



Can Your Marriage Be Saved??



By Dr. Robert Huizenga - Providing tips, information and personal guidance on breaking free from the affair

Discover how the affair in your marriage may be the best thing that ever happened to you.

Visit my site: <http://www.break-free-from-the-affair.com>

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Introduction

How are you doing?

I would think this is a terribly difficult time for you.

Nothing can compare to the gut wrenching experience of going through an affair. There is finality about death that in some way is almost comforting. But, you don't get that with an affair.

An affair is a huge loss that tears at you and keeps tearing at you. You probably have more questions than answers, don't you?

Can your marriage be saved? That's the question I will address here with you.

First, let's **define saving the marriage as the two of you having some level of commitment to legally remain married.** We won't get into the quality of the marriage, only the odds of the two of you staying together legally.

Remember also that these odds are based on the two of you maintaining your relationship patterns – of continuing to respond to each other as you typically do.

If you begin to change how you act, what you do, what you say, become a little unpredictable in certain ways, then the odds will change. But, I'm not going to get into that here.

The odds of saving your marriage hang hugely on the kind of affair that confronts you.

Not all affairs are alike. Far from it! Don't assume that the affair in your marriage is like all other affairs. **Begin to look at the patterns and themes, make distinctions and you are on the way to breaking free from your affair.**

I will help you identify the kind of affair facing you. I've been a therapist for over two decades, working with hundreds of people struggle with an affair in their marriage. From my experience as well as study and research I will share with you 7 different kinds of affairs.

Pay attention to the themes and patterns and begin to fit a particular kind of affair to your situation. For each one, I give the odds of saving your marriage.

But, remember! These are the typical odds for those who let the affair carry them along rather than look closely at the kind of affair and plan new strategies and behaviors to turn the tide.

I've identified the 7 kinds of affairs according to the reasons people give for having an affair. Of course, some people are more conscious of these reasons than others.

Here are the 7 reasons or kinds of affairs:

#1: My marriage made me do it

#2: I can't say no

#3: I don't want to say no

#4: I fell out of love (and just love being in love)

#5: I want to get back at him/her

#6: I need to prove my desirability

#7: I want to be close to someone (which means, I can't stand intimacy)

There is a format for each type of affair. I first give a general description for that kind of affair with key points following. I also have a paragraph or two that give basic tips for dealing with that kind of affair. After that, I give the odds for saving your marriage with that particular kind of affair.

Let's get started.

#1: My Marriage Made me Do It

Ask someone why they had, or are having an affair and you may hear something like this: "I have a lousy marriage. My marriage is dead. There is no intimacy, no sex, and no excitement. The love is gone. We've grown apart. I can't stand the marriage. There was nothing happening in the marriage and the affair just happened."

Key points:

1. It's as if a marriage is an animal gone bad. **A marriage does not have a life of it's own.** In reality, there is no such thing as a

"marriage." One is "married" as a result of making some promises and signing a paper at one point. After the paper is signed, two people continue communicating and acting toward another in particular ways that they hope will help them get what they individually want. Just as there is no "marriage," there is no such thing as a "relationship." There are, however, ways of relating for which each person is responsible. Remember the comedian Flip Wilson (that dates me) and his "The devil made me do it" skit?

2. **We idealize "marriage" or "romantic relationships"** with the expectation we will get what we want, without much effort to boot. The movies, popular public press and romance novels/stories don't help much here. A "marriage" is behind the eight ball from the word go. "IT" can't win.

3. From day one most of us **don't have a clue about how to get, build, nurture and maintain healthy and intimate ways of relating**. We need 'love 101' and it's not there. We rely upon experimentation or bad models.

4. **If the "marriage" is dead, why in the world would one choose to have an affair?** Talk about jumping from the frying pan into the fire. It really is stupid. You add a whole layer of deceit and shame that eventually will result in consequences more dire than approaching your spouse and saying, "I'm really unhappy. What I'm doing with you obviously is not working. I want out." Oh well, maybe some people need more problems and suffering.

5. **If the "marriage" is bad, obviously, I don't have to look at me.** I can blame "it" or the other. Some of us find it difficult to look at me. Some of us don't know how to look at me. Some of us never think of looking at me.

Tip: If your partner/spouse is having an affair and blames it on the "marriage," don't buy into it. The "marriage" is not the problem. You are not the problem. Your spouse/partner chose the affair out of ignorance, fear or inadequacy.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



Not very good. Once she attaches firmly to the other person, she most often will not give up that hold.

