotional affair, thought that perhaps I had wasted 30 years of my life. Particularly when my husband hurtfully said that he had been unhappy for the last 10! He knows how to control me very well after so many years...and he knows how to hurt me as well. But, I decided this: even if my marriage ends after 30 years, I am blessed, because I have known romantic love, I have experienced marriage, and the birthing and raising of children. Those experiences were good times in our lives, and nothing can take that away from me. I am not an old maid, a spinster that has not experienced the joys of womanhood. I focus on that when I grieve over what I feel will be denied me in terms of a life-long partner, should this finally come to an end. I am also emotionally exhausted, like Julie. The pain of wishing it would be different, and constantly coming up against my husband's wanting a divorce...yet coming home and taking me out etc. is wearing me out too. I still wish to save my marriage. I hear it in Julie's voice...the wish accompanied by the frustration and despair. I did the same as Julie...leaving to a hotel, and then coming back. I had to learn to mentally and emotionally separate myself from my husband, so that regardless of what happens, I can believe that I will be okay. I began to do things for myself: I had my ears pierced because I had always wanted to, but had been afraid. I started to go out to eat with friends to develop a support system for myself. I had a manicure and a pedicure for the very first time at a day salon. These have been small steps toward the goal of being an individual me. These were also little joys that I created in my life for me. The more I create little joys, the easier it is for me to deal with the pain of not having joy with my husband. And, the benefit of this has been that I accept whatever joys come from him as they may, rather than waiting for him to provide these things for me.
- ▶ I also couldn't discuss with him anything. I realize that it is worthless, and stop talking. I also felt uncomfortable around him. I understood that you can't hit the wall with your forehead.

- ▶ Julie's situation is similar to mine in that she was (is) in a long term marriage with a man she seems to love and care for, yet his actions do not display any value for their marriage. Like Julie, I am reluctant to recognize this, so I hold on... want to go, want to not go, and basically give away my own life in hopes this man I love will come back to the relationship of marriage, family. I recognize that like Julie, I have not done for me, what I need to do for my life without him. I recognize that like Julie, I may be taking small steps for me, but mostly I lie in wait, as the "victim" perhaps, wishing, hoping, I will understand and find the key to HIM... when this is not possible. The key is in me for me, for my life now.
- ▶ Julie's situation is VERY similar to what mine was. My husband underwent some counseling himself personally for over 2 years, and that seemed to help with the abuse and also shed some light on to why he needed someone "on the side". I didn't suggest the counseling, his family doctor did for "depression". The counseling helped, although I wish he had gone longer. He was starting to see that there was a problem within himself that he blamed on our relationship.
- ▶ Nothing helped, he was self destructive, angry and he took us all down with him.
- ▶ Somewhat similar in that I thought an affair was going on but was rebuffed or told I was stupid it was not. Then, it continued... helpful to me? hmm, I think I finally had to say internally to myself that at the point I knew the affair was going on that I needed different in my life. I needed to work on myself and make changes for myself. I had been put down mentally and verbally to the point of having no self-esteem and I needed to make lifestyle changes for myself. Losing weight, counseling, filling my life with positive role models which included other men. Not sexually, but to see as friends and know that other men CAN treat you well. That all men are not abusive and controlling.
- ▶ Did a lot of reading on affairs and relationships. 2. Read your book. It really helped me to step back and understand where he might be coming from. I also used some of the strategies you suggested. There does come a time though where you have to draw a line in the sand for your own health and happiness.

👉 I started a counseling class once a week to deal with all this for me and it has helped and I did this because I bought your book. Self help is the greatest things I did for myself as he was beyond any help that I could give him in my eyes. Same situation except no physical abuse but the mental/verbal was brutal to me, so I told him go talk to her like you talk to me and let her put up with you. Opp's!!! I was also the rock and his need to be needed and cared for is over whelming. High Maintenance Man.

Part 4: Comments from Peers - From your personal experience and what you have learned about infidelity, what 2 suggestions would you give to Julie?

- ▶ Continue to find the things that make you happiest in your work and with your children, and pursue them. Julie has been amazing in that she has been able to accept work out of town....what great strength! I have been very depressed, and have lost a lot of my confidence that I will be actually able to work...but Julie has actually gone out and started something new on her own! She is to be commended! 2. Continue to make strategic plans for your life. The more I have done this, the more respect I have for myself, and the more respectfully my husband has treated me....though for years I have also endured shaming, criticism, rejection, and withholding of love. I always thought that I was the one who was damaged by my father's alcoholism... a problem my husband also has... but, I now understand that the affair is HIS problem. I will survive this, and I will have a life. It will be different...it already is. But, my focus on life ahead helps me now, too.
- ▶ It is really hard to let go long term relationship, but sometimes you don't have other options. Continue to concentrate on your needs, take care of yourself.
- ▶ This is so difficult to write, because it is my advice to me, that I really do not want to recognize: let him go and protect yourself. Let him go the way you desire to be on your deathbed, looking back on your life. Let him go... self destruct if he does. Let him go... resolve his life with joy if he does. Let him go... and in doing, look to you, to save you, to resolve your life with joy OUTSIDE the marriage now. Because, honestly Julie, controlling this man is not your option if you truly love and respect him. He wants to do what he wants to do.
- ▶ I knew he really didn't want to lose everything or to "marry or even live with" this girl. We had a lot of "short" conversations. I told him it was either me exclusively or I wanted out. I just could not live like that. This was a complete turn about on my part, as I was not crying or pleading. Whenever he would raise his voice, I would physically leave, go shopping, and visit a friend, until he calmed down. They ceased communicating, and I think he is really trying.

