

*Women's Infidelity*  
*II*



# *Women's Infidelity II*

BREAKING OUT OF LIMBO

*How to End Your Confusion  
and Move Forward*

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*For Sondra, Katie and Debbie*

## *Disclaimer*

The information in this book is made available with the express stipulation that the author is not a physician or psychologist. All conclusions, suggestions and interpretations in this book are expressions of the author's opinions and should not be considered professional advice.

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## Introduction

Limbo is one of the most painful experiences you can go through in a relationship. I've interviewed several hundred people in this situation and I've also been there myself. Anyone who has lived in limbo knows how agonizing the experience can be. So agonizing in fact, it's hard to imagine that there isn't a plentitude of information available for people who are going through it.

When people are in limbo, they feel like they have an ailment, a condition of some sort; they just know they have something and whatever it is, it isn't normal. Unfortunately, many people today are not only currently living in limbo, they have been living this way for a long time.

After *Women's Infidelity* was published, I began getting emails and letters from women praising my book. The women often expressed how relieved they were to finally know what they were feeling and why. However, several women also stated that, even though they now understood the problem, they remained unsure about how to fix it. Since the problem has several contributing factors, it is my opinion that in order to fix the problem (or break out of limbo) all of the factors which are contributing to the problem must be addressed.

*Women's Infidelity II* takes you through that process. This book, like the first, is written in conversation form, although this time the conversation is with a woman. I wanted to include all of the information needed to move forward, so I have taken some creative liberties. While the information is presented as one conversation with my friend, Sondra, it actually represents the combination of my conversations with three different women.

Again, as I pointed out in *Women's Infidelity*, I am not a physician or a psychologist. The information in this book contains my opinions. My opinions result from having delved deeply into the subject for more than ten years. I wrote *Women's Infidelity II* for one purpose—to help women break out of limbo. Although this book does contain important information about relationships, it is not a book about how to have great relationships, nor is it about how to save marriages. *Womens Infidelity II* is intended to help you to stop the circular thinking characteristic of limbo and lead you in a straight line toward your destination.



# Chapter 1

## *Getting Clear*

**You said that you would talk to me after I finished your book. Well, I've finished it, so can we talk now?**

Sondra, I'm sorry if you felt I was unwilling or didn't have time to talk to you about your situation. I just don't think it's beneficial to discuss the subject until *after* someone has read the book. *Women's Infidelity* contains basic information—in my opinion it's the starting point. I don't believe people can develop a deeper understanding without first having a basic understanding. *Women's Infidelity* explains a problem that is complex. Therefore, you can't begin to fix the problem until you understand all of the different factors that are causing it.

After reading *Women's Infidelity*, people often mistakenly reduce the problems women experience in their relationships today to women's sexual peak. However, I gave several very specific reasons why women are feeling the way they're feeling and each one of those reasons needs to be understood and addressed in order to move forward.

**I know that I told you I was going to read your book a long time ago. Well, I finally have and I'm really serious about trying to move forward. So, is it possible? Will I be able to figure out what I want and get out of this place I'm in?**

Yes, it's absolutely possible, although there are several steps involved. I think you will be surprised at how quickly you can break out of limbo if it's what you really want to do.

**Well, that is truly what I want, because I can't live like this anymore. So please tell me what I need to do first.**

You will need to set aside a full day to spend at my office so that we have access to all of the books and information I have at hand.

**I'm ready. I want to do this. Just let me know when you have time.**

Okay, let's start next Saturday.

***Saturday morning***

Why don't we start by catching up? Bring me up to date on your situation. The last time we spoke about this you had become attracted to a man who had recently started working for your company. Have you become involved with him? Is he the reason you asked your husband to move out?

**Yes, I have become involved with him. I believe when we spoke about this last, I had just kissed Curt for the first time. We went out for a drink one night after work and that's when it happened.**

That was a little over a year ago, right?

**Yes...it was just over a year ago.**

What happened after that?

**Nothing at first. We just started talking more, but about a month later we had sex. We've been pretty involved ever since. Brad, my husband, realizes that something is wrong, but he has no idea what's really going on. He moved out six weeks ago in order to give me some time to work things out in my head.**

What does he think you're trying to work out?

**I don't know, he probably just thinks I'm confused about life in general.**

Is that what you've been leading him to believe?

**Yes, I guess I have been leading him to believe that. I certainly haven't alluded to the fact that there is someone else. Although, I**

**don't know how he can think otherwise.**

Has he asked you if there is another man?

**Yes, he has asked me. But I've denied it.**

Well, that's why he thinks there isn't another man. He believes what you're telling him because he wants to believe that you're telling the truth.

**I know, but it just seems like at some point he would catch on.**

Is that what you want? Do you want him to catch on?

**I don't know, maybe that's what I want to have happen. I just can't believe that he still thinks that nothing is really going on. Why would I be so confused and want him to move out if there weren't someone else? If I were confused about anything other than another man, I would be talking to him about what I'm confused about. I wouldn't have been just saying, "I'm not happy" for the last year. I would have told him exactly what I was unhappy about.**

Okay, well let's go ahead and move on. I have to warn you though, most women who contact me for information don't make it very far into the conversation. I want to let you know up front that for the next several hours you're going to be pretty uncomfortable, because we're going to be discussing your situation in a way that you're probably not accustomed to.

Typically, women in limbo are seeking reassurance about what they are doing. In other words, they're not looking for advice about how to change their situation; they're looking for someone to tell them that what they're doing is okay, or that it's at least justifiable. When people seek advice, they usually seek it from people who will tell them what they want to hear and this is not just a cliché. In *Stumbling on Happiness* the author says, "...we derive support for our preferred conclusions by listening to the words that we put in the mouths of people who have already been pre-selected for their willingness to say what we want to hear."<sup>1</sup> This is a natural behavior for both men and women. The only reason I'm bringing it up is, it's likely that I won't be telling you *anything* you want to hear.

Your previous conversations about this situation probably ended when you got to the point where the reality of what you've been

doing was about to sink in, or when the conversation got too close to the truth. In the past you may have either stopped talking or tried to change the subject at that point in your conversations. In fact, even when you were alone and just thinking about your situation you probably forced yourself to stop thinking about it and changed the subject in your mind, so to speak, when you got too close to the truth.

**Yes, I have done that, because I feel completely overwhelmed by everything that's happening.**

Yes, I imagine you've been talking and thinking about this for more than a year now, yet there's been no change in your situation—you're still in limbo.

**Yes, you're right...I have been. And yes, I'm still very much in limbo.**

The reason you've been so frustrated and in so much pain is because prior to today you already knew, deep down, that every conversation you had about this was going to lead nowhere, because you weren't going to allow it to...

**I never consciously thought of that before, but I think it's probably true.**

I've found that women often don't want to fix the problem—they just want to talk about it. I've also found that women often pretend to get offended and become emotionally volatile in order to prevent others from telling them the truth. They actually want others to fear their reaction. So I want to let you know up front that a) I'm not going to sugar-coat the truth in any way, I plan to be very direct during our conversation, and b) your reactions to what I say aren't going to change that fact. Therefore, I'm assuming that you're serious about resolving this problem and that you're prepared to speak very candidly.

**Yes, I do want to solve this problem, otherwise I wouldn't be here. At this point, I just want my life to get back to normal.**

That's something people in your situation commonly say. The first question I have for you is this: if you are still so confused about what you want, why did you ask your husband to move out of the



house and why are you still spending time with your boyfriend?

**I chose to separate because I didn't know what I wanted and I still don't.**

If you don't know what you want, though, isn't that a pretty drastic measure to take at this point?

**Yes it is, but I didn't know what else to do. I wanted to separate because I was confused about what I wanted and I felt like I needed to find myself.**

What have you discovered so far, other than the fact that sex is intoxicating with a new man, especially a new man under these circumstances?

**Well, I can tell already that this is going to be fun. Although I hate to admit it, in all honesty I really haven't learned much other than that so far.**

The first thing you need to do is get *clear* about what you are really doing. Most women in limbo believe that their situation, and consequently their "confusion," is unique. The truth is, this is just one more similarity that women in limbo share. Women in limbo are confused about what they want, primarily because they're in denial about what they're doing. So, what I want to do now is give you an outside perspective. I'm going to do that by reading an email from a woman who is in a situation very similar to yours. She writes:

*I just read your book and I feel as though it was written about my life. My husband and I separated six months ago. My boyfriend moved in with me shortly after my husband left. I love my boyfriend very much, but I'm so confused and I don't know what to do. Last week was my wedding anniversary and I was very sad. I do still love my husband. I'm so torn. I can't imagine not being with my boyfriend anymore, but I can't imagine not ever working things out with my husband either.*

*I know my husband would like to get back together and I think we might get back together someday, but like I said, I really love my boyfriend. I just don't know what to do.*

So, what do you think? After hearing this woman's email, do you think she's confused?

**Yes, she sounds just like me. I would definitely say that she's confused.**

Really? This woman is not only separated from her husband, but she's also living with her boyfriend. She says she's confused, just like you. But her actions, like your actions, are saying something else entirely.

What the two of you are doing would be similar to someone quitting their job and after working six months to a year for another company continuing to spend all of their time thinking and saying, "I'm really confused; I don't know if I want to quit my old job and get a new job or not." The decision to quit their old job, as well as the decision to get a new job has already been made. So although the individual may regret having made these decisions, the fact remains that they have already quit their old job and are currently working for a new company.

**But Brad and I are still married. Nothing's been finalized yet.**

Actions speak louder than words, Sondra. If someone's words and behavior don't match up, it's wise to pay attention to what they do and not what they say. Whether you want to acknowledge it or not, you've already quit being Brad's wife. In fact, you quit being his wife a long time ago. Women can be very delusional in this regard. They seem to think they can sleep with, and sometimes even live with, another man and then later get back together with their husbands and live happily ever after.

For example, one man I interviewed told me that in court on the day of his divorce his wife said to him, "I know we'll get back together someday." This was the same woman who, after a two year separation, falsely accused him of molesting their daughter. She accused him of this when he started seeing a new woman after being separated for nine months. Now, bear in mind, *she left him for another man* and had been living with that man ever since she left. There wasn't any chance that these two were ever going to get back together, but his wife still continued to believe that she had a decision to make. She had already made countless decisions along

the way, all of which led her away from a life with her husband. She had no decisions left to make.

So you see, women often say they're confused and unable to make a decision about whether they should stay married or get divorced. This is because many women mistakenly believe that they have a single decision to make—whether to stay married or get divorced and they assume that they will make that decision in the future.

However, what you and many other women don't realize is, there isn't any big *future* decision to make. You've already made decisions—you've been making decisions all along. And so far, all of those decisions are moving you *away* from a life with your husband. Right now you have not only separated from your husband, but you are also very much involved with another man.

Life is a process of *continuous* choice making. We're continuously making choices every day. Yet, as I pointed out in *Women's Infidelity*, most people still seem to believe that a single decision or event can either ensure or destroy their chances for happiness *in the future*. By the time a woman starts contemplating separation or divorce she should already know this isn't true. After all, don't most women want to get married because prior to marriage they believe that this one event will guarantee them a lifetime of happiness?

**But don't you think that's why women take so long to decide whether or not to divorce. It's because they don't want to fall for the same happily-ever-after crap all over again.**

Yes, but the truth is, it doesn't matter what man you choose or what job you choose or where you choose to live. The only thing you need to understand is that none of these things, or anything else for that matter, will create the "happily-ever-after" feeling that you're striving for.

**But that sounds so depressing. What's the point, then?**

Well, you have to consider the flip side. If nothing can ensure your happiness, then nothing can destroy it either. Your ability to understand this is crucial. If you want to get out of limbo, you have to understand that this decision, like every other decision, will not make or break your life.

However, for the time being, I don't want you to think about making a decision. I don't want you to think about what you are going to do. Instead, I simply want you to focus your attention on what you are *currently* doing because this will allow you to determine if you've already made a decision.

**Well, I certainly know that I haven't made a decision yet.**

I understand that that's what you believe, but again, all of your decisions so far have been leading you away from a life with your husband and, in order to get clarity, we can't sidestep that fact. We also can't sidestep several other facts either. For instance, you need to acknowledge the fact that you asked your husband to move out of the house because you met a man at work that you were attracted to. Additionally, you should accept the fact that your husband would do anything that you asked him to do and that the only reason your needs were not being met in your marriage is that you never told him exactly what those needs were.

**I agree with what you're saying, but let's not make Brad out to be some kind of saint. You and I both know that he's not. From the beginning, I waited on that man hand and foot. Brad wouldn't do anything for himself and after we got married it was the same thing.**

So, why exactly did you love Brad so much and want to spend the rest of your life with him?

**I know what you're doing...you are trying to turn this around on me.**

No, I'm trying to make you see that you're not an innocent victim. You not only created the life that you had with Brad, but you went after that life with a vengeance. You waited on Brad hand and foot because *you wanted* something from him—marriage. So let's not pretend that you were being selfless or loving. You wanted something from Brad and you were willing to do whatever it took to get it. Brad was a pretty hot commodity when you married him and you wanted to be the one to win the prize.

**You're right, I did.**

Women love a challenge just like men do, and you found Brad to be a challenge; therefore, you were willing to modify your behavior to get him. So the life you had with Brad was created by your own design. However, after closing the deal and winning the prize, you, like the majority of women who pretend to be something they're not in order to get "the guy," had to make a decision. The decision was either to come clean and feel like a fraud for luring your husband in under false pretenses, or to suppress your desires and hope that one day your husband would just figure out what your needs were on his own.

Unfortunately, like most men, your husband didn't know he was playing a guessing game so he wasn't even trying to guess what you wanted. He thought he knew what you wanted. He thought you wanted to marry him. He thought you wanted to be his wife and do all of the things you had done in the past—both prior to getting married and at the outset of your marriage.

**Okay, so all of this is my fault, right?**

Sondra, now you're trying to pull the "poor me" card. That won't get you anywhere.

**But I feel like you think this is all my fault and I don't believe that that's true.**

Many women have a really hard time taking responsibility for their actions, because they've been conditioned to believe that they're innately good. Most of the time they don't even have to make excuses for their bad behavior, because society has always been eager to make excuses for them. This is one of women's greatest stumbling blocks to happiness. It allows them to believe that their happiness is contingent upon the behaviors and actions of others as opposed to something that they alone control.

I want to read something to you from *Female Rage*. In it the authors write:

...women's stories begin—when they are lovely, young, and innocent. Whether it's a grade school photo, a sweet sixteen birthday snapshot, or a wedding portrait, every woman can look back at a time when her eyes were dewy and she was full of hope about her possibilities and future life. But for

many women, innocence becomes a lifetime condition of suspended development and lack of emotional growth. Like Alices in Wonderland, these women fall into life's rabbit holes still wearing rose-colored glasses, unprepared for its disappointments and betrayals...Innocence in a girl becomes naïveté in a grown woman: The romantic illusions of teenage women turn into infantile and unrealistic fantasies in the female adult. The infantilizing of women is reinforced throughout the culture and fortified in myth and fairy tale. An innocent woman, with her unrealistic expectations, is set up for rage in both intimate and professional relations.<sup>2</sup>

The reason innocence sets women up for rage is that as long as we view women as innocent we relieve them of responsibility. Relieving them of responsibility causes women to disconnect from their power. Simply put, powerless women are women who don't take responsibility for their choices, their lives, and their behavior. With this in mind it will only benefit, and in no way diminish, you if you take responsibility for everything that has already happened or is happening in your life right now.

I want to move on and explain what's causing your inability to make a decision, because there are specific reasons you feel this way. What I'm going to do now is ask you some questions. These questions will help you to understand how you ended up in limbo.