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being No Way, I would say your chance of saving this marriage is about a 9. Remember, this is based on the fact that you, your spouse and the other person continue with the same emotional, cognitive (how you think) and behavioral (what you do) patterns. If the three of you continue playing the game the same way, following the same rules, it's about a 9.

#2: I can't say no

People can't say no? Well, I believe we all have the capacity, at some level, to say no. However, not all have developed that capacity or reached that level to firmly say no and mean it. Some have many "unconscious" tugs and pulls that lead to an affair. They are "stuck" and seem to lack the ability to consistently act on the "no." Please remember that all of us are "grabbed" by something and find it difficult to let go. One's history, personal development and internal blocks play a role here.

Key Points:

1. **Sex takes on an inflated role or value.** Sex, sexual conquest, sexual release becomes a powerful force. Acting on the sexually impulse is a frequent activity. Thinking about sex likewise consumes an inordinate amount of time. Multiple ways of acting out sexually (porn, strip clubs, multiple sex partners, etc.) are common.
2. **This activity is bound by fear.** The person lives with fear: the fear of getting caught, the fear of consequences, the fear of "being found out," the fear of being abnormal, the fear of being punished, and the fear of losing family, spouse, job and respect.
3. **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.
4. Others are used or seen as objects for personal gratification. **No true intimacy is developed.**
5. **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. (I worked with one woman who "used" a one-night fling with a significant person to "clear up" a particular issue.) She was free of that "urge" from that point on. No one ever knew. Could she have chosen a different way? Maybe.

6. Such a person lives in a distorted world. **They come to see the world and relationship through the eyes of their "addiction."** They have a great capacity to rationalize their behavior, deceive others and may lead a "dual" life.

Tip: If you suspect these characteristics fit you or someone you love, get some help before your world disintegrates further or falls apart. Life can be different. Life, sexuality, a truly intimate relationship IS different. You can get there. You are stuck, and need some true love, care and guidance to arrive at the next level.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



Not very good. I would give most marriages where the spouse can't say no about an 8 or 9.

Having said that, I will give myself an out. Where your spouse is in the downhill slide influences the chance of saving the marriage. **If her behaviors are deeply engrained, are frequent occurrences and she seems locked into denial with little awareness of her situation, your chances ride close to a 10.**

If she is not so locked into her behaviors, (they occur infrequently and some insight and awareness of the patterns exist) the chances for saving the marriage are a little better.

As well, if you can extricate yourself from assuming responsibility for her behaviors or more accurately the consequences of her behavior, and can create a life of your own, the chances of saving the marriage are enhanced a degree.

#3: I don't want to say no!

Some people just don't want to say no, and they believe they don't have to say no. The older term of "philanderer" applies. Their relationships are marked by a series of sexual conquests, and that's what they basically are - nothing more than the thrill of the score.

Key points:

1. There is an **underlying need for excitement, thrill and adventure**. The thrill of the chase or hunt is what drives this person.
2. Once the "score" is achieved the person is likely to move on to the next conquest. **The chasing of these relationships is viewed as a game or hobby**. The person collects a number of "trophies" along the way that supposedly inflates his/her sense of well-being.
3. **The other object/person may be someone who seems highly unobtainable**, making the chase more challenging.
4. **The person seeks "quality"** – someone who is perceived to be beautiful, attractive, handsome, alluring, with position, power or with status. The person desires someone who will "mirror back" those qualities of perfection that seemingly flame and keep alive grandiose thoughts of self.
5. **This behavior is subtly admired in our culture, and often "excused."** "Boys will be boys" you know. This behavior can continue with knowledge of colleagues, friends and even spouse, provided it doesn't interfere in particular ways or "cause damage." People often "look the other way" so they might continue to be the recipient of or aligned with this person's "charm and power."
6. This person will **only stop philandering if his/her behavior results in the possibility of losing something perceived important** – job, position, family, prestige, children, etc. There is usually a huge, hollow and empty cavern in this person – marshmallows inside – that is exposed once the reality of a significant loss appears imminent.
7. Once the fear of loss subsides and/or the person talks and charms his/her way out of the difficult situation (I will never do this again!) and has not faced the internal emptiness, the **person usually resumes the chase games**.

Tip: If you are married to such a person, there is a major question to face: Am I willing to tolerate and put up with this behavior in exchange for the perceived benefits I receive from

this person and what he/she provides? The affairs most likely will not cease. Where will you draw the line? How can you maintain your integrity and what is the level of integrity you need?

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



Actually, many marriages such as this continue. A publicly known example is that of Bill and Hillary. The couple establishes an understanding or balance that keeps the relationship, at least legally, intact.

