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Investigative Questions for Couples Experiencing Infidelity

These questions are aimed at helping the couple shift from a detective to an investigative position, after the acute crisis phase has subsided. That is a shift from facts to meaning. They open up the possibility for broader conversations that capture the multidimensionality of affairs including: love, sex, desire, commitment, betrayal, loyalty, loss, secrecy, honesty, intimacy, eroticism, longing, accountability, trust and forgiveness.

*These questions draw upon the work of Esther Perel, Peggy Vaughn, Michele Scheinkman and Ulrich Clement.

**MEANING AND MOTIVES**

1. What did the affair mean to you?

2. Why did it happen then?

3. Were you looking for it? Did it just happen?

4. Did you feel entitled to your affair?

5. Did you feel guilty?

6. What did you discover about yourself in that relationship? How did you feel about it?

7. Did you discover new parts of yourself or recover lost ones in that relationship?

8. Why do you think you could not express your needs to me, emotional, intellectual or sexual?

9. Do you think you could show me those newly discovered parts?

10. Are there parts of you that you want to bring into our relation?

11. Was your lover someone you thought you could build a life with?

12. How important was sex?

13. Did your affair having anything to do with something missing in our sex life?

14. Did you ever get to a point where you felt you were losing yourself or felt torn and confused?

15. Were you drawn by the general idea of having an affair or did you feel pulled toward this specific person?

16. Did you think it would help you stay in our relationship or help you to leave?

17. Did you ever worry that your affair would destroy our relationship?
DYNAMICS OF SECRECY AND REVELATION
1. What do you want me to know about your affair?
2. Do you think I have a say in it?
3. Is it okay if I don’t want to know anything?
4. Did you want me to know and were you hoping to tell me? Were you relieved when I did?
5. Once I found out, what did you think would happen to you and to the two of you?
6. Did you hope I would find out without you telling me?
7. Were you afraid I would find out or did you assume that I never would?
8. Would you have ended it if I hadn’t found out?
9. Did you lie out of deception or were you hoping to protect me with your lies?
10. What was it like for you to lie?
11. Did you tell anyone about your affair?
12. What was it like for you when you would come home?

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP
1. Was your affair a rejection of our relationship? Did you see it as a sign of something missing between us?
2. Do you think your affair was a symptom of flaws in our relationship?
3. Did you think of leaving me?
4. Did you want to leave me or was the affair just an addition to us?
5. Did you think about me, and the children?
6. Do you think it could happen again?
7. Where does sex factor in?
8. Were you trying to get my attention?
INTEGRATION THE AFFAIR INTO THE PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP: RECIPROCAL QUESTIONS FOR PARTNER TO ASK ONE ANOTHER

1. Do you think your affair may have ultimately been good for our relationship or do you think it created permanent damage?

2. Are you sure that you want to be with me?

3. Did you come back to me, or to our family?

4. What would have been your biggest loss in the life we have built?

5. How do you think you can bring what you discovered in your affair into our relationship?

6. Do you think this will hang forever over us?

7. What do you think are the strong parts of our relationship?

8. What is it about us that you value most?

9. What are some things we can do together to make our relationship stronger?

10. Do you think you could ever trust me again?

11. Can you forgive me? Or, how much forgiving do you need for us to move on?

12. Do you think you've changed your values in relation to monogamy?

FOCUS ON THE HURT PARTNER

1. Can you understand my anger and hurt?

2. Are you open to further conversation if I have questions that will help me better understand your actions?

3. Do you realize that I can leave too?

4. What would it be like if I had an affair?

5. For the Partner Who Had the Affair to Ask the Hurt Partner

6. Do you believe me when I say it’s you that I am coming back to?

7. Do you want me to stay?

8. Why are you staying?