**Okay, that's fine.**

Initially, when this all started, you were just flirting with this man from work, right?

**Yes, it was pretty harmless at first.**

You said you met him for drinks one night after work and then the two of you wound up kissing, right?

**Yes.**

But you didn't have sex with him that night...

**No, we didn't have sex that night.**

Tell me how you felt about your husband *before* this man started working at your company. Try not to answer the question in hind-

sight. Try to remember exactly what your feelings for Brad were at that time.

**I'm not sure that I know what you mean. I loved Brad then and I still do.**

Were you looking for something on the side, or had you been thinking about leaving your husband at the time?

**Oh God no, I wasn't thinking about anything like that, but I will say that I was bored.**

How did you feel after the kiss? In your car on the way home that night, how did you feel?

**I felt a lot of things that night. When Curt and I kissed, it was so damn intense—it was so passionate.**

Did you feel guilty when you were driving home that night?

**Yes, I felt guilty. I felt intense guilt, but I also felt a lot of excitement too.**

Were you afraid, even if it was only for a second that you could lose your husband?

**Yes, for a moment or two I was very afraid of that. I remember thinking at the time that I might have just thrown my marriage away for a kiss.**

If you had walked in your front door that night, and your husband had said, "I know what just happened and I want a divorce," what would you have done?

**God, I don't know what I'd have done. I would probably have had a nervous breakdown.**

Would you have been willing to walk away from your marriage that night, after that very first kiss?

**No...no, of course not.**

So if you had been forced to choose at the very beginning, you would have chosen your husband hands-down.

**Well, if you put it that way, yes, I would have.**

After you got home that night and realized that your husband was completely unaware of what you had done, did you think that maybe you could get away with it this time, and possibly even do it again? In other words, at some point, during that night, or the next day, did you think, “Hey, maybe I don’t *have* to stop doing this?”

**I don’t know if I had those thoughts that night, but I know I had those thoughts later, probably within a few days afterward.**

So do you see that your inability to make a decision about this is a result of you not *having* to make a decision?

**Do you really think so?**

Females are quite familiar with the indecision males often feel about commitment. But, unfortunately, that difficulty is typically attributed to males having a natural aversion toward commitment. However, if the tables were turned and females had to make a financial commitment to support males for life, they too would be extremely leery of commitment. Especially since in the past, even if a marriage didn’t work out, the man was financially responsible for his wife for life.

The old saying, “Why buy the cow, when you can get the milk for free?” was intended to help women understand that men would not make the decision to marry unless they were forced to. And a similar thing could be said of you and lots of other women today. Why give up your boyfriend when your husband will let you keep him?

People typically don’t make decisions unless there’s some type of urgency. This is why every sales offer includes what’s often referred to as a call to action—a *reason to decide now*.

The truth is, you would not have fallen into limbo if your husband had forced you to make a decision in the beginning when all of this started. Your husband allowed you to remain disengaged from him and your marriage instead of requiring that the situation be resolved. There was obviously a problem and it should have been confronted and dealt with immediately. The alternative—avoidance—only creates a much bigger problem. Unfortunately, your husband probably



did what a lot of men today are doing. Not only did he try to avoid the problem, but he began to reward you for acting like an asshole. He probably started treating you better for treating him worse, which wouldn't make any more sense than expecting your dog to go to the bathroom outside even though you give him a treat every time he goes to the bathroom in the house.

**You're right...he did start treating me better. I'd never have dreamed in a million years that Brad would put up with so much shit from me. I've been so cold to him. But it's not like I haven't tried to end my relationship with Curt. The last time I tried, it was gut-wrenching. We were in his driveway and we kept staring into each other's eyes. We were holding on to each other so tight and when we kissed it was incredible, it was like being in a movie.**

Why? Because it felt fake and scripted?

**No! You know that's not what I meant!**

Sondra, affairs are very predictable because the circumstances of an affair are what create the feelings people experience during an affair. In fact, that's what I plan to discuss with you next.



## Chapter 2

### *The Other Side of the Story*

Sondra, you said that you have tried to end your relationship with your boyfriend, but you have been unsuccessful...

**Could you call him by his name? It doesn't seem right to call him my boyfriend.**

It doesn't seem right because you obviously don't think its right to have a boyfriend when you're married, but that doesn't change the fact that you do. Curt is your boyfriend, Sondra. You need to stop denying what you're doing.

**Okay, I understand. Yes, I have tried to end the relationship and I am aware that my feelings, to some extent, are due to the circumstances. Like I said, though, I don't want to fall for all the happily-ever-after crap all over again. I'm very scared that down the road I'm going to regret it if I divorce my husband. If my feelings for Curt don't stay the same, then I know that I will feel like such a fool.**

It's impossible for feelings to stay the same. Nothing has happened in your life so far that has put you into a perpetual state of bliss, right?

The fact of the matter is, there's no such thing as a "right" person, and this is a reality that many people need to face. People pretend that they already know this, but deep down, most people don't really believe it. Often, people secretly hope that there truly is a "right" person out there who will make them happy forever. Unfortunately,

this belief, or even just having this hope, can keep people from happiness, because love isn't about finding the right person, it's about treating a person right.

What people in our culture refer to as love really has nothing at all to do with love. It's just another form of consumption in our country. I call it "consumer love" or "love, American style."

Our economy has thrived as a result of our addictions. Advertising is a science of human behavior. People need to see advertisers and the media as the behavioral scientists they are. As long as the media and advertisers know more about you than you know about yourself they will have a powerful influence on your behavior. They will be able to *create* desires within you as well as insecurities.

From childhood on, we're continuously told by our parents (often as a means to control our sexuality) that there is a right person out there for us. We've also been told that when we meet this right person we'll just know that they are the one. Now, add to that the fact that we're also continuously seeing images of people meeting the "right one" in the movies.

Throughout our lives we've been exposed thousands of times to varying versions of the boy-meets-hard-to-get-girl (or vice versa) story. Chemistry, or attraction, is *always* created between characters by making the possibility of a relationship difficult. One of the characters must be already married, dying of a terminal illness, gay or, at the very least, emotionally shut down. As a matter of fact, a movie recently came out where the couple actually lived in two different time dimensions.

**That's funny. I know which movie you're talking about.**

These scenarios set the stage for the impossibility of a relationship between the characters, which automatically creates desire. It's no wonder people are typically attracted to individuals who they believe are difficult to get in one way or another and equate the feelings they have under those circumstances with love.

However, notice that the movie always ends when the relationship begins. Consequently, our relationships mimic the movies. We keep turning partners in an attempt to relive those initial feelings and recapture that final moment from the movies.

**That's so true. We all want that feeling to last.**

In *The Myth of Male Power*, Farrell says:

Society needed to reinforce men's biological dependency on female beauty for the same reasons it needed to make women dependent on male income: dependency created an incentive to marry. A man who is addicted to a woman's beauty, youth, and sex would temporarily 'lose his mind'—he would make the irrational decision to support her for the rest of his life.<sup>1</sup>

Society was successful in addicting each sex to the other. Males became addicted to female beauty and often to sex by being continuously teased sexually with young, beautiful females in all forms of advertising and media; while at the same time females were being taught to withhold sex. Females became addicted to "getting a commitment" which they falsely perceived as "love" due to the lack of options available to provide for themselves. Plus, they were also regularly teased with images of helpless females being rescued (financially supported and protected) by males on TV and in the movies. At the same time they were being conditioned to believe that males didn't want to commit to them.

Both sexes were not only told repetitively what they wanted, but they were also told repetitively that what they wanted would be hard as hell to get. And nothing is more intoxicating than excitement coupled with fear, which is why the "tease them, scare them" method is used as a means to sell almost everything in this country.

Unfortunately, many people keep changing partners because they want to go back to the beginning stage of a relationship, yet what they're really doing is *preventing* growth from occurring. Ironically, the stagnation or boredom people experience in their relationships is due to a lack of growth, which is often born of their desire to remain in the beginning stage of a relationship.

**That is ironic, because I know that's what I want. I want those feelings that we have in the beginning of a relationship, but I also want depth in a relationship, too. For a long time, I have felt like Brad and I were just going through the motions in our marriage. I didn't feel like we were really close at all.**

Yes, I believe most people feel that way after a few years of marriage. Many people live on autopilot, and when you're living on autopilot you don't feel anything fully. Nothing resonates deep inside, therefore life seems boring and monotonous.

**Yes, that's exactly how I felt before I met Curt. Whenever I think about going back to my life with Brad I get depressed, because I can't bear to live that way anymore.**

I don't blame you, but whether or not that happens will be entirely up to you. It will have little to do with the partner you choose, or with your life situation. You see, even your relationship with Curt has resulted from living on autopilot. You didn't consciously choose to lie and cheat on your husband; you simply reacted in the same way that you've always reacted when you became overly bored with your life. Prior to getting married, you ate, shopped and watched TV to stimulate yourself when you were bored, and when that wasn't enough, you sought out new relationships. So, in essence, when people change relationships they're typically just reacting in the same old way to the same old problem. Temporarily, it appears as though they're experiencing some type of growth or change, but instead they're just repeating a familiar pattern.

**Are you saying that we should never change relationships?**

No, of course I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is there are many negative consequences when we *unconsciously* change relationships.

**But how do you know if you're changing relationships unconsciously?**

You're unconsciously changing relationships when you're not willing to take responsibility for the change. If you're making a decision based on the belief that your feelings for Curt will remain the same, then you'll wind up disappointed and probably repeat the process all over again.

**Aren't you supposed to follow your feelings, though? Every self-help book I've read says that your feelings are the most important tool you have to guide your life.**

It's important to pay attention to your feelings, but *following* your feelings is something else entirely. It's not always wise to follow your feelings, especially if you don't understand them. Remember, you can get lost following a road map if you don't know how to read one. Several times now, you've said that you don't know what you want, or you're not sure about how you feel, which indicates that you don't understand what you are feeling.

In short, any feeling that is created inside of you by something that is happening outside of you is temporary. As long as you're not creating your feelings from the inside (meaning creating the way you feel through your thoughts) your feelings will go up in response to certain external circumstances and will gradually come down to what is your natural base-line of happiness. Likewise, your feelings will also go down in response to certain external circumstances and then they will begin to gradually go back up to your normal base-line of happiness, too. It doesn't take long to understand this once you start paying attention to your feelings.

You've also stated that you don't want to give up your marriage if your feelings for your boyfriend aren't going to stay the same. Obviously, on some level you know that your feelings will change. Otherwise you already would have divorced Brad. Don't try to fool yourself about this. If you really believed that Curt was your ticket to happiness you would have walked down that road in a heartbeat.

You like the way you feel with Curt right now. However, you know those feelings won't last, so you're trying to milk the situation for all it's worth. You're pretending to try to make a decision about which man you want to be with. But the truth is, right now you're much more interested in making sure the current circumstances don't change too much, because you know those circumstances are creating the intensity you are feeling.

**So you're saying that nothing is going to last. I'm going to be miserable no matter who I wind up with, right?**

Yes, but...

**Then what the hell is the point?**

That's a good question, but before I answer that, I want you to think about something for a minute. I want you to think about what

it feels like when your foot falls asleep. Sometimes you don't even know that it has fallen asleep until you try to move it, right?

**Yes.**

Well, that's what falling asleep, or going on autopilot, in your life is like. It hurts when you try to move your foot once it has fallen asleep, and for a moment or two it's tempting to just let it stay asleep. This isn't any different from what you're experiencing now. You can go through the temporary discomfort of *waking up* or you can fall back into your old routine, whether it is the old routine of your life with Brad or the old routine of changing partners.

So, if you believe that what's happening in your life right now is about which man to choose, then you will most likely choose a man and go back to sleep. On the other hand, you could see this as an opportunity to wake up and begin living consciously. And if and when you decide to do that, you will quite naturally want to figure out what the point is—the point of your life.

**How the hell do you go about figuring out that?**

You do it by understanding your feelings.

**But how do you understand your feelings? I've been trying to understand my feelings for over a year now.**

Sondra, it's not hard to learn how to understand your feelings. Keep in mind, our society thrives because of people *not* fully understanding much of anything. The objective in a society based on consumption is to keep individuals confused. When people are confused they are easy to manipulate, because their confusion makes them feel insecure. The excessive consumption that takes place in this country is a result of people's need to calm their insecurities—insecurities that are intentionally created to increase consumption.

Let me give you a perfect example. In *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say*, Warren Farrell tells the story of how he was asked by a major magazine to co-author an article about men. During Farrell's research, he discovered that men often found sex *more* enjoyable with less-attractive women. The article never made it into the magazine and with reason. His information would have *eased*, not increased, insecurities in females. If women believed that men



were attracted to them and enjoyed being with them even when they weren't perfect, women would *spend less money* trying to be perfect.<sup>2</sup>

**I would never have thought of that, but it does make sense.**

Yes, it makes perfect sense if the objective is to manipulate people's feelings. The media sends specific messages to each gender. The majority of the information women receive is intended to make them feel not only insecure, but angry. Women have no idea how badly they've been manipulated in regard to their feelings about men.

We have created a society in which the average woman has a deep mistrust of men and, in many cases, an underlying hatred toward them. And yet, these feelings are largely unfounded. Males don't deserve to live under the presumption of guilt any more than females deserve to live under the presumption of innocence.

If women knew the truth, or rather, if they knew the whole story, it would quickly put an end to their anger toward men. Unfortunately, though, women are seldom if ever exposed to the male side of the story. What's more, they are seldom exposed to the evil and destructive behavior exhibited regularly and frequently by females.

In fact, at the time that I wrote *Women's Infidelity* I knew very little about this myself. My primary focus had been on women's sexuality. I was aware that much of women's bad behavior was kept from the public, but I had been focusing on women's sexual indiscretions. Much of what I've learned since writing that book has been shocking to say the least.

**Really?**

Yes, very much so. For example, it would probably surprise you to know that women physically abuse men as much, if not more, than men abuse women. In his book, *Domestic Violence: The Twelve Things You Aren't Supposed to Know*, Thomas James says women not only abuse men as often as men abuse women, but that the violence is just as severe. Additionally, contrary to what most people believe, women who abuse men are not typically acting in self defense.<sup>3</sup>

**Are you serious? But, how can information like that be kept from the public?**

Well, listen to what he says in the introduction to his book: "Scientists who have tried to speak the truth have received death threats, threats of harm to their careers and reputations, and even threats to kill or harm their children."<sup>4</sup>

### **What? Do you think that's true?**

Yes, in *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say*, Farrell tells a similar story. He tells a story about a woman who published an article on battered husbands. Afterward, she received a bomb threat and threats to harm her children.<sup>5</sup>

### **...from women?**

Yes. However women's violence against men is only one of many things that are kept out of the public eye. Women are often quite violent and abusive to their children, too—including sexually abusive. In *Domestic Violence*, James says, "Almost all cases of criminal neglect are perpetrated by mothers, and a substantial majority of child physical abuse and child killings involve a female perpetrator."<sup>6</sup> And Farrell states in *The Myth of Male Power* that boys' sexual abusers are usually women.<sup>7</sup> Although, how often do you hear stories about mothers molesting their sons or girls molesting their brothers?

### **What you're saying is very disturbing.**

Yes, it's disturbing on many levels. Aside from the actual abuse, the fact that this information is withheld causes other problems, not the least of which is an image of women in the minds of both sexes not only as innocent, but as victims. So you see, this one-sided reporting enables women to get away with both physical and sexual abuse and, in many cases, even murder. In fact, in *Domestic Violence*, James says, "...a man is over 25 times more likely to be sentenced to prison for inappropriately fondling a child than a woman is for killing or maiming one!"<sup>8</sup>

So it seems that regardless of the crime, women do not receive punishment equal to men. They often receive either no punishment at all or their punishment is greatly reduced from that which men who commit the same or similar crimes would receive.