The relationship faces the possibility of dissolution when he is forced to face the consequences of his behavior. The crisis is not usually precipitated by an announcement by his spouse that she is out of there, but usually by legal, business or financial failure. All of the dirty laundry may then be aired. He doesn't do well with failure, weakness or humiliation. She may say she has had enough. He will most likely beg for understanding and forgiveness.

The assets the couple holds may also hold the relationship together. Divorce is expensive. Both may give the established lifestyle more importance than establishing intimacy in the marriage.

Once the storms are weathered the relationship can often be saved. I give it a 4 on the 1 to 10 scale.

#4: I fell out of love (and just love being in love)

I find this dilemma rather **common for younger couples**, probably mid or late 30s and younger. Usually one reports, "falling out of love" and is truly disturbed by this shift. He/she (and this is not merely a female problem!) wants to "recapture" those feelings. This person has found a "significant other" who has stirred those dormant feelings and this person once again "feels in love." They are determined not to "settle" for a less than ideal relationship, which means, of course, feeling the love feelings.

Key Points:

1. Unfortunately, our culture (movies, songs, romance novels, soap operas, romance comedies) teaches us that this is how it's supposed to be. **"Falling in love" is the norm** – the implication being, that if it doesn't happen, or if it goes away, something is wrong – with you, your spouse or the marriage. A good relationship must first unlearn a great deal.
2. The person pulled to find "that loving feeling" (reminds me of a song..) usually **experiences a high degree of guilt and conflict**. He/she is often married to a "good" person and the desire to "find that loving feeling" seems selfish (which it is) and immature (which it is). Intuitively (and this person usually has a great deal of intuition and sensitivity) it is known at another level that he/she is not on the right path.
3. This person usually has a **need for drama and excitement**. Life easily becomes a soap opera. Emotional juice from the fall out of emotionally intense relationships reigns rather than living life from the core of who one is.
4. There is **little understanding or perhaps healthy models of the shifts needed as a relationship matures**. For example, "falling out of love" usually happens when the attractors become the distracters. For example: His love for fun and spontaneity, which drew her initially to him, becomes irresponsibility. Her stability and calm, which drew him initially to her, become control.
5. The person "looking for love" is actually **looking for the ideal**, someone, out there, who will project back to him/her that he/she is OK. No, more than ok, close to perfect. This person needs to be adored, or think another adores him/her, because there is a lack of inner strength and solid identity. The other becomes my world, because I lack a world. Being "in love" is the panacea for my emptiness.
6. **Sexual intercourse does not need to be a part of these relationships**. Sexual activity may indeed END the relationship or at least move it to the point where the attractors become, again, the distracters. The idealized images may be held together by long phone calls, gifts, holding, love letters, e-mails, etc.

Tip: If your spouse is struggling with this type of relationship, make sure you hold and care for your self. Your spouse does not have the capacity to do this for you (or anyone) at this point. Yes, you are ok. Her/his affair says less about you and

much more about the emptiness within her/him. It is time for you to know you better. Model for him/her what it means to be a person with a core, with integrity, with boundaries, with values, with meaning, with purpose and actively figure out what you need and get them met. Maybe she will ask questions. Maybe she will not. Maybe soon. Maybe later.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



People tell me a great deal in therapy – more than they would tell anyone else. I know for a fact that over your lifetime **you can count on being attracted to other people**. Talking in depth to hundreds of people, I conclude that it is not an unusual experience. Our needs, our models, our values and our capacity to set boundaries according to our personality influence what we do with those attractions.

As well, the feelings of love (some call infatuation or to a more extreme, “a case of temporary insanity created by narcissistic flattery”) eventually fade. **Whether you can hang in there until this feeling fades is one question.**

Another question is the length of time it takes for the feelings to fade for your spouse and the other person. This depends on a number of factors, but it will fade.

All in all, there is a good possibility the marriage can be saved.

#5: I want to get back at him/her

This is the revenge affair. It occurs in a marriage in which one feels slighted in some manner and seeks revenge by engaging in an affair. It is less a movement toward the other person and more a movement away from one’s spouse.

Key Points:

1. The affair **may be a direct response to the affair of the spouse**. “I’ll show you! Take this! I want you to hurt as much as I hurt.” Or the affair may be revenge for some other form of cut-off or perceived emotional injury: “I’m not getting enough here, so I’ll show you!” Or, “There, I got your attention!”