- ▶ Get out, get help detaching from him, and never look back. U cannot take anger out of a person. It is hard wired into their soul.
- ▶ I would have to ask her... what has been missing in your marriage to possibly cause him to look outside your marriage? Is it communication, financial, etc. problems? If it was better between affairs... what was better, and what became worse or never changed perhaps that may have caused him to look outside marriage again. Secondly, running away from the situation by moving and getting a job out of town probably further distanced your relationship. What could you have done differently?
- ▶ Read the book "My Husband's Affair Became the Best Thing that Ever Happened to Me" by Anne Bercht. After reading it, I casually mentioned that it was an excellent book, very moving and inspirational. He appeared to show no interest. Months later when I told him I was going to move on with my life without him (a timeline I had set for myself which only I knew); he finally picked up the book and read it. He was so deeply moved by the book that he broke off the affair completely. He has since learned much about himself and relationships through attending seminars, reading, etc. And, he has made every effort to make our marriage a loving and passionate one.
- ▶ I know that no matter what you say they do not hear what you are saying because they have reached a plain that is so out of the norm they have no conception of the hurt, ramifications, abuse, that they cause to their partners. One morning he got up and I was up, he said something rude and demeaning to me and that was the last straw for me. The door opened and I ran through it like bull, I told him you need to leave and be where you want to go and leave me be because you have somewhere else to go and I do not so get out and while you are at it buy me out of it all and I am gone, he said he could not do that at this time so I told him the next time I see her I will ask her to buy me out and you can be her partner for life and the two of you can live happily ever after. Opp's again. He, of course was angry as usual and then thought about it I told him make a choice she does not like this any better than I do no woman wants to share her man and I cannot live like this with you so there's the door and I will pack up your things and you can go where you want to be. He never left. This was well over a two year affair most

marriages today do not last this long and he has not seen her so he says since last Nov but I do believe him & do think it is starting again and I will approach this in a different manner. I have heard all the I Love You's and it will never happen again and I am sorry, it should have never happened in the first place crap. I would not believe him if he stepped on a stack of bibles there is no trust left here, I gave him what he said he wanted a peaceful loving relationship and he abused me and it. I believe he did not leave out of fear but this time around I think he will go he misses the excitement, sex whatever and it's not to say he is not taken care of at home but he is a very unsatisfied, unhappy man in himself he has to fix him I cannot do it for him and won't. I am tired also it wears you out and other things start to happen to you and you need to take care of yourself they are big boys with long pants now and they made their choices and we have to make ours. Best of luck to all of us suffering through these miserable people lives at our expense.

Part 5: Comments from Peers - List a couple benefits you received from listening to this tape.

- ▶ I hear in Julie, myself. Her ambivalence is just like mine. I am learning to make choices for myself. This is very difficult when one's confidence has been undermined so fully. And, it is not always easy to keep forward movement during depression and anxiety. I appreciated hearing from someone who has been married about the same length of time as I have been, and also is about my same age. 2. I was so impressed with Julie's ability to find work in another town for 4 days! Congratulations to her! I am really struggling with this one... I really don't want to have to do it either...her story makes me realize that we have strengths that we don't know we have, until we try.
- ▶ Think about my options. Develop constructive exit strategy that is respectful.
- ▶ In listening to this tape, I realize I have been other focused... and in so doing, not taking care of me. In hoping he will come back... come to his senses... I have been in denial of me. Of living my life to my fullest potential. I allowed me to be in limbo, in denial, and into depression of the situation. Looking back, I would have done things differently. I wish, knowing what I know now, I had let go... yet I still find this difficult. I am so attached. I do not believe in divorce... even with infidelity and such disrespect. I need to question this in me. I do not understand why I am having so much trouble letting go of this man. I need to examine in me, why it is so tough to "move on".
- ▶ That there are other relationships very similar to mine. I am married 26 years, together 4 years prior to that. His 1st affair was 6 years ago. WE survived that. His most recent "affair" was an emotional one with a woman he used to work with. She was going thru a divorce, and he was "helping her through that". I think that was resolved before it became physical, that it was an emotional affair. I need to keep in mind that it is not me. I do love him, and he is not so verbally abusive as he was years ago, counseling helped him somewhat with that. I don't know if I will ever truly trust him though.....
- ▶ They won't stop the affair. They will put U through drama and pain forever.

- ▶ I realized I've always taken care of my husband's needs (as he seemed to expect) but that also took away his need to be needed.
- ▶ To understand you can't run from a relationship problem, but to possibly embrace it and look for a solution together. Lots of TALK.
- ▶ Realizing that we can all help each other in one way or another, whether through feedback like this, just listening, or just being there for them.
- ▶ I like the word options that was the best and we all have them it's just a matter of putting ourselves above them as we have catered to them for so long that we lost ourselves in their wants and desires and I am done with that play. First they give you the responsibility and then they are angry because they feel they don't have any, they are needy people and clinging vines afraid to let go of us out of fear the other person will not hold up or they won't. These things never last because they built on lies and deceit on both parts. They lie to themselves, you and them and give them the power and don't even know it. Fantasy land is where they are grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. Heard myself taking in your tape and know I am going to leave as soon as this sells. I want a better life for me he does not deserve what he had in me. I told him that also. Have a great day.