### **So none of this ever gets reported?**

From what I understand, stories about abusive female behavior are not as likely to be reported on a national level. You may only hear about them in local papers. Therefore, it appears to the public that these incidents don't happen as frequently as they do. For this reason, I've recently started reading the local newspaper. The first day I decided to do this, there were two stories about female abuse in the local paper. One story involved a woman who poured rubbing alcohol on her husband when he was sleeping and set him on fire with a match; the other was about an eighth grade girl who fondled and then bit the penis of a six-year-old boy on the bus ride to school.

**Well, you had to have heard about the local woman who just cut the baby out of another woman's stomach? You know, they found out that she killed the woman's other three children, too.**

Yes, one of the local news shows recently did a story about violent females. I'm assuming they did the feature not only as a result of the story to which you are referring, but because of the local woman who was stabbed and who's baby was kidnapped the previous week by a different woman.

During the news segment it was stated that murder by women is rare. However, Farrell says we have six blinders that don't allow us to see the female methods of killing. For example, we don't recognize poisonings, which are often recorded as heart attacks, or contract killings. And cases in which plea bargaining results in lesser charges are not counted either.

**Talking about this is making me think about that interview that was recently on TV; the one with the schoolteacher who had sex with her student. If it had been the other way around and the teacher had been male, you know the teacher would have been in jail.**

Yes, I saw that interview, too.

**I couldn't believe it when she said something to the effect that, "He wanted it, so I gave it to him." Can you imagine if a male schoolteacher said that about a girl student?**

No, I can't imagine that happening. In fact, a male teacher would already have been incarcerated, yet this woman doesn't have to go to jail at all.

**I really don't see how people can view women having sex with boys as any different from men having sex with girls. It just doesn't make sense.**

As a society, we usually pretend that when something like this happens to young males it's fulfilling a fantasy for them. You never hear anyone say that it's fulfilling a fantasy for females when a male teacher has sex with one of his students. And yet females, like males, often fantasize about having sex with one of their young attractive teachers.

**That's true. I would have had sex with my sophomore science teacher. All the girls were in love with him and they all flirted with him, too.**

When males molest young females, they're often viewed as evil, but when females molest young males they're often viewed as mentally ill. These beliefs are a reflection of a much deeper problem within our society—lack of compassion for males and an eagerness to make excuses for females.

The truth is, however, in at least some cases the teachers who have sex with their students aren't really much different from managers who have sex with their employees. They're not evil or mentally ill, they're just stupid and irresponsible.

Society is oblivious to the fact that women can be sexually attracted to young males. In the media this particular female teacher's attraction to the young boy with whom she had sex was depicted as odd or unusual. People were acting like it was unnatural for a woman to be attracted to a young, six foot male. No one would be puzzled over how a good looking male teacher could be attracted to a young, beautiful girl, but the reverse situation was an apparent mystery in this case. Everyone wanted to know how this pretty teacher could be attracted to this tall, good looking boy.

**You said when boys have sex with older women, we think they're fulfilling a fantasy, but we don't see it that way for girls. But I don't feel that way and you obviously don't feel that way, either. Do you think women are more likely than men to see it as the same offense?**

Yes, I do think that. Men don't know much about women's sexuality, or the dark side of their nature, and they're obviously not supposed to. Earlier I mentioned that the media sends specific messages to each gender. Women are constantly being bombarded with information to make them feel angry and insecure about men, while men are receiving the opposite information. Men are continuously receiving information to make them feel secure with regard to women.

I could cite several examples, but let me give you one from a book I just read: *The Way of The Superior Man: A Spiritual Guide to Mastering the Challenges of Women, Work, and Sexual Desire*, by David Deida. The book was extremely informative. I don't agree with everything the author says, but I do believe both men and women can benefit greatly from reading it.

Anyway, let me read just a few sentences to you. Deida writes,

If you want your woman to be your spiritual and sexual consort, not just your housemate, you must skillfully maintain your household and livelihoods so that the potency of your union is not diminished. She can be the mother of your children as well as your business partner, as long as these functions do not cut into the primacy of your purpose: to serve one another's enlightenment through your unwavering commitment to love, and to enliven one another's core by the bodily transmission of love via sexual polarity.<sup>10</sup>

He goes on to say,

When these two aspects of your loving—spiritual awakening and sexual transmission—become diminished by your daily duties, you will both begin to seek elsewhere for daily refreshment and fulfillment. You will seek feminine energy in the form of a six-pack or a mistress. Your woman will seek masculine direction in the form of a social cause or a masculine-style career.<sup>11</sup>

Although it seems as though the intention of the book is to enlighten men or wake them up, Deida, in my opinion, left out one crucial detail. He left out the one truth that is almost always omit-

ted in information distributed to men about women. And I believe leaving out this particular piece of information is what allows men to go to sleep to begin with.

In my opinion, it sounds as though Deida is telling men that the worst thing that could happen in their relationship is that they will become drinkers and possibly get another woman on the side, whereas the worst thing that could happen in regard to their wives is that they'll start helping others (get involved in a social cause) or possibly start making more money (get involved in a masculine-style career).

**That's funny, but you're right it does sound like that's what he's saying.**

Most of the information distributed to men leaves out the fact that women are as likely to cheat as men are. Many men wind up believing that the repercussions for not fully engaging in their relationships are minimal. This false sense of security is often what keeps men disengaged. It also makes men appear clueless and, consequently, unattractive to females. Females simply think men are stupid for not knowing that they sometimes desire other men and are willing to cheat, too.

**Yes, that's true. Many times I've thought that Brad was a complete idiot for not thinking that I'm having an affair. I mean, how oblivious can you be?**

Women say things like that to me all of the time.

**Because Brad is so oblivious, I look at him like he's this naïve little kid and it's a total turnoff for me.**

That is what's so sad about all of this. Men and women are oblivious to each other, because neither sex has any idea that both sexes have been split down the middle and are only able to own part of who they are.

Men and women could easily learn to understand each other if both would take into consideration the socially conditioned differences between the two sexes. Males are conditioned to hide their feelings and females are conditioned to hide their sexuality.

Women tend to hide, suppress, lie about and deny their sexuality in the same way that men tend to hide, suppress, lie about and deny their feelings. Females are constantly monitoring their behavior so as not to be labeled a slut or a whore, while males are constantly monitoring their behavior so as not to be labeled a pussy.

Interestingly, each sex is also taught to protect the other sex's "image," which also requires denial. Females are taught to protect the ego of males and males have been taught to protect the virtue of females. Females are taught early on to kiss ass, while males, on the other hand, are taught not to kiss and tell. Because both sexes have been conditioned to deny a part of themselves, they end up exaggerating and/or flaunting the part that they are able to express.

Almost every female grows up knowing that something just isn't right when it comes to the rules about sex. Males can have sex with as many people as they want while every single sexual encounter a female has lowers her value. Females see the hypocrisy in this from a very young age.

Often I've heard men complain that their wives get angry when they admit to having a desire for other women, or even if they simply look at other women. However, men usually don't understand the reason behind women's anger over this. The reason women get so angry is because they *can't* admit to having similar feelings. Females are conditioned to use faithfulness as a selling tool in acquiring a mate, so to admit to their desires or attractions to other men would be like shooting themselves in the foot. Women just want men to be polite and not mention their attractions to other women, because in the past women couldn't mention their attractions to other men. Today many women continue to avoid mentioning their desires only to be polite.

**Yes, that's it exactly! When I'm with Brad, I don't stare at good looking waiters, nor do I drool over my good looking next door neighbor who also happens to have a great ass. It seems so simple to me. Why don't men get that?**

Yes, but there are two sides to this. Obviously growing up female, you've noticed that men often brag and boast about their sexuality, but what you probably haven't noticed is that women do the same thing with their feelings. Women flaunt their feelings in the same way that men flaunt their sexuality.

I want you to imagine that you're a man. Imagine being a man and having a conversation with your wife. What do you imagine the conversation would be about? Most likely the conversation would revolve around *her* feelings—why she's not happy, how you are to blame and what you need to do to make her happy. When a man has a conversation with a woman, the conversation usually goes straight to how *she* feels.

**Yes, I can see that.**

Occasionally women ask men how they feel, but when women do, they often have a hidden agenda. They're either asking the question to get men to open up, so that men will become more attached to them, or they're asking the question to get positive feedback about how men feel about *them*.

**God, did you have to say that out loud? That sounds awful.**

Yes it does. But is it true?

**Yes, it is true.**

You see, one of the big problems in relationships today is that, collectively, we've only been viewing things from a feminine perspective. Women believe that in the past men had it made, and many believe that they still do. Many women think that men have it better than they do, and nothing could be further from the truth. Do you think that in the past men wanted to shoulder all of the financial responsibility? Do you think men wanted, and still want, to go off to war and die for complete strangers?

How do you think it feels to be a man and listen to news reports and hear things like "One hundred and forty-seven people were killed, including women and children"? When a reporter says, "including women and children," what is the only category of people the reporters are not specifying? Men!

This is so common that nobody even notices the message that's being sent. The message is, men don't matter, men aren't as important.

**I never thought about it like that, but it does seem like we have the impression that it's worse for something to happen to a woman, or to a child, than it is for something to happen to a man.**



Yes, we have the impression that women are special and somehow more important than men. In fact, Farrell says we are biologically wired to protect women. Yet which sex regularly complains about being treated unfairly?<sup>12</sup>

Many women have been duped into seeing men as evil and in the process many have been exhibiting evil behavior themselves, all under the guise of their so-called goodness.

In fact, in his essay, "Feminism Exposed: Our Blindness to Feminine Evil" Shackleton says that,

...the feminine archetype is now dominate in the western world, and that, most dangerously, we are virtually blind to the shadow side of this archetype. As a result, while we are vigilant against masculine forms of evil, feminine evil is taking over our culture...<sup>13</sup>

Later in his essay, he goes on to explain when and why the belief that *women are good and men are bad* originated. He says:

Something deeply significant happened after WWII. The world was already reeling from the experience of two World Wars and the Great Depression in the space of a single generation. When the excesses of Nazism were exposed at Nuremberg, when the atom bombs were dropped on Japan, the world recoiled in horror...Male institutions and male government were seen as flawed and dangerous. At an archetypal level, we decided as a whole culture that masculinity was suspect, and we took men 'off the pedestal'. As a consequence...women were established even more strongly on the pedestal...In practice, we began to idealize women and to demonize men. Where there were major problems in the family or the world, we anticipated that they would have male causes and that women would be found to be innocent victims. In fact, we became resistant to any other finding.<sup>14</sup>

As a mother, you'll probably find what Shackleton says next to be particularly interesting. He goes on to explain the differences between masculine and feminine abuse in regard to raising children.

The focus of moral authority in the family shifted to the mother, since fathers, as males, were ashamed and suspect...the mother became the parent who effectively wielded 'the power that mattered'...Feminine archetypal power takes different forms than masculine. Where a father's authority is usually overt and direct, that of a mother is more commonly covert and indirect. For example, a mother saying to a child, "You've been so bad, just wait till your father gets home" maintains the appearance of the father being the one who is in charge, when it is clear that it is actually the mother who is judge and jury, and will probably set the sentence. Where a father's discipline is physical and intellectual (e.g., a spanking or a reasoned explanation why something is wrong), a mother's is typically psychological and emotional (e.g., "If it wasn't for you I wouldn't be stuck in this dump" or "you've made me cry"). And, most fundamentally, where the masculine archetype coerces through force and the creation of fear, the feminine archetype coerces through deception and the creation of shame...Archetypal feminine abuses are indirect (exercised through others such as the father or siblings), psychological or emotional ("you should be ashamed of yourself" or "stop your crying at once"), covert (often no more than a glance that says, "You're such a disappointment"), manipulative (you can't understand because you're not a woman/not an adult/ect.), and psychologically rather than physically incestuous ("let me tell you what your father is really like"). Such behavior is seen as adequate parenting, not ideal perhaps, but not really harmful. Nowhere is it a criminal offense, as are the masculine forms of child abuse. Yet, I argue that it is at least as damaging as are the masculine abuses with which we are familiar, but that the wounds it produces are different. Fundamentally, it is built on the use of shame to control behavior (as opposed to the dark masculine which uses fear for the same purpose). Where fear attacks the will, shame kills the soul... Just how powerful is shame as a coercive technique? Powerful, wealthy men gave up their lives to save those of women and children on the Titanic in 1912. Why? Because of the shame they would feel as a coward, if they didn't. In wartime, average men will run directly into machine gun fire, knowing they will

die a meaningless death, rather than face the shame they would feel if they fled the battle. Shame is the most intense psychological pain we can feel. We usually prefer to die. It's that big.<sup>15</sup>

**It's interesting that he compares emotional abuse to physical abuse. I've never looked at it from that perspective, but he's right, why wouldn't we consider psychological and emotional abuse to be as cruel and harmful to others as physical abuse?**

Yes, I agree with Shackleton. I think psychological and emotional abuse are just as bad as physical abuse. But you must also keep in mind everything I told you earlier. Women aren't just guilty of engaging in psychological and emotional abuse, they are often physically and sexually abusive as well. Yet even in these cases, they're not being held to the same standard as men. As I mentioned before, there are as many physically battered men out there as there are battered women, and the abuse that those battered men endure is as severe as that of battered women. As far as sexual abuse is concerned, we really have no way of knowing the extent of the problem, because thus far we've been in complete denial about female sexuality, just as we've been in denial about men's feelings.

**I find all of this so hard to believe. How can this be happening and yet nobody knows about it?**

There are a few reasons. One reason Shackleton pointed out is shame. Today, it is almost sacrilegious to say anything negative about women. Our society has an image of women similar to the image that we used to have of priests. Priests were able to get away with molesting numerous children because child molestation went against the image people held in their minds of priests.

Although, the church tried to cover up the fact that it was happening in order to protect the images of priests and of the church, believers and churchgoers were also responsible for the cover up, because many didn't *want* to know the truth. Why? Because people wanted to believe that priests were special and therefore incapable of certain behaviors. This is the same problem we have in our society today with regard to women. Society wants to believe that women are special and therefore incapable of certain behaviors.

The other reasons have to do with power and greed. Women are the largest consumers and are also the majority; therefore, the media panders to women and so do the politicians.<sup>16</sup> Women think they have it bad because the media and the politicians spend half their time telling women how bad they've got it and the other half stroking women's egos.

**I thought I was confused before, but now I don't know what to think. It's as though everything has been turned upside down and nothing makes any sense at all.**

Do you feel like nothing makes sense, or do you feel as though you've lost your point of reference? Things should actually be coming into focus.

**What do you mean?**

Well, the pieces should be coming together, but as they do you may begin to feel as though you're losing your identity—your sense of self. You may not feel as though you know who you are, because you've always identified yourself as selfless and loving, and as a victim.

When you cheated on your husband, you began to feel off balance for the same reason. Your behavior didn't fit into the image that you held about yourself so everything felt off-kilter. Most people identify so strongly with their image that they're constantly spinning reality in order to make it match their image. It's not any different from what politicians do on a regular basis, only the average person isn't typically aware that they're doing it regularly, too. One of the big problems for women in limbo is that they can't seem to spin the story enough to believe it themselves. Although they can easily get others to rally behind them and see their husbands as the culprits, in many cases deep down they know that it isn't true. And even if it were true, most women have the ability to leave instead of staying and cheating. As I said, deep down women know this, and it disturbs them a great deal.