2. This typically **occurs in a marriage where effective personal confrontation does not happen or happens ineffectively**. There is a mistrust of expressing one's self fully to the other person. The marriage relationship usually is marked by civility, but the two, in essence, do not know each other very well. They are polite, but there is no fire. They may want more, but are not sure how to get more.

3. **The fire that does exist is a smoldering tension under the surface of the marriage**. The tension may be the result of the frustration that one or both experience when they believe their needs are not being met. There is a genuine desire for more – from the spouse – but it's not happening.

4. This form of revenge affair serves as a **wake-up call** for the relationship. If, and I use the word if advisedly, the couple can "get it out" – drain off the tension – and begin talking about needs; yes, the relationship stands a very good chance of turning into something wonderful. One or both must say with a great deal of passion, "I REALLY want you! I no longer will settle for the boiling frustration and seeming indifference to my needs. This is what I need and expect....."

5. There is another kind of revenge affair that holds less hope and is more destructive. **A revenge affair may be the result of long-standing and unresolved anger or rage toward the opposite sex**. There is a persistent pattern of the person pushing others away with rage or anger. There also is a great deal of projection, or this person blaming others for his/her situation.

6. This form of anger is more rage than frustration. **The rage emerges from a desire to hurt rather than from the frustration of needs not being met**. This person exhibits little concern as well for the OP (other person). Whereas someone more frustrated because they want needs met, are usually more considerate of the OP.

Tip: Begin to make distinctions between rage and frustration. Determine the type of revenge affair you must face. If it is rage, learn to protect yourself and set boundaries. Begin to take exceptional care of yourself. Begin to say no! If it is an affair of frustration, begin looking at your needs. Identify and express those needs. Take a risk. Turn up the passion button. Dare to engage about needs, both yours and the others.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?

Let's break this down into the two components.

First the revenge affair. Because the underlying commitment and emotional connection there is a good chance the marriage will be saved. I give this one a 3.



The rage affair is different. This holds the potential for a great deal of pain and the rage indicates some fairly strong and deeply engrained patterns of destructive thoughts and behavior.

Even though the emotional investment is usually high the offended spouse at one point, when the torment becomes too much, will reluctantly leave the relationship. I give this one a 7.



#6. I need to prove my desirability

Let's face it: Most of us are on pretty shaky grounds when it comes to our sexuality. Look at the models before us on TV, the big screens and magazines. Geezzz-louise, how is anyone ever to feel as if they measure up or are desirable? Also, a key in a marriage is the degree to which someone feels wanted. I want to be wanted. After "familiarity" sets into a marriage, self-doubts are easily rekindled. (A key component of "being in love" is the giddy feeling of thinking I am deeply wanted or adored. If one does not understand the stages of marital growth or lacks a core sense of self from which to live, he/she becomes prey to confusion and disenchantment.)

Key Points:

- 1. General feelings and thoughts of inadequacy may emerge as the passion of a committed relationship fades.** This typically triggers deeply engrained negative ways of thinking culminating in: "There must be something wrong with me!" This person may begin a quiet internal nagging dialogue about his/her intimate/sexual relationship.
- 2. The perceived area of inadequacy and desirability may be very specific.** He/she may feel very inferior with particular parts of

foreplay or intercourse or sexual thoughts or fantasies or body image or ability to relate intimately with the opposite sex.

3. A relationship outside of the marriage may emerge that seemingly offers an opportunity to explore those areas of concern and perceived inadequacy. **The relationship may seem safe.** Geographical distance, background differences, strong family commitments or other issues mean that the length and degree of true intimacy in the relationship will be limited.

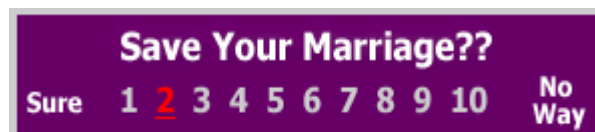
4. **The affair is usually of brief duration and will probably be the only affair in that person's life.** Sometimes it's a matter of a one-night stand. A huge drive to "find out" is met. Some internal changes usually take place that internally realign his/her thinking and feelings about sexuality and intimacy.

5. **Intense guilt** usually is a by-product of this affair. The person will feel legitimately terrible about what he/she did. Remorse prevails.

6. Others view the affair as very **uncharacteristic of this person.** No one expected that he/she would do such a thing. They are puzzled. They are even more puzzled when they ask he/she why they did it and they hear, "I don't know." Truly, they may not know or be aware of the power or source of the underlying quest to be, in their minds, desirable.