When anything goes wrong in their relationships women usually point fingers and rarely take responsibility, unless it's to take responsibility for being *too loving* or *too giving*.

**I know I shouldn't laugh...but we are willing to take responsibility for that aren't we?**

Yet when you take a closer look, the giving and loving behavior of women can be just a manipulative tool used to get what they want. In other words, they kiss men's asses for very selfish reasons. They think they'll get something huge out of the deal—a lifetime of happiness.

Recently, I read an article that was written by Kristin Armstrong, Lance Armstrong's ex-wife. She begins the article by saying, "The greatest conspiracy in modern history is not Watergate or the shooting of JFK; it's something far more ingrained and insidious in how it distorts the truth. The conspiracy is marriage."<sup>17</sup>

She goes on to say, "Marriage has the potential to erode the very fiber of your identity. If you aren't careful, it can tempt you to become a 'yes woman' for the sake of salvaging your romantic dream."<sup>18</sup>

In the article, she basically describes how she gave up her own desires in order to make her husband happy. She also says that if she were to do things over again, she would guard the things that she enjoys and the things that make her feel like herself.<sup>19</sup>

Women do give up much of who they are, but the reason is to accomplish *their* dream. Yet after they get what they want, women forget this fact and mistakenly think that they have given up and sacrificed in order to make their husbands happy.

If modern women were unable to provide for themselves, they would gladly take care of their husbands and would greatly appreciate the ways their husbands take care of them. Women are unhappy because they don't think they're getting a good enough deal. They don't think they're getting a good enough deal because they only hear one side of the story. Consequently they are not only oblivious to the ways men get screwed, but also to the ways that men sacrifice for their wives and families. Unfortunately, women have begun to believe their own hype, not realizing that the hype is doled out to get their viewership, their money and their votes.

I agree with Armstrong that marriage is the greatest conspiracy in modern history. However, in truth men don't fare any better than women, and to believe anything else is merely to buy into the conspiracy.

In fact, I want to go back to something I talked about a few minutes ago. Shackleton pointed out in his essay that while we are familiar with masculine forms of abuse, feminine forms of abuse continue to go unrecognized. The feminine abuse he was referring to is emotional and psychological. This is certainly true, but I also believe it's important to point out that, on the rare occasions when feminine physical and sexual abuse is acknowledged, the abuse is not just minimized, it is often viewed as a source of amusement. The physical abuse perpetrated by women isn't taken seriously because we think men are stronger and should be able to take it. We don't think feminine sexual abuse is a big deal because males like sex anyway. So, sadly, males are often ridiculed when they expose these types of abuses.

**I agree. It is sad. Though, I must say, you're not painting a very pretty picture of women.**

My intention is not to paint a negative picture of women. I'm simply trying to tell the other side of the story. We can't truthfully discuss the behavior of women unless we discuss all of it, the good and the bad. We simply have to bring women's negative behavior and tendencies to light. Worse than being abused is being abused by someone who actually thinks he or she is being kind and loving.

Let me give you an example of something that women do all the time, thinking it is not only harmless but that it makes them a good person. Yesterday, I went to my favorite coffee shop. When I walked in I got in line behind a gentleman who had just paid for his purchase. My usual cashier looked at me, smiled a very warm smile and said hello. Although she is always pleasant, she appeared to be particularly pleasant this time. When the man in front of me left, the cashier said, "I'm sorry that guy took so long. I said hello to you so that he would hurry the hell up, but he didn't get the hint."

What she did was deceptive and manipulative. She presented herself as warm and kind, although her intentions were anything but. Women do this type of thing all of the time. Until we bring these deceptions and manipulations out into the open, women will not only continue them, they'll continue to believe, like the rest of society, in their unwavering goodness. I've brought this up because, if you're like most women in your situation, you probably think that you're somehow being kind by not telling your husband the truth.

**How can I tell my husband the truth? If I told Brad the truth it would kill him.**

No, what you're doing now is damaging to your husband. Sugar coating the truth serves no one.

Women constantly say to me that they can't tell their husbands the truth because they don't want to hurt their husbands. But the truth is they don't want to lose the power they have over their husbands. Most women know full well that their power lies in their image. So not telling the truth is simply their way of remaining in control and maintaining their special privileges.

Unfortunately, this is a no-win situation. Women lose respect and desire for their husbands when they are able to deceive and manipulate them. For instance, you see your husband as a child who needs to be protected because you think he can't cope with the truth of who you really are and of what you are really capable. Yet maintaining the illusion of who you are feels false to you because it makes *you* feel like a child.

**Yes, that's exactly how I feel. How can I feel close to someone who doesn't even know me?**

Or to someone who you believe would stop loving you if they did?

**Yes, I do think he would stop loving me if he knew the truth. I think he needs to believe that women are all sweet and innocent.**

This is what ultimately can kill a woman's attraction to a man. Many women have begun to realize that they are playing a role. Many want to drop the role, but they don't think men will be able to handle it. Women are afraid that men will either reject them if they drop the act, or stay with them and become terribly insecure. So they believe it's a lose-lose situation. They will either get dumped or...

**Or, they will be stuck living with an insecure man, which is just as bad.**

Right.

**I would love for the man I'm with to know the truth. I want a man to know that if I'm not happy, I'll move on. I also want a**

**man to know how important sex is to me and that if I'm not sexually satisfied, I'll get sexually satisfied somewhere else. But men don't get that and I don't see why. Why would we need to say it? Shouldn't that be obvious?**

You're acting as if it's men's fault for believing women's lies. Women seem to want men to see through their deception and manipulation, but wouldn't it be just as easy for women to stop being deceptive and manipulative?

**But how can we if men can't handle it?**

Trust me, men can handle it. Advertisers and the media have sold both sexes the illusion that each has to be something other than they are in order to attract the other. But that's ridiculous, because nature has already guaranteed the attraction. Men and women are attracted to each other—that's just the way it is. Believing otherwise is the result of being raised in a consumer society that thrives by creating imaginary desires and insecurities.

**I know women can be manipulative, but I also think women try to tell men they're not happy long before they make the decision to screw around.**

Sometimes. But people also cheat simply because the lighting is right. What I mean is that circumstances at a given moment are such that cheating is made easier, more appealing than normal, or at least harder to resist. For example, a bad day coupled with an attractive and willing participant. We can easily see how this can happen with men, but not with women. In *Stumbling on Happiness* Gilbert says:

Unexplained events seem rare, and rare events naturally have a greater emotional impact than common events do...Once we can explain an event, we can fold it up like freshly washed laundry, put it away in memory's drawer, and move on to the next one; but if an event defies explanation, it becomes a mystery or a conundrum and if there's one thing we all know about mysterious conundrums, it is that they generally refuse to stay in the back of our minds...Explanation robs events of their emotional impact because it makes them seem likely and allows us to stop thinking about them.<sup>20</sup>



This explains why women spend endless hours trying to figure out why they cheated, as well as why women have more difficulty letting go of their affairs than men. Simply put, our society promotes the notion that women are not naturally inclined to cheat, therefore when a woman cheats she finds her behavior to be mysterious, and mysterious events captivate our attention.

Unfortunately, most people are completely unaware that the answer they eventually come up with when examining their behavior is often one they unconsciously make up.<sup>21</sup> Men and women come up with myriad reasons to explain women's cheating, but the reasons are seldom accurate because most people are unaware of why they actually do the things they do.<sup>22</sup> If this weren't the case, women who are married to men who treat them well wouldn't be exhibiting the same behaviors as women who are married to men who treat them badly.

However, having said that, I do agree that some women *think* they try to tell men they're not happy before they make the decision to cheat. But the key word here is "try." You don't have to try to tell the truth, you simply tell the truth.

A divorced woman I interviewed who'd had an affair during her marriage told me a story that illustrates the difference between the whole truth and women's truth. After she had been married approximately four years, her husband started working a second job to make more money for their family. Several months after he began working two jobs, she told him that she was starting to get bored and, if he didn't spend more quality time with her instead of coming home and lying on the couch, she was going to start going out. Her husband said, "Honey, I wish you would go out and start spending more time with your friends. I want you to have a good time. I'm just too tired to talk or do anything after I get home from work." She told me all she thought at the time was, "You are such a fool."

**Oh come on. He was a bit foolish, don't you think? She pretty much told him what was going to happen.**

Well, by the time I interviewed this woman she no longer felt that her husband was a fool. She came to see that she was to blame because she was deceptive in trying to get her point across. This woman did the same thing as the cashier who said hello to me in

order to make the man ahead of me hurry up. She tried to get what she wanted without saying what she wanted.

**No, that's not true. The woman told her husband that if he didn't spend more time with her she was going to start going out.**

Let me be more specific. She tried to get what she wanted by being nice and left out the most important part. Her husband thought she was checking with him to see if it was okay for her to start hanging out with friends, because he was positively convinced of everything she told him during the beginning of their relationship regarding her uncompromising virtue. However, do you think if she had told him the whole truth he would have responded differently? What do you think his response would have been if she had been clear about her intentions? For instance, if she had said, "Honey, we need to talk, I'm getting really bored and if you don't start spending more quality time with me I'm going to start looking for another man to fuck."

**Yeah, right! Like she's really going to say that!**

But that was the whole truth. If she had told him the whole truth, their marriage may have stood a chance.

**If she had told the whole truth, their marriage probably would have been over!**

The marriage *is* over. There are many men who are willing to stay with their wives and work on their marriages even *after* their wives cheat, so I'm sure many men would be more than willing to work on their marriages *before* they cheat.

The problem is, many women care more about others *thinking* they are virtuous than they care about actually *being* virtuous. This woman didn't tell her husband the truth because she feared losing her trump card. She feared that she would no longer be able to manipulate him through shame. A woman is only effectively able to shame a man if he believes that she is morally superior to him. Consequently, women are usually much more willing to give up their man than their image. Simply put, women fear that they will lose all their power in the relationship if they no longer have moral superiority. The fact of the matter is, if you want a man who can handle the truth, you must first be a woman willing to tell the truth.

**But what about how they lie to us? Men lie all the damn time, too.**

Sondra, if you want to feel as though your husband understands you, you need to give him accurate information instead of expecting him to read between the lines.

There are two really important things you need to do at this point. First, you need to face your own shortcomings and, second, you need to listen to men's side of the story without interjecting your own, or women's, side of the story. Many women today simply don't listen to anything men have to say. They feel as though they'll lose ground if they acknowledge any of their own shortcomings and wrongdoings. Likewise they fear they'll lose ground by acknowledging any male goodness or feelings.

I'm not oblivious to how women feel, I'm a woman. Plus, every day we are constantly being reminded of how women feel through every form of media available.

In *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say*, Farrel tells a great story about something that happened in one of his workshops. During a workshop a woman told him that she wished her partner were more like him because he was so tuned in to his feelings. He informed her that he was not showing any sign of being in touch with *his* feelings; he was actually in touch with *her* feelings. Farrell also explained to her that because her husband wasn't in touch with his feelings, she was able to air her feelings 100 percent of the time.<sup>23</sup>

I think this story perfectly illustrates a very serious problem occurring in relationships today. Politicians, like the media, try to woo women with stories about how bad women have it, as well as stories about how wonderful women are. Because women aren't aware of the ulterior motive behind such stories, they have not only become gluttonous in terms of rights and special privileges, they've become emotionally gluttonous with the use of similar mantras —*Me, me, me, and more, more, more.*

Regularly, I hear women say things like, "I don't know why I'm not happy, I have everything I've ever dreamed of—a great husband, a beautiful home and wonderful kids."

**I can't argue with that. I have everything I've ever wanted, too.**

Yes, and you're not alone. Many women have those same things and yet, like you, they're still not happy. Regardless of how much they get, women are never going to be happy until they stop seeing themselves as the mistreated and better half. Because, not only are women the controlling majority, as a species humans are biologically wired to protect females. Many women today feel entitled. That sense of entitlement is causing them to be angry and it's also causing their unhappiness.

Farrell explains the quandary that many women are experiencing today in *The Myth of Male Power*. I want you to listen to what he says:

The political parties have become like two parents in a custody battle, each vying for their daughter's love by promising to do the most for her... Ironically, when political parties or parents compete for females' love by competing to give to it, the result is...entitlement...the political party, like the needy parent, becomes unconsciously dependent on keeping the female dependant. Which turns the female into "the other"—the person given to, not the equal participant. In the process, it fails to do what is every parent's and every political party's job—to raise an adult, not maintain a child. But here's the rub. When the entitled child has the majority of votes, the issue is no longer whether we have a patriarchy or a matriarchy—we get a victimarchy. And the female-as-child *genuinely* feels like a victim because she never learns how to obtain for herself everything she learns to expect. Well, she learns how to obtain it for herself by saying "it's a woman's right"—but she doesn't feel the mastery that comes with a lifetime of doing it for herself. And even when a quota includes her in the decision-making process, she still feels angry at the "male-dominated government" because she feels both the condescension of being given "equality" and the contradiction of being given equality. She is still "the other." So, with the majority of votes, she is both controlling the system and angry at the system.<sup>24</sup>

As you can see, he explains the problem quite clearly. However, this very same dynamic is also affecting male and female relationships. Many daughters are being raised to believe that they are deserving of special treatment from males. Both mothers and fathers are

guilty of raising their daughters this way. Unfortunately, this creates within them a sense of entitlement in regard to their relationships with males. In the past, women's feelings of inferiority prevented them from feeling like equals in their relationships with men, and now their sense of entitlement is causing a similar problem. When parents teach their daughters to demand and expect special treatment from males, they are in effect teaching their daughters to believe that they are in some way handicapped. Therefore, their daughters will not only grow up to expect and demand special treatment, they are likely to be unhappy when they receive it. As you can see, although many parents think they are raising their daughters in a way that will build self-esteem, they're actually doing just the opposite.

Unfortunately, while many men are giving women special treatment in their relationships, women don't really want that special treatment, they want men to stand up to them. When men don't stand up to women, or challenge them when they're making ridiculous demands, women feel ignored. And what women primarily want from men is their presence. Women want to be with men who are awake.

**Well, I can't argue with that either. It would be wonderful to be with a man who wasn't oblivious to everything that was going on around him. So often I think that there's got to be more to life than this.**

Yes, many people live very unfulfilling lives. Women are always telling me that they think men are clueless, but I believe what women mean when they say that is that men are sleepwalking through their lives.

**I don't think women know how to articulate it correctly, they just know that men don't get it. But what you said makes it much clearer.**

Women need to know why men sleepwalk through their lives, as well as why women are suddenly waking up, because until recently the majority of women were sleepwalking too. Although women believe they have fewer choices than men, the fact of the matter is, women are only waking up as a result of having choices—choices men in our culture don't currently feel they have.

Women wouldn't be trying to figure out what brings them fulfillment if preparing a meal still required several hours a day and doing laundry meant beating your clothes on a rock. Men today, unlike women, don't feel they have the luxury of doing what they want to do for a living, because as a culture we still expect men to provide for their wives and families. As a result, men believe that the only way for them to receive love from a woman is to take care of her financially. So they tend to be much more entrenched in the struggle for survival than women. Unfortunately, people who are struggling to survive don't have time for soul-searching.

However, the struggle for survival isn't the only reason men live on autopilot. They also go on autopilot to tune out the constant demands and negative feedback they so frequently receive from women. For the last thirty years or more, we've been continuously knocking down males while at the same time building up females in an attempt to create gender equality. As a result, many males have switched themselves off. They've simply given up and stopped even *trying* to please females.

So to summarize, men have a natural desire to protect and provide for women, plus they are socially conditioned to protect and provide for women. Therefore men feel very obligated to women. and this obligation coupled with women's constant demands causes many men to tune out. Men are taught from a young age to ignore their own feelings. Later in life, as a result of feeling overwhelmed by what they eventually perceive to be an impossible task—trying to please women—they tune out women's feelings as well.

## Chapter 3

### *I Love Him, But I'm Not "in" Love with Him*

**How are women supposed to know any of these things if men won't open up and say what they're thinking and feeling?**

One of the biggest myths a woman can buy into is the myth that men don't talk, or that men won't open up about their feelings. Men are more than willing to talk when they are talking to someone who will listen and who cares about what they have to say. Unfortunately, many women are only interested in hearing what men have to say if it's something that they want to hear.

In the beginning of a relationship, men usually do open up; however, as the relationship progresses they start to shut down again, because of the reaction they often receive from the women with whom they're involved. If women experienced the same reactions when they talked to men, women would quickly learn to stop talking, too.

In fact, many women get a taste of their own reactionary style of relating after they cheat on their husbands. For instance, you probably try to avoid getting into conversations with your husband right now because he has become so reactionary. Now, whenever the two of you talk, Brad is constantly looking for signs to see how you really feel about him. His close monitoring of your conversations has most likely caused you to shut down.

Women are extremely insecure in their relationships with men, because they've been conditioned to believe that men don't really want to be in relationships with them. They are always looking for clues that they hope will tell them how the men they're involved with really feel about them. And men begin to do the same thing when their wives start to pull away.

**Yes, that is what women do. I've been doing that with Curt. I've been trying to feel him out about my getting divorced.**

That probably has a lot to do with why you separated from your husband. Separating was the safest way for you to get information about how your boyfriend feels because, first, you knew Brad would take you back if things didn't work out with Curt, and second, you wouldn't have to risk the possibility of rejection by directly asking your boyfriend how he felt.

So you see, the reason men and women have so many problems in their relationships is that they don't say what they really mean. Both have hidden agendas.

**I think at this point I would be willing to tell someone what I want if I could just *figure out what it is* that I want.**

This is a big problem, too, and we touched on it earlier. I agreed with you when you said that women try to tell their husbands of their unhappiness prior to cheating. However, women are often completely ineffective at communicating their needs not only because they're afraid to say what they really want, but also because they often don't *know* what they want.

I can give you a good example of this from my childhood. When I was a kid, my mother would periodically have what my brother called, "little fits." During these fits, my mother would say things like, "You kids never do anything to help me. I do everything around here and nobody else does a damn thing," and "Why won't you guys help me? I'm tired of it, do you hear me? I'm tired of it."

Although, the fits never lasted very long, my brother and I still had a tendency to tune out everything that she was saying when she was in the middle of one. However, on one occasion, my brother became very angry and frustrated with my mother's complaining and confronted her. I remember him saying, "What do you want



me to help you with? What exactly would you like me to do?" He then proceeded to rattle off a list of chores. "Do you want me to clean my room? Do you want me to do the laundry? Tell me what you want me to do and I will do it, because I would rather do every chore in this house than listen to you complain!"

Interestingly, my mother didn't say anything at first. She just stood there in silence, looking somewhat surprised by what my brother had said. But then she yelled, "I just want you to help me more! I just want you to help me, damn it!" At that point, my brother just shook his head in frustration and said, "Yeah, that's what I thought. You just like listening to yourself complain."

Many women communicate in this same way with their husbands, because they learned this form of communication from their mothers. So often women enter their relationships and marriages vowing that they will never become a nag, because, whether they will admit to it or not, they don't want to be like their mothers. However, they often end up doing just the opposite. And their husbands tune them out just as my brother and I tuned out our mother.

My mother, like most women, wasn't complaining about cleaning the house, otherwise she could easily have resolved the problem by telling my brother exactly what she wanted. When women complain about such things, what they're actually feeling is unloved and unappreciated. This is why, when men offer to help their wives, the wife often refuses the help by saying things like, "I want you to help without my having to ask. I want you to *want* to help me."

Women express their love by cooking and cleaning, because that's how they were conditioned to show love. In fact, in the past it was one of the few ways that they could express their love, because sexual expression wasn't supposed to be in their nature. Women often feel unloved or unappreciated by their husbands' lack of help around the house, because they mistakenly think that that's how men show love, too. However, men express love by working and they also express love through sex. Unfortunately, both men and women often feel unloved and unappreciated because their partners aren't expressing love in the manner that they themselves have been conditioned to express it.

Interestingly, men usually complain in the same indirect manner when their wives lose interest in having sex with them. Husbands often say things like, "You never want to have sex," or "I want to have sex more often." When women confront these requests directly by asking, "Do you want to have sex now?" or "How often would you like to have sex?" men are likely to respond by saying, "I shouldn't have to ask you to have sex. I want you to *want* to have sex with me."

So you see, men in this case aren't really complaining about not getting enough sex. If they were, they would answer their wives directly with the number of times they want to have sex per week or month. When men start complaining about sex, their real grievance is usually the same as women's actual grievance when they complain about help around the house. Both are really feeling unloved and unappreciated.

**I'm listening to everything that you're saying and you've really opened my eyes to a lot of things...**

But...

**Yes, there is a but...But, although I still love Brad, I'm just not sure that I'm *in* love with him anymore.**

People are always tossing that phrase around. It's what everyone says about their spouse when having an affair.

**It's true, though. I don't think I'm *in* love with him anymore.**

Let's be honest about what that phrase really means. When you say, "I love Brad, I'm just not *in* love with him," what you really mean is, "I love Brad, but I just don't want to have sex with him." Right now you're not attracted to Brad, or, at the very least, you're not nearly as attracted to him as you are to Curt.

Saying I love him but I'm not in love with him is too abstract. People often believe that there is some big magical difference between loving someone and being in love, but the only difference is that one involves the desire for sex and the other doesn't. So, when you talk about your feelings for Brad versus your feelings for Curt, try to keep this in mind. Otherwise you're only creating a false belief about what love is.

**You're right, that's true. That probably has a lot to do with my inability to make a decision. Somehow it just doesn't seem right to leave your husband for sex.**

You can leave your husband for any reason you want. All I'm saying is, don't kid yourself into believing that the reason you're leaving him is that you are no longer in love with him. That's not a reason, it's just a cliché people use to avoid taking responsibility for their actions. People also use it as an excuse to avoid taking the necessary step of digging deeper into what they really want and need.

**But I think I have been trying to look deeper for an answer.**

Yes, but you've only been digging deeper to avoid facing the answers you don't find to be very flattering about yourself. You need to stop denying the parts of the truth that you don't like. For instance, you need to acknowledge the fact that you have been lying and cheating on your husband because you don't want to give up the extraordinary sex you are experiencing in your affair. As long as you deny what you love about the affair, you will be unable to create those experiences outside of an affair-type situation. The bottom line is, regardless of its moral or social unacceptability, there is no denying that *both* men and women get a great deal out of their extramarital affairs.

**Yes but it's not just the sex. It's more than that...it's the intimacy. I can talk to Curt about anything. I feel so connected to him emotionally and physically. I feel connected to him in every way.**

True intimacy involves qualities and conditions such as *truth*, *wholeness*, and *authenticity*. Your relationship with your boyfriend is not based on truth. Neither is it authentic or whole. Therefore, it can't be truly intimate.

**I have to disagree. I tell Curt everything. He knows more about me than anyone.**

Let me give you an example from someone else's life to help explain what I mean. Recently, I spoke with a single man named Jason who had been involved in an affair with a married woman named Melinda for several months. At the time we spoke Jason had just ended his affair. He said that he had never felt closer to anyone than he did to Melinda. During the affair she told him that she wouldn't

be able to leave her husband for at least another year, because she and her husband were experiencing financial problems. However, her husband had recently been promoted to a much higher paying job, which required him to relocate to another state. Melinda told Jason that she needed to relocate with her husband for at least one year. Otherwise she wouldn't be in a financial position to leave her marriage.

Prior to her moving, Jason had the opportunity to spend an entire weekend with Melinda, something he had never done before. Her husband had relocated and begun his new position three weeks before she was supposed to join him. Due to the circumstances, Jason expected the weekend to be sad. However, during that weekend he saw glimpses of a truth that he had been unable to see before. Melinda had portrayed her marriage as being almost unbearable. Prior to that weekend she had rarely mentioned her husband. When she had it was always in a very derogatory manner. Melinda had stated several times during the affair that sex and affection were nonexistent in her marriage.

So, Jason and Melinda spent the weekend together at her house. After having sex on their first night together, he went to the kitchen to get a drink. While he was there he saw a vase of flowers on the counter. When he went back to the bedroom he asked Melinda about them. She told him that her husband had given her the flowers the day he left, which happened to be that very morning. Jason thought it was odd that Melinda's husband would give her flowers, given that her marriage was devoid of anything loving or positive.

After Melinda told Jason about the flowers, he started to wonder if she had had sex with her husband before he left, too. This hadn't occurred to him before and a part of him didn't want to know the truth, but he finally decided that he had to know, so he asked her directly. Instead of answering right back, she quickly looked up and to the side and then answered, "No," to his question. At that point he told her he knew she was lying. Melinda said she wasn't lying; she had only paused and looked up because she was trying to think back to the last time she'd had sex with her husband. Jason then asked her when that was. Melinda said that she had not had sex with her husband in over a week. Jason was completely surprised by her answer and was certain that she was lying about not having had sex just before her husband left.

He said it bothered him a great deal to know that Melinda had had sex with her husband within 24 hours of having sex with him; however, something else bothered him even more. Although he knew Melinda's claim of having last had sex with her husband a week prior was just a cover-up, her answer revealed something about her marriage that Jason hadn't realized before. Sex was a part of Melinda's marriage.

For the first time, Jason was able to clearly see Melinda's whole marriage, instead of just the parts he wanted to see. Having only a partial perspective had allowed him to engage in the affair to begin with. It also allowed him to continue the affair. Jason finally understood that he had been willing to overlook part of the truth to hold on to what he was feeling. He also understood that Melinda had been omitting part of the truth for the same reason...she needed her marriage to be *all* bad to rationalize continuing the affair.

**I understand what you're saying, but I don't think that I do that with Curt.**

Your affair allowed you to become aware of a part of yourself, but it was only a part, and that part has to be integrated into your whole self. You express certain parts of yourself with your husband and other parts with your boyfriend. Neither of your relationships is whole, because you're not bringing your whole self into either of them. Affairs involve a splitting of the self. Let me read something that will help make this clearer for you. In *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, the author writes, "It is by becoming increasingly complex that the self might be said to grow. Complexity is the result of two broad processes: *differentiation* and *integration*....A complex engine, for instance, not only has many separate components, each performing a different function, but also demonstrates a high sensitivity because each of the components is in touch with all the others. Without integration, a differentiated system would be a confusing mess."<sup>1</sup>

**So you're saying I'm a confusing mess.**

I thought you already knew that. I assumed that was why you were here...

**Funny...**

Just as people can glimpse certain parts of themselves during an affair, they can also glimpse these parts of themselves in the initial stages of relationships. In the initial stages of a relationship, seeing, listening and touching their partners are behaviors that people perform automatically. At some point though, these behaviors are no longer automatic. Just as in every relationship, there will come a point when the things you and your boyfriend are now naturally doing will no longer be automatic. Our insistence on believing that there is some special someone out there who will override or short-circuit our biological wiring keeps us from fully understanding and confronting the problem.

**So you think that we need to just accept the fact that our feelings are not going to last and be done with it. Is that what you're saying?**

Accepting something and resigning yourself to it are two different things. Resigning yourself to something means that, although you accept it, you don't like what you're accepting. You feel inner resistance and disappointment. As long as you feel that way you can't embrace the possibility of experiencing something greater, because you're constantly longing for the conditions and feelings that have been lost.

We all want to feel desire and passion for our partners. These feelings are wonderful to experience and there's nothing wrong with our wanting to experience them. So if we accept that these feelings go away, and likewise accept that we don't want to give up these feelings, then we can begin to confront the problem directly.

**You mean by having an open relationship?**

That's one way that people try to deal with the problem, but that's not what I was suggesting. I haven't interviewed very many couples in open relationships. The few I have spoken with give me the impression that in the beginning they feel a little like kids in a candy store. After a while, though, the excitement begins to wear off. One couple told me that having sex with whomever they wanted soon became as boring as only having sex with one person.

**So if having an open relationship can't even fix the problem, what else can you do?**

The solution becomes apparent when you begin to understand what ultimately makes people feel good. Unfortunately, most people haven't got a clue about what really feels good and what doesn't. In order to explain this to you, I'm going to be referring to two books: *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, and *Stumbling on Happiness*.

In *Stumbling on Happiness*, Gilbert explains that we have two devices for dealing with familiarity, or habituation: variety and time. We can either try new things or we can increase the time between repetitions of an experience. Interestingly, Gilbert says if enough time passes between occurrences of the same pleasurable experience, variety becomes unnecessary because spaced out pleasurable experiences are more enjoyable than variety.<sup>2</sup>

When desire starts to wane, many people try to spice things up by trying new things. They could experience more pleasure if they continued doing the the most gratifying things, but with less frequency. Many people aren't aware of this alternative and continuously seek variety to deal with familiarity.

Today, people have an unlimited number of choices when it comes to finding a mate. Consequently, as I said earlier, "love" in this country has become just another form of excessive consumption. However, variety only increases pleasure when consumption is fast, which explains why people have difficulty forming lasting relationships through Internet dating—the more variety we have, the faster we need to consume in order to increase pleasure.<sup>3</sup>

This obviously has to do with depth. When you have fifty people to choose from, you only skim the surface with each person because a certain amount of your attention is focused on the next person instead of the person you are currently with.

Recently, I was asked during an interview what my thoughts were about fantasizing during sex to spice things up in a relationship. I was glad they asked me the question, because I believe people have been misinformed about this topic. Let me ask you a question. Do you fantasize while you are having sex with your boyfriend?

**No, I never fantasize when I'm having sex with Curt.**

You said that sex with him is better than any sex you've ever had, right?

**Yes, by a long shot. Sex with Curt is amazing.**

Therefore, if the best sex you've ever had is with Curt and you don't fantasize during sex with him, it would be accurate to say that you prefer *not* to fantasize during sex, correct?

**Yes, absolutely. I definitely prefer not to.**

And the reason you prefer not to is simple. When you are thinking about one thing while doing another, you don't fully enjoy what you're doing, because you are not fully aware of what you are experiencing and can't feel it fully. Fantasizing during sex isn't any different from driving when you have something on your mind. You usually wind up at your destination, but you don't remember driving there because you missed everything that happened along the way.

Fantasies are counterproductive because they distract our attention, and in order to fully enjoy an activity we must focus undivided attention on it. This explains why, ultimately, variety does not provide as much pleasure or satisfaction as we would expect—it divides our attention. In fact, the reason we experience pleasure doing something for the very first time is that we are more likely to be focusing our full attention in the moment.

In *Flow*, Csikszentmihalyi says:

Experiences that give pleasure can also give enjoyment, but the two sensations are quite different...we can experience pleasure without any investment of psychic energy, whereas enjoyment happens only as a result of unusual investments of attention. A person can feel pleasure without any effort, if the appropriate centers in his brain are electrically stimulated, or as a result of the chemical stimulation of drugs. But it is impossible to enjoy a tennis game, a book, or a conversation unless attention is fully concentrated on the activity.<sup>4</sup>

Although we hear a lot today about living in the moment, many people don't really understand what that means or why it's so important. Living in the moment means focusing all of our attention in the current moment. By doing so, we are able to create our own



happiness. Regardless of what you want to call it—joy, happiness, flow, or fulfillment—the fact of the matter is, what we're all striving for can only be achieved by focusing our *full attention* in the current moment.