Tip: This type of affair is a great opportunity for a married couple to move their level of sexual and emotional intimacy to new levels. It is crucial to talk... talk some more...and more. Often sex can be surprisingly passionate and powerful once the disclosure is made. The "wounded" spouse must work hard at not personalizing the affair and provide a warm accepting environment to talk...and talk more...and more. The "offending" spouse must open up and continue exploring in detail his/her sexuality.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



The odds of saving this marriage are very good. **Although the recovery from the affair often is arduous and long, the**

offending spouse, if the affair was a “learning experience,” renews his commitment to the marriage.

Often, as well, the offended spouse has the capacity to hang in there and work through the issues. This is a great opportunity for her to reconfigure her life in ways that help create a deeper richer relationship.

If the general intent (often unconscious) of the affair was to repair a sense of inadequacy and the occurred, I give this marriage a 2 and is well worth saving.

#7: I want to be close to someone (which means, I can't stand intimacy)

A marriage or relationship of investment is a dance – a dance of joining and distancing. A couple moves close with the purpose of joining and being one and after a fashion moves apart to claim their own space and uniqueness.

Usually we choose or are attracted to someone with the same comfort zone in the distance/joining continuum or with a similar capacity for joining and/or distancing.

The couple does their dance to balance the pull for joining and the push for individual space and expression. Intimacy is the capacity to talk about and the freedom to move between joining and individual expression.

Someone has an affair because ostensibly they say that want to be close to someone. However, a **relationship with a third party is NEVER intimate**, but may serve the purpose for that person of never having to be intimate with anyone, although someone may feel close. Got this!?

Key Points:

1. Affairs of this nature **may be fairly long term in nature**, usually with only one other person. The affair serves to siphon off the tension between the spouses as the two experience difficulty in talking about their needs for joining and distancing and successfully working out agreements (usually unspoken) to achieve a balance of being close and apart.

2. The affair **may be a highly guarded secret**. This secret, in itself, almost guarantees that the marital relationship will remain stuck and

not develop in intimacy. A secret is like a blanket that smothers growth.

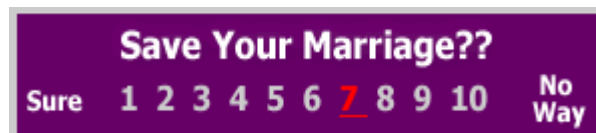
3. The affair **may not be a closely guarded secret**. The other spouse may have knowledge of the affair or have a strong inkling but chooses not to bring it up or say anything. There will be consequences to face the elephant sitting in the room.

4. **The three parties walk somewhat of an emotional tightrope** to maintain the balance in the relationships. There is an underlying sense of unease or emptiness.

5. **Those nearby will usually pick up on the underlying tension.** (At one level, children KNOW what is happening.) Children will sense the tension and may display disturbing symptoms such as illness, acting out, withdrawal, poor performance, etc. as a way of responding to the elephant in the room.

Tip: The biggest obstacle for this couple is garnering the courage to face the truth. Truth telling (either, I'm involved with someone else or, I know you are involved with someone else) will begin the healing and growth process. Both will have an opportunity to evaluate the relationship, explore and define their needs and begin charting a future that holds for them greater freedom and enhanced capacity for intimacy. They will begin to LIVE, whether they choose to maintain the marriage or divorce.

What are the odds of saving the marriage?



This kind of affair is fraught with a great deal of ambivalence. Do I? Don't I? And the ambivalence is frequently locked tight, which means she finds it difficult to move off center and commit.

As well, an underlying frustration, irritability, impatience, almost seething anger boils. This gets in the way of looking at her spouse in a realistic light. Do you feel the underlying tension?

She has developed many defenses over the years to avoid intimacy, which become deeply ingrained and mitigate her from facing and working through her ambivalence. She is stuck! Mainly for that reason, I give this couple a 7.

Conclusion

I hope this gives you a sense for the complexity of affairs.

I also hope you come away with a deeper understanding of what faces you.

This will give you strength, more confidence and the personal power to try different tactics and strategies that will change the flow of the relationship so that saving your marriage becomes more possible, provided that is what you want.

Please keep coming back to my site: www.break-free-from-the-affair.com. I continue to add material to help you break free.

Here are projects in different stages of completion:

What can I expect will happen in the affair?

Will they live happily ever after?

Do I REALLY want to save the marriage?

What can I specifically do to increase the odds of ending the affair?

And more...

Also feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like to set up a coaching relationship.

Warmly, I hope for the best for you and your family,

Bob

Dr. Robert Huizenga

<http://www.break-free-from-the-affair.com/>