However, this is difficult to accomplish, as the author goes on to explain:

In reality, to achieve such an ordered mental condition is not as easy as it sounds. Contrary to what we tend to assume, the normal state of the mind is chaos. Without training, and without an object in the external world that demands attention, people are unable to focus their thoughts for more than a few minutes at a time...We don't usually notice how little control we have over the mind, because habits channel psychic energy so well that thoughts seem to follow each other by themselves without a hitch. After sleeping we regain consciousness in the morning when the alarm rings, and then walk to the bathroom and brush our teeth. The social roles culture prescribes then take care of shaping our minds for us, and we generally place ourselves on automatic pilot till the end of the day, when it is time again to lose consciousness in sleep. But when we are left alone, with no demands on attention, the basic disorder of the mind reveals itself. With nothing to do, it begins to follow random patterns, and usually stopping to consider something painful or disturbing. Unless a person knows how to give order to his or her thoughts, attention will be attracted to whatever is most problematic at the moment: it will focus on some real or imaginary pain, on recent grudges or long-term frustrations.<sup>5</sup>

After learning this, you can see why happiness can be so elusive. The mind is only "happy" when attention is focused on something, because otherwise it has nothing to do. When the mind has nothing to do it seeks out and creates problems in order to *find* something to do. This is why people are constantly striving for things, as well as why they become restless and unhappy after they get the things for which they have been striving. Therefore, the final attainment of a pursuit can never bring happiness, because our attention is only focused during the attainment *process*. It's important for people to

understand that happiness results from focusing their attention in the present. We'll talk more about this later.

But getting back to sex, if you keep in mind everything that I've just explained to you, you can see that enjoying sex with the same person for an indefinite period of time really only requires two things. It requires time between sexual encounters, and it requires paying full attention during sexual encounters.

This should explain why you find your affair to be so fulfilling, because not only is your time with your boyfriend spaced out, but, also, when you're with him all of your attention is focused in the moment.

**Yes, that's exactly how I am when I'm with Curt. I'm not thinking about anything but him.**

Right now, your circumstances are creating the extraordinary feelings you're experiencing with your boyfriend. Because of the circumstances, you and Curt are completely in the moment whenever you are together. You are literally breathing each other in. In those moments, you experience all of the passion and pleasure that in reality are *always* available to us in each and every moment. This is what living in the moment really means: to immerse yourself in the present moment and not allow any past or future moments to invade *this* moment.

Therefore, your affair has the potential to change your life for the better, but this can only happen if you stop seeing your decision as being about which man you should choose and instead see it for what it really is. The experience you've shared with your boyfriend has given you a glimpse of what life is like when you *cherish* the moment.

**Meeting Curt has changed my life and I know what you mean by cherishing the moment. I do cherish my time with Curt.**

As I said earlier, seeing, listening to and touching our partners are behaviors that we perform automatically during the initial stages of a relationship. However, if we continue to perform these behaviors with focused attention after they are no longer automatic, those behaviors will trigger feelings similar to what we experienced in the beginning of the relationship. Therefore, we can continue to

feel connected to our partners as long as we behave in ways that *connect* us to our partners.

Even a long term relationship can be turned around in an instant by simply looking at your partner and *really seeing him*, listening to your partner and *really hearing him*, and if you touch your partner, *really feeling him*. These three things are what all of us want and need to *receive* from our partners, and what all of us want and need to *give* to our partners, too.

So regardless of how destructive affairs are, men and women are going to continue to engage in them until we stop judging affairs as bad or wrong and start acknowledging the need that they fulfill. What takes place in an affair can and should occur in all marriages and relationships, not just in the beginning, but indefinitely.

**Do you think this is possible even when you are living with someone? Because you can't help but see them all the time.**

Unfortunately, most of the time couples spend together is devoted to things that are not very enjoyable—doing chores, running errands, paying bills.

**Exactly...and to be honest that's why I haven't been sure about whether I would even want to be with Curt in a domestic situation.**

I've heard many women say that. I remember one woman telling me that she would never leave her husband for her affair partner, because she didn't ever want to see her affair partner in a different light. She just knew that she would lose all sexual desire if she ever saw him taking out the trash.

I understand why you feel this way. But again, you need to integrate these parts of yourself, otherwise you will never experience true intimacy. Your relationship with your boyfriend allows you to express a specific part of who you are. Sexual and emotional expressions are what have been missing from your life, so I understand that you're afraid to lose what you now know is vital to a relationship.

As I've already mentioned, this is an area where women are often confused about what they really want. Women complain to their husbands that they need more help around the house, but what they

are really asking for is the kind of intimacy with their husbands that they would experience in an affair. Women want a few hours each week where they can express themselves emotionally and sexually with their partners.

If it weren't so sad, it would actually be funny. Women are constantly after their husbands to do more chores, which will not make them happy. Men and women need to make sure that they spend three or four hours a week giving each other undivided attention—mimicking what men and women do in affairs.

People mistakenly believe that it's all about spending time, or doing things, together. In fact the only thing men and women really need from each other is to occasionally, but regularly, receive each other's full, undivided attention.

Quite frankly, you could spend forty hours a week with someone and still get absolutely nothing from being with that person. This is why I so often hear women complain that they feel lonelier living with their husbands than they would if they were living alone.

**I thought that many times before Brad and I separated. I thought living alone wouldn't be nearly as lonely as living with someone who has his head in the sand.**

Yes, I've talked to many, many women who feel the same way. However, like men, women are often guilty of not being fully present when they are with their partners. It would help if women could see that, although they do a lot for their husbands, they are often making the same mistake as men. Neither is fully meeting the other's needs. For example, your husband certainly must have noticed that you've been doing less for him. But the truth is, regardless of how much you cleaned up after him and waited on him prior to meeting your boyfriend, that wasn't what your husband really needed from you. You may have thought you were fulfilling his needs, just as he thought he was fulfilling yours by being a hardworking and dependable husband.

Women are terribly mistaken if they believe men don't want the same thing in their relationships as women want. Both are willing to risk everything to fulfill those needs outside of their marriages.

And whether you believe it or not, your husband may already be getting those needs met elsewhere, too.

**No, there's no way that Brad's having an affair. I would be able to tell. He's too messed up right now, plus he spends all of his time trying to make me happy.**

Yes, he's so messed up that he needs someone to help patch him up. Don't be foolish, Sondra. Your husband may want you back, but he either *is*, or most likely *will* be, seeing someone else in the interim. You felt neglected and started seeing someone else. What makes you think Brad won't do the same? Especially since you are not only neglecting him, but abusing him emotionally.

**Thanks for making me feel guilty.**

My intention is not to make you feel bad. Guilt has not stopped you so far.

**I can tell that you think I should stay with my husband.**

If that's what you think you are mistaken. I don't have an opinion on that, because I have no way of knowing what is best for you. I am simply trying to point out that you, like many women, mistakenly believe that your husband is getting his needs met while you are not. In actuality, you are not meeting his needs now, nor were you before. You and your husband have simply swapped roles. He is now trying to do everything he can to please you, just as you tried to do everything you could to please him in the beginning of your relationship. However, as I'm sure you know, having your ass kissed is completely unfulfilling.

**Well, I can't deny that.**

Most human relating is done through role playing. The role of wife is just that—a role. As Eckhart Tolle points out in *A New Earth*:

When you are completely identified with a role, you confuse a pattern of behavior with who you are, and you take yourself very seriously. You also automatically assign roles to others that correspond to yours. For example, when you visit doctors who are totally identified with their role, to them you will not be a human being but a patient or a case

history. Although the social structures in the contemporary world are less rigid than in ancient cultures, there are still many pre-established functions or roles that people readily identify with and which thus become a part of the ego. This causes human interactions to become inauthentic, dehumanizing, alienating. Those pre-established roles may give you a somewhat comfortable sense of identity, but ultimately, you lose yourself in them...Authentic human interactions become impossible when you lose yourself in a role.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, many couples only interact through their roles as husband and wife. That's why women often say they feel lonelier in their marriages than they would if they were living alone. Many women are simply becoming conscious of the fact that they've been playing a role, which is why they often feel as though they're just "going through the motions" in their marriages.

Therefore, what many women want is to let go of the role of wife because they want to develop deeper and more authentic relationships. The problem is they often don't know how to do that without leaving their husbands. However, this isn't necessarily due to their husbands' resistance to their giving up the role. It's simply due to the fact that many women are so identified with the role in *relation* to their husbands. Many women simply can't stop playing the role when they're in the presence of their husbands because the role has become so automatic for them.

I've spoken with women who never want to marry or live with a man again for the same reason—they're afraid they will somehow slip into the wife role if they do. But this has nothing to do with men. Women need to stop waiting for men to see them for who they really are and start *being* who they really are. Otherwise they will never achieve the intimacy they are looking for in relationships. In truth, men also want more intimacy in their relationships. In fact, in *The Seven Levels of Intimacy*, Matthew Kelly says, "The human person needs one thing above all else: intimacy."<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, both sexes want and need the same thing. It's just that neither sex knows how to go about getting it.

So you see, one of the reasons you separated from your husband is that you wanted to let go of the role of wife and the expectations that role carried with it. Although your workload may have decreased

since your husband moved out, the real difference is the relief you feel from dropping the role.

**I felt a lot of guilt after Brad moved out, because of how good I felt. I felt like I had so much less to do. Now I get exhausted just thinking about living with him again, because it seems like I have so much more work to do when he's around.**

But that's mostly due to how you set things up from the beginning, when you were trying to get Brad to marry you. Remember what Armstrong said in her article: "Marriage has the ability to erode every fiber of your identity...it can turn you into a 'yes' woman...it can lure you into a pattern of pleasing that will turn you into someone you'll hardly recognize."<sup>8</sup>

You see, this is what women need to understand. The problem isn't with the men, the problem lies within women themselves. Women only become "yes" women because they believe men don't really want to be with them, at least long-term. So the problem can't be solved until women understand that they are creating their own problems and that their pleasing behavior is nothing more than the result of their own low self-esteem.

Many women can't have fulfilling relationships with men because they are too insecure to be themselves. Women need to understand that in the past each sex had to be willing to give something up in order to get what they needed. Women also need to realize that men often felt, and continue to feel, equally used or unwanted. Men have always been expected to forgo their feelings and provide for their families in order to receive any type of love or acceptance from women.

Image was, and continues to be, the biggest difference between the sexes. In the past, men were expected to be strong, to be providers and to be willing to die for others. They still are. In the past, society continuously built men up, because otherwise they wouldn't have been able to perform the duties that were expected of them. This building up in turn caused society to adopt the belief that men are somehow better, or at the very least much more capable, than women. Richard Driscoll explains this in *The Stronger Sex*:

The fact that women see men as powerful and privileged, in spite of their obvious weaknesses, can be explained by evolution. *Seeing men as powerful frees women to push their own demands, thereby benefiting themselves and their children.* Nature selects for the woman who feels a man could and should be doing more for her, if only he would. Conversely, nature selects against the woman who is aware that her anger stresses her man and wears him out. Better that she not know that her anger stresses him, so that she can push him hard without her conscience bothering her. Men go along with the ruse, because revealing weaknesses disqualifies them as providers and limits their progeny. So, men and women accept the pretense because each benefits genetically from seeing men as stronger and women as subordinate.<sup>9</sup>

So you see, at this point in our evolution, the continued growth of our species requires that we stop seeing men as stronger and as more privileged than women. Instead, we need to see that the desire of men to please women, coupled with women's inability to feel compassion toward men, is responsible for many of the problems that we are now facing. In order to move forward in our growth as human beings, we will have to develop the same compassion for men that we have for women. Likewise, we have to develop intolerance for all types of abuse committed by women equal to that which we have regarding abuse committed by men. When this happens we will no longer hear stories like the one I read in yesterday's paper: a 60 year-old woman was found guilty of molesting two nine year-old boys, but the only punishment she received was a few months of electronic monitoring and probation.

### **That happened here? That's terrible!**

Yes it is terrible, but getting back to the point—whether you realize it or not, much of your stress and unhappiness is a result of the expectations that *you* hold about your role as a wife, not the expectations that your husband, or men in general, have about that role. So again, it's women who must solve this problem, not men. When women overcome their insecurities they will stop feeling overwhelmed and start to relax. Only then will women be able to "find" themselves, because at that point they will simply start *being* themselves.



**I think I know what you mean. I feel more like myself now than I have in a long time.**

Yes, I'm sure you do. Again, Armstrong nailed it when she said, "If I were to do things over again, I wouldn't have thrown myself so irrevocably into my new life. I would have guarded the things that made me feel like *me*...and above all I would have spoken up about my needs."<sup>10</sup> You'll notice everything that she said she would change involved changes that *she* needed to make, not her husband.

**I know that I did this to myself, but the problem is, I don't know what to do about it.**

If you fully understand why you did what you did, then you can make sure that you don't do the same thing all over again. Unfortunately, women regularly make the mistake of forgoing their own needs and desires simply to hold on to the feelings of attraction, excitement and fantasy experienced prior to commitment. This is what happened in your relationship with Brad, so you really need to examine it.

My intention is not to hurt your feelings or to embarrass you by bringing this up, but I vividly remember the night your husband became a little intoxicated and made an off-handed comment about you and oral sex. He said oral sex was your favorite thing to do for the entire three years you were dating, and even for the first six months of marriage. Yet, from the day you found out you were pregnant you suddenly became repulsed by both oral sex and sex in general.

**But I honestly did lose interest in sex after I got pregnant and had the baby. I really think it must have been hormonal or something. I'm not the only woman who goes through this. My gynecologist told me that it's normal for women to feel that way.**

Sondra, you may have lost your interest in sex for a while, but that certainly isn't the case anymore. You still tell your husband that you have no interest in sex, while truthfully you not only *want* sex, but are *having* sex all the time. So how can you make that statement with a straight face? Claiming a lack of interest in sex after pregnancy is often just an excuse women give their husbands to disconnect from them after they've gotten what they wanted—fulfillment of their

happily-ever-after fantasy. Many women give very little thought to what comes after getting married and having children. As I said in *Women's Infidelity*, men are often just props women use to fulfill their fantasies.

You mentioned earlier that you didn't know how your husband could be so oblivious. However, like many women, you were equally oblivious prior to getting married and getting pregnant. Furthermore, since you've begun cheating on your husband you've fallen into a similar state of oblivion. Several times now you've said, "I don't want to end my marriage if my feelings for Curt aren't going to stay the same." You assumed your feelings were going to stay the same when you got married and that didn't happen. If you're going about things in the same manner as you did before, then you can expect similar results.

Prior to getting married and having children, you had specific goals that you wanted to achieve and your thoughts and behaviors aligned with those goals. However, once you achieved your goals you became restless, because the only remaining goals were to stay married and provide for your offspring. Today, providing for offspring requires little effort because the majority of us in this country are no longer struggling to survive. Tolle says:

As soon as you rise above mere survival, the question of meaning and purpose becomes of paramount importance in your life. Many people feel caught up in the routines of daily living that seem to deprive their life of significance. Some believe life is passing them by or has passed them by already. Others feel severely restricted by the demands of their job and supporting a family or by their financial or living situation. Some are consumed by acute stress, others by acute boredom. Some are lost in frantic doing; others are lost in stagnation. Many people long for the freedom and the expansion that prosperity promises. Others already enjoy the relative freedom that comes with prosperity and discover that even that is not enough to endow their lives with meaning. There is no substitute for finding true purpose.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, there is often a destructive intermediate period of time that follows rising above the struggle, but precedes finding purpose and meaning in your life. This destructive intermediate pe-

riod is caused by unpreparedness. The majority of us have no idea that we've been chasing an illusion until *after* we've attained what we were taught and grew to believe would bring us happiness. This is why most of us experience a very painful awakening during which we begin to reach out for any type of pleasure we can find. This is an attempt to ease the pain of feeling that we were duped into a life that we may not actually want to live.

So you see, in order for people to live on autopilot, they must be transfixed, or focused upon that which can never be attained. In our culture we are focused on the perpetuated belief that happiness can be achieved "in the future" by acquiring money and things as well as by finding the right mate and having children. Gilbert explains this too. He says:

Economists thrive when individuals strive, but because individuals will only strive for their own happiness, it is essential that they mistakenly believe that producing and consuming are routes to personal well-being...we must believe that children and money bring happiness, regardless of whether such beliefs are true...while we believe we are raising children and earning paychecks to increase our share of happiness, we are actually doing these things for reasons beyond our ken. We are nodes in a social network...which is why we continue to toil, continue to mate, and continue to be surprised when we do not experience all the joy we so gullibly anticipated.<sup>12</sup>

Many people in the intermediate period wish they could get "back to normal," which in reality means they wish they could go back to sleep. They wish they didn't know what they do know. Consequently, they experience a great deal of unnecessary pain. But the truth is, once you pass through this intermediate period you will be able to, for the first time, live a life that is created by your own conscious design and is also filled with meaning and purpose.

### **Well how long does this intermediate period usually last?**

It will last as long as you continue to carry the snapshot in your mind of happily-ever-after and how you think things *should* be. This picture in your mind is both the reason you can't move forward and the reason you can't stop inflicting pain on yourself and your family.

The day you let go of the image that you hold of yourself and your life will be the day that you become free. Because the image is and always was—just an image.

## Chapter 4

### *The Stages of Limbo*

Everything we've been discussing so far has involved the first step to getting out of limbo: letting go of your image and false beliefs.

**Well, how many steps are there?**

There are seven.

**...And we haven't even made it through the first one?**

No, there is still more that we need to discuss, but once we get through the first step things will move much more quickly.

False images and beliefs are what keep people from moving forward, because they cause people to take inappropriate actions. In *The Book of Secrets*, Deepak Chopra says:

Belief systems are complex—they hold together the self that we want to present to the world. It is much simpler not to have beliefs, which means being open to life as it comes your way, going with your own inner intelligence instead of with stored judgments. If you find yourself blocked by your suffering, returning to the same thoughts again and again, a belief system has trapped you. You can escape the trap only by ending your need to cling to these beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of your beliefs are really someone else's beliefs—you were conditioned or trained to think and behave in a particular manner. In *The Mastery Of Love*, Ruiz calls this process *domestication*. He says:

We domesticate humans the same way we domesticate a dog or any other animal: with punishment and reward...What we call education is nothing but the domestication of the human being...We are afraid to be punished, but later we are also afraid of not getting the reward, of not being good enough for Mom or Dad, sibling or teacher. The need to be accepted is born. Before that we don't care whether we are accepted or not. People's opinions are not important...and we live in the present. The fear of not getting the reward becomes the fear of rejection. The fear of not being good enough for someone else is what makes us try to change, what makes us create an image. Then we try to project that image according to what they want us to be, just to be accepted, just to have the reward...We learn to pretend to be what we are not...Soon we forget who we really are, and we start to live our images.<sup>2</sup>

Up until a year ago you not only believed, but were also living your life as if, you were actually society's image of a woman. This image was created in order to train women to live in the past. However, just as this image doesn't reflect who women are today, it didn't reflect who they were in the past either. It was simply a role women played in order to get their reward—society's approval and men's financial support.

We train people how to think and behave through punishment and reward instead of teaching the natural consequences of behavior. Therefore, often when the punishments and rewards are gone so is the behavior. The past behaviors of women resulted from their desire to receive certain rewards and to avoid certain punishments. Now that those punishments are gone and women no longer need the rewards, they've stopped the behaviors. Today, women need to learn the natural consequences of cheating—the sequence of events that occur after cheating on their partners. Limbo is simply one of those consequences.

Unfortunately, the false image that both men and women hold regarding female sexuality leads to inappropriate actions on the part of both genders. Women respond inappropriately to their sexual impulses by cheating on their husbands, and then men respond inappropriately to their wives' cheating by kissing their asses. Since the husbands respond inappropriately to the situation, they

receive inappropriate responses from their wives. Instead of being remorseful, the wives will often behave self-righteously or as though entitled to cheat. The husbands are often surprised by their wives' lack of remorse over cheating, but they only lack remorse for cheating because their husbands lacked intolerance for their cheating. This domino effect results from the false images both genders have about women.

So you see, you and your husband have a similar problem. Both of you are reluctant to let go of your image. Your situation has gotten to this point because both of you are trying to keep your image intact.

In order for a couple's marriage to survive this situation, both the husband and wife must break their attachment to the wife's image. You took the first inappropriate action by cheating on your husband. Your husband took the second inappropriate action by allowing your cold and distant behavior to go on without demanding an explanation. You took the third inappropriate action by making the decision to continue cheating, and your husband took the fourth inappropriate action when he agreed to leave the family home. As you can clearly see, one inappropriate action leads to another.

A man's reaction to his wife's cheating will often determine whether or not she stops cheating and also whether she stays in the marriage. Let me give you an example. Recently, a friend asked me to talk to one of her male friends who had just caught his wife in bed with another man the week before. The man told me that he had already told his wife that he was committed to their marriage. He asked me what he should do, because he loved his wife and wanted to work things out with her. I explained that he wasn't really committed to his wife, but that his desire to work things out was a direct result of his *emotional dependency* on her. If he hadn't been emotionally dependent on her, his immediate response to catching his wife in bed with another man would have been very different.

In fact, he responded to his wife's cheating in the same way women used to respond to their husbands' cheating. Men overlook their wives' cheating because they are *emotionally dependant* on them but claim that it is due to love. Not to mention the fact that many men also fear financial consequences and losing access to their children. Likewise, in the past, women overlooked their hus-

bands' cheating because they were *financially dependant* upon them. However, women didn't usually give financial reasons for staying with their husbands; instead they claimed they were staying because they loved them.

Just like men in the past continued to cheat on or abuse their wives after the wives overlooked their behavior, today's women continue to cheat on or abuse their husbands because their husbands allow them to.

Now, let me give you an example of a man who gave an appropriate response to his wife's cheating. Last week I received an email from a man who will probably end up staying married. This particular man realized that it was *he* who had a decision to make after finding out that his wife had cheated. After finding an email that she had sent to another man, he confronted her and demanded answers. Unlike many men, he wasn't afraid of his wife leaving him, so he wasn't interested in getting only the answers he wanted to hear. He wanted to know what was really going on and he wasn't going to buy any of her excuses.

He contacted me several weeks after he had found the email. He said he was still not sure whether or not he was going to stay with his wife and had made her aware of that fact. She had been having an affair for eight months and the email indicated that she was very much in love with the other man. Yet, from the moment he confronted her she began to look at him and act toward him like she did when they were dating. He also mentioned that she, after years of disinterest in sex, was now trying to give him oral sex every day. She obviously knew that she had to put all of her effort into keeping her husband and was doing just that. He was not only unwilling to overlook his wife's cheating, but he was not going to fool himself into believing that everything could go back to normal either. He understood that he couldn't just forgive her and go back to the same life they had. He also knew that if he was going to stay married, their relationship would have to change, because he now understood that he didn't really know *her*, he only knew *her image*. Tolle explains this very clearly in *A New Earth*. He says,

A range of conditioned patterns of behavior come into effect between two human beings that determine the nature of the interaction. Instead of human beings, conceptual mental



images are interacting with each other. The more identified people are with their respective roles, the more inauthentic the relationships become. You have a mental image not only of who the other person is, but also of who you are, especially in relation to the person you are interacting with. So *you* are not relating to that person at all, but who you think you are is relating to who you think the other person is and vice versa. The conceptual image your mind has made of yourself is relating to its own creation, which is the conceptual image it has made of the other person. The other person's mind has probably done the same, so every egoic interaction between two people is in reality the interaction between four conceptual mind-made identities that are ultimately fictitious. It is therefore not surprising there is so much conflict in relationships. There *is* no true relationship.<sup>3</sup>

This is why infidelity can lead to a more satisfying and fulfilling relationship. Infidelity usually shatters the previous image of the cheating partner. Just as a celebrity may find it false and unsatisfying to be in a relationship with someone who is only in love with an image, average people often suffer from the same feelings when they believe that their spouse is only in love with their image, too.

When men refuse to take appropriate action in response to their wives' cheating, or other abhorrent behaviors, they are in effect saying, *I don't want to know you, because I'm not in love with you, I'm in love with my image of you. It doesn't matter what you do, because all I want and need is for you to be my security blanket.*

**Yes, that's it exactly. I don't feel like my husband knows me at all or even really wants to know me, for that matter.**

Yes. As I said earlier, when men don't stand up to women, women end up feeling ignored and invisible. Men experienced similar feelings when women didn't stand up to them in the past. Back then, women were willing to put up with almost anything, because they were not nearly as interested in the man as they were in what the man represented—financial security. Likewise, today's men, who are willing to put up with anything in order to hold on to their wives, aren't nearly as interested in the woman they are married to as they are in what the woman represents—emotional security. What this led to in men, and is currently leading to in women, was a disinterest in their spouse...much like you have been experiencing.

### **I understand what you're saying completely.**

Unfortunately, when you were in pursuit of a commitment from your husband you did something similar to what he's doing now. Back then you were much less interested in *who* Brad was than you were in *what* he represented—the fulfillment of your fantasy of happily-ever-after.

### **It's painful to admit it, but it's true.**

In order to fix the problem someone is going to have to take appropriate action. In *Mind-Fullness*, Ellen Langer says:

What seems to happen when we take small steps is that, after the first step, we do not think to question our behavior until, by looking back, we can see how far we've unwittingly come. If we cheat somebody out of 50 cents, what's the big deal the next time of cheating him out of \$1.00, then \$2.00 or \$5.00? And so on until something makes us realize that we've behaved poorly. If we fall into a routine rather than make decisions anew each time, we can get mindlessly seduced into activities we wouldn't engage in otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

As Langer points out, once we “get mindlessly seduced” into behaving inappropriately, something has to happen to make us realize that we're behaving inappropriately. If your husband took the appropriate action and held you accountable for your behavior, you would automatically realize the magnitude of your actions. However, it doesn't appear that your husband is going to do that, so you're going to have to come to that realization yourself. In order to help you get to that realization, I'm going to take you through the first three stages that I described in *Women's Infidelity*, however I want to take you through them from a different perspective. I want you to view these stages as varying stages of limbo: *Limbo I*, *Limbo II*, and *Limbo III*.

Women in *Limbo I* are at a crossroad. Here, they will either begin to grow and develop a deeper relationship with their husbands, or they will stunt their growth with feelings of anger and resentment over not attaining the happily-ever-after feeling they had anticipated. Women in this stage are faced with the dilemma of either taking responsibility for their lives or choosing to view themselves

as victims. If they choose to view themselves as victims they will eventually move into *Limbo II*.

Women in *Limbo II* are women who have cheated on their husbands. Many of these women are in their sexual prime and are unknowingly acting on their sexual impulses. Initially, many of these women are completely guilt-ridden over cheating. Women can easily recommit to their marriages at this level if they forgive themselves. However, forgiving themselves requires taking responsibility for cheating. So, once again, these women are faced with the same dilemma they were faced with in *Limbo I*. They can either take responsibility for their lives and their behavior or they can continue to view themselves as victims. If they choose to view themselves as victims they will eventually move into *Limbo III*.

*Limbo III* is where you are now. In *Limbo III*, women have decided that their affair is too important to let go of, because it provides them with what they believe is missing in their marriage. Additionally, the high they experience helps ease the pain of their guilt so they try to figure out how to have both. Many women in *Limbo III* kid themselves into thinking that they're trying to decide between their husbands and their lovers, but in truth they are trying to maintain the high while holding onto their marriages for as long as they can.

Therefore, women's actions in *Limbo III* usually run completely contrary to what they say. They feign confusion even as they're ending their marriages. They simply don't want to face the facts and take responsibility for their actions. So women in *Limbo III* are still faced with the same dilemma as women in *Limbo I* and *Limbo II*. Although they continue to think they are confused about whether to stay married or get divorced, the real question that needs to be answered at all three levels is, "Do I take responsibility for my life and my behavior, or am I a victim?" Unfortunately, the image that women hold about themselves regarding their innate goodness and naturally monogamous nature often keeps them from answering this question correctly.

**So you think that's what I'm doing? You don't think I'm trying to make a decision about whether or not I want to be married?**

Yes, clearly that's what you're doing. Women in limbo are in a holding pattern and want to stay there. Their primary goal is to

keep things the same, meaning they don't want to end their marriages but they don't want to give up the high either. They want to keep the feeling. They're not looking to change their life situation. However, if they continue with their current affairs (or continue to be open to having affairs) and will not grow and start to develop deeper relationships with their husbands, they will eventually move into *Limbo III*, which is exactly what you have done. Your separation from your husband is still an attempt on your part to keep things as close to the same as possible, because you are unwilling to take responsibility for your life and your behavior.

The manner in which people behave during affairs is very predictable. One of the most interesting things that Gilbert points out in his book is that, although people typically feel the same when they are in similar situations, they persist in believing that they are unique and different from others.<sup>5</sup> If you were to talk to thirty people in your same situation, you would be blown away by the similarities between your own feelings and behaviors and those of the other thirty people.

The overwhelming majority of the emails I receive from people who have read *Women's Infidelity* start out, "It seems as though your book was written about my life." Bearing this in mind, if you really want to make a decision and move forward in your life, we need to discuss the differences between people who have made a decision and people who are in a holding pattern. The most basic difference is this: the people who make a decision are the people who *want* to make a decision. They have finally decided to take responsibility for their lives, they want to put an end to their own pain and stop inflicting pain on others. On the other hand, people who are in a holding pattern are people who want to be there because they are chasing the high.

Again, several times now, you've said that you don't want to end your marriage if your feelings for your boyfriend are not going to stay the same. This statement indicates that you are chasing a feeling—the high—and are not really interested in spending your life with Curt. The fact that you've asked your husband to move out of the house indicates that you desire a life without him. Generally when people are living unconsciously, their behaviors are *ahead* of their thoughts. So whenever people's thoughts and words don't match their behaviors you should pay attention to their behaviors, because

that is where you'll find the truth. I can give you a perfect example of this. Do you remember when we stopped by your cousin's house before we went out to dinner for your birthday?

**Yes.**

I remember that she was trying to decide whether she was going to visit a man she had met who lived out of town. She said several times that she was confused about going to see him and was very concerned at the time because she didn't know whether it was a good idea. Do you remember what she was doing while we were at her house?

**Yes, she was packing.**

Exactly. Her words didn't match her behavior. Her thoughts and words said, "I don't know," but her behavior said, "I'm going." Predictably, she went on the trip. As I said, whenever thoughts and words don't match behavior, pay attention to the behavior because it reveals the truth. Again, your behavior says that you are not interested in living a life with your husband, but it also indicates that you are not necessarily interested in sharing a life with your boyfriend either.

If you want to be sure of what you feel for your boyfriend it is very easy to figure out. In affairs people typically express their feelings openly. They demonstrate strong physical and emotional feelings for one another, but rarely develop concrete or realistic plans for the future.

Affair couples seldom discuss how to change their situations. They don't talk about taking the next step or *moving forward*, although they may commiserate with each other by saying, "I wish we could be together," or "What are we going to do?" The bottom line is, the conversation rarely, if ever, goes further, because neither partner wants it to. However, usually neither partner is willing to admit their reluctance, because then the illusion and the mystery about the relationship's outcome would cease to exist. Once that happens, the relationship itself will end because once we can explain something we can put it away and move on.<sup>6</sup>

The easiest way to end your confusion regarding the affair is to discuss the next step with your affair partner. Most people are

unwilling to do this because they don't want to give up the feeling they're getting from the affair. Affair couples often say that there is no way to change their situation. They cite many reasons for their inability to leave their marriages. But the truth is, at least one of them wants to hold on to the affair feeling, which they recognize would disappear immediately upon ending one or both marriages.

However, the feelings experienced during an affair have nothing to do with whether or not the person wants to spend his or her life with the affair partner. The only way for two people to find out whether or not they want to spend their lives together is to communicate about what type of life each wants to live and to discuss what sharing a life together would entail.

Affair couples who do this show they are sincerely interested in, and serious about, *the possibility of building and sharing a life together*. Affair couples who don't do this are sincerely interested in and serious about *maintaining their feelings* by preserving a fantasy relationship.

So my question to you is, have you and your boyfriend discussed the next step? Have you discussed a plan of action?

**No we haven't discussed what we're going to do yet. I didn't think it was appropriate up to this point, because I hadn't reached any decisions.**

But now you understand that you have already made *many* decisions, right?

**Yes, I do see that, but I still don't think I know what I want. This isn't as easy as you're making it out to be. I have kids!**

I have found that people behave the same way in an affair situation whether they have children or not. In each situation they find a reason to avoid making a decision. Both men and women use their children as excuses for staying in their marriages and also as excuses for the inappropriate ways in which they end their marriages.

More specifically, they use children as excuses to have affairs instead of taking the appropriate actions to either work on, or end, their marriages. Additionally, rejected spouses who don't want to divorce often use their children to shame the departing spouse into

staying. Unfortunately, it is also quite common for them to disparage their partners in front of the children. Likewise, spouses who want to divorce often disparage their rejected spouses in front of the children in attempts to justify their leaving.

The pain and suffering that children experience during marital discord and divorce usually result from the inappropriate ways in which the parents deal with each other, not the fact of the divorce itself. Children become afraid because they easily recognize that their parents are unable to cope with their own problems. The children have difficulty coping because the parents can't cope. So don't use your children as excuses for what you do, because the way you are handling the situation is making it harder on everyone—including your children.

**I don't want to make it harder on them...that's why I'm here. I want you to help me make a decision.**

Because you see this as a monumental decision, you're forgetting everything you know about the decision-making process, so what I'd like to do now is refresh your memory. Let's use a small decision as an example. For instance, let's say that I asked you to lunch and you said yes. The next step would involve deciding where to go for lunch, right?

**Right.**

Let's say I suggested two different restaurants, but neither one sounded very good to you. Instead of saying, "No, I don't want to go to either of those places," you would very likely respond to my suggestions with something like, "Oh, I don't know. I'm not sure where I want to have lunch," or "I don't know what I want." On the other hand, if I made a suggestion that you liked, you would say, "Yes, that sounds great! Let's go there!"

**Yes, you are probably right.**

People say, "I don't know what I want" when they're not thrilled with their options. This is true whether the decision is perceived to have little importance or great importance. That's why I said earlier that if you truly believed your boyfriend was your ticket to happiness you would have walked down that road in a heartbeat. But the fact is, you don't believe he is. On the other hand, your actions

make clear that you've already decided being married to Brad is not something you are interested in either. Your confusion over this has much more to do with what you *think* you should want than what you *do* want.

**My body just went cold when you said that. I hate hearing this. I don't want what you're saying to be true, because if it is true my marriage is over.**

Yes, you're right. The next step after separating is either divorce or reconciliation. And divorce is most certainly guaranteed in your situation, because you've separated from your husband so that you can spend more time with your boyfriend and you're making absolutely no attempt to work on your marriage. Stop kidding yourself. You're in the process of ending your marriage and the fact that you haven't filed for divorce only means that you don't want to face the truth about what you are doing.

**It sounds as though you're telling me to go ahead and file for divorce now, because that's what I'm going to wind up doing eventually.**

No, I'm saying that *you are already unconsciously deciding to divorce*. I'm telling you to wake up *before* it happens, because if you don't you're in for a whole lot more pain. The path that you are on will lead you to a very predictable place. At some point, possibly very soon, your husband is going to close the door to reconciliation, at which point you will lose your fucking mind.

**What? That sounds a little extreme!**

I wish I were exaggerating. The severity of your situation will come crashing down on you like a ton of bricks and for the first time you will see very clearly how you've brought it all upon yourself. Unfortunately, though, it will be too late for you to do anything about it and the pain will be almost too much to bear.

**I don't know what you are telling me to do! Please...tell me what to do!**

I cannot tell you what to do, but I can remind you how to figure it out for yourself. Eventually you'll see that you have known what to do all along. You've just been unwilling to do it.



## Chapter 5

### *Wiggling Their Way Out*

What you need to know up front is this: you must be willing to face the fact that what you *really* want might be different from what you *think* you should want. Determining your real desires isn't difficult if you listen to what your body is telling you. Take a minute to recall something, regardless of how trivial, that you were absolutely sure about. For instance, think of a time you were going to the movie theatre and knew which movie you wanted to see. Remember what it was like to feel no hesitation in making that decision.

#### **Can it be something that involves Curt?**

Absolutely, it can be anything you want.

**Alright, I have something. Several months ago, after deciding that I was finally going to do the right thing and stop seeing Curt, he called and asked if I would see him. I didn't even question whether or not to go, even though I had promised myself that I was not going to see him anymore. I said yes immediately and then went right over to his house.**

So you experienced no hesitation over whether to see him and then you moved toward that experience.

#### **Yes, that's exactly what happened.**

What you experienced was certainty. In that moment you knew exactly what you wanted and you went for it.

Now, I want you to think about a time when you were unsure

about something. But this time, I want you to think of something that has nothing to do with this particular situation.

**I have been torn about this for so long, I don't remember much before that.**

What about going back to school? Weren't you thinking about going back to school at one point?

**Yes. Wow...that seems like a lifetime ago.**

Do you remember if the confusion you experienced over whether or not to go back to school was similar, in any way, to the confusion that you are experiencing now?

**Oh God no...not even close. I've never experienced anything like this before. This has made me feel like there's something wrong with me, like I'm going crazy or something.**

You didn't end up going back to school, did you?

**No, I decided against it.**

How? How did you decide?

**I don't know. I just did.**

I want you to try very hard to remember how you made that decision.

**I think one day I just knew that I didn't want to go back.**

The answer finally just came to you.

**Yes, you could say that. I finally realized it was something I really didn't want to do.**

Do you remember how long you spent thinking about it?

**I probably only seriously considered going back to school for a few weeks before deciding against it.**

Did you think about it every waking moment of every day like you are doing with this decision?

**No, I didn't think about it like that at all. This has completely consumed me.**

You've said that you don't want to make a move until you are certain what you want to do. That means you are waiting for some type of inner knowing-ness, right?

**Yes, that's exactly what I've been waiting for.**

Remembering what it feels like to get an intuitive response will help you a great deal. In the past when you needed to make a decision, you gave whatever you were considering some amount of thought and, at some point, let it go. Then the answer just popped into your head. Or, when the time came to act, you knew what to do in that moment.

Women in your situation only *think* they are waiting for an answer. Actually they are not waiting at all. When you are waiting for an answer about what action to take, you wait, you don't act. You didn't enroll in school and start going to classes *prior* to deciding about school. You waited for the answer to your question and then acted.

Yet you are doing the exact opposite here. You are acting while pretending you are waiting for an answer. The truth is, you have received many answers along the way. Like many women, you have chosen to ignore the answers because you didn't like them. For instance, when you initially started feeling attracted to your boyfriend I'm sure you received several signals indicating that you needed to stop what you were doing, but ignored them.

**You mean my guilt?**

Yes, your guilt was an obvious sign. Your body is constantly giving you information about whether you're heading in the right direction. When you don't listen to, and heed, these signals, your life will become chaotic. In fact, the circumstances in your life reflect how well you've been listening to those inner signals.

**It still sounds like you're telling me that I should stop seeing Curt and go back to my husband.**

Sondra, how many times in your life have you started a serious relationship with a new man while you were already in a serious, committed relationship with someone else?

**This isn't a pattern for me, if that's what you're asking. I was seeing someone when I met Brad, but I stopped seeing him right afterward.**

And that's exactly my point! You didn't wonder about what cheating would do to your relationship or what cheating means. You knew you had a decision to make and you made it. Your thoughts and behaviors have created very predictable results. You've had numerous opportunities to turn this around, yet you haven't taken any of them. There have been many times along the way when you could have either ended your affair with Curt or ended your marriage. Instead you've chosen to do neither, which should tell you something.

**What are you saying? Are you saying that I don't really want to be with either of them?**

Well, let's go back to the lunch analogy again. You've been given two choices for lunch and neither of them sounds great to you because you haven't said, "Yes, let's go there," to either of them.

I'm sorry if what I'm about to say hurts, but the truth is, you're kidding yourself if you think you're dragging this out because of your big heart and kind nature. In actuality, you're ending your marriage to Brad in the same passive-aggressive manner in which you pursued getting married to him.

Back then you believed that your behavior resulted from your loving nature and now you're fooling yourself into believing the same thing, even though what you are doing to yourself (and everyone else involved) is the most painful thing you can do to another person. You had your husband move out of the house because you're involved with someone else and have been for more than a year. Yet you continue to present yourself as a confused woman in order to be viewed in the best possible light.

You know you don't want to be with your husband anymore, but you feel guilty about it. The reason you feel so guilty is that you haven't even given him a chance to make you happy. The reason you

haven't given him a chance is that you already know the feelings you experienced when you were dating and marrying him had nothing to do with him or the quality of your relationship. Your feelings were the result of your attraction to him and the excitement you felt over trying to catch and marry him as well as the excitement you felt over the idea of marriage in general.

Many women pretend that they are confused, or that they are trying to make their marriages work. Some even attend marriage counseling with their husbands, but it's all a charade. These women have already decided that their husbands *can't* make them happy, therefore they refuse to let them try.

When you initially called me to talk about this, you mentioned a woman at work who was also having an affair. You said she told you that it would be easier for her to handle if her husband were killed in an accident than it would be to get a divorce. You were horrified by what she said but understood how she felt. As horrible as it is, I've heard several women say the same thing.

Women who feel this way are in effect saying, "I would rather have my husband die than take responsibility for my own life and choices." What I find interesting is that women can feel this way and still feign confusion over the future of their marriages. I've never heard a woman say, "It would be easier if my lover were killed in an accident," or even, "It would be easier if *either* my husband or my lover were killed in an accident." So how can any woman who feels this way say that she is confused about what she wants?

Obviously, you didn't want the life you had. But instead of taking responsibility and trying to improve your life, you decided to let it slowly unravel. All of this time you've wished that you would one day want what you used to want...but the fact is you just don't want it.

You are experiencing all of this pain because deep down you already know what I'm telling you. You haven't been trying to figure out if you want to stay married to Brad. You've been trying to figure out how you are going to *get out of* being married to Brad.

**I can't stop crying. Everything you just said is true, but I don't want it to be. I want to believe that someday I will stop feeling like this.**

I know you do. Many women say that they wish they felt differently, without realizing that they wouldn't need to wish that they wanted something unless they *didn't want* it to begin with. Right now you don't want what you feel you *should* want and that's causing you a lot of pain. But it would be much more beneficial at this point to stop hoping your feelings will change and instead face the truth about what your feelings *are*.

**What you're telling me is that my marriage is over.**

I can't predict the future so I cannot answer that question.

**I know you can't predict the future, but please don't hold back what you think. I want your opinion.**

Okay. In my opinion, yes, your marriage is over. What you and Brad are experiencing is the long, painful and drawn out process of ending a marriage. It's extremely common for people to end their marriages this way, so common in fact that everyone should have a step-by-step guide describing the very predictable process in detail.

Marriages that get to *Limbo III* are very difficult to rebuild because, as with everything else, there is a point of no return. And in my opinion you've reached that point. When someone has an affair, whether physical, emotional, or both, there are consequences. The problem is, we don't teach what those consequences are, we simply use shame to convince people not to have affairs.

Had you known that every single thing you've experienced so far was completely and utterly predictable you wouldn't have gotten to where you are now. You would have understood the sequence of events that are sure to follow once you step outside of your marriage. You would have known that when you cheat it's natural to feel madly "in love" and to experience intense sexual desire for the person with whom you are cheating.

You would have known that it is natural to slip into a long and painful state of limbo where you are constantly weighing the differences between your spouse and your lover with the hope of making a decision. You would also have known that a decision would most likely never be reached because trying to compare a spouse with an affair partner is like trying to compare a TV with a refrigerator.

Each provides something entirely different from the other, thereby making comparisons completely ineffective.

Finally, you would have known that the demise of your marriage was inevitable if you fooled yourself into thinking that you were waiting for an answer while simultaneously engaging in the affair.

So, at this point you have two options. The first option is to keep doing what you are doing until your husband meets someone else, at which time I can almost guarantee that you will want him back. In fact, you will probably start pining for him like you've been pining for your lover. You will probably also experience a tremendous amount of self-hatred, because you will realize that you have brought all of this on yourself. However, if at any point your husband falls for your pleas to reconcile, you will most likely lose interest in him immediately and start pining for your lover once again.

### **Do you really think that will happen?**

Yes, it's all very predictable. You obviously believe it too, otherwise you wouldn't be treating your husband so cruelly and causing him so much pain. You obviously realize that through all of this you've been in complete control of him. His fear of losing you has allowed you to manipulate him at every turn. However, what you've failed to realize is that your husband has that same potential to control you, because *you are both* in limbo now.

Your indecision has led him into a state of indecision. Limbo is an unconscious state. When people are in limbo they believe they have no control over their feelings, which is why their feelings can be so easily manipulated. This is why so many women who have zero interest in their husbands miraculously want their husbands back when their husbands begin to move on or meet someone else. Like children, they declare, "That's mine," because they don't want anyone else to play with their toy even though they have no interest in playing with it themselves.

At this point, I strongly recommend that you stop pretending you have no control over your behavior. Everything that's happening in your life right now is a direct result of your behavior. At any time along the way you could have stopped and dealt with the consequences of your actions. Regardless of what you think, you're not going to bypass the pain, so you might as well face the pain and

move through it, instead of slowly poisoning yourself and everyone around you.

**You're telling me to get divorced again, aren't you?**

No, there is a second option which we haven't discussed yet: telling your husband the truth. I recommend you do this. If you do, for the first time since this whole mess started, you will be thrust back into reality, which means you will finally be able to deal with the real problem instead of your imaginary fears. If you tell your husband the truth you'll come back into your life in the present moment and will know what to do in that moment.

**Do you really think so?**

In my opinion, resolving *Limbo III* requires truth. Otherwise, be prepared for your marriage to end in the manner that I described a moment ago. You can save yourself a lot of unnecessary pain if you choose to go forward handling this situation with integrity.

**How can I tell my husband something like this? Especially when he thinks I'm the Virgin Mary and that I walk on water?**

You just tell him. You don't really want your husband to think that you are something you are not anyway. In fact, his inaccurate perception of you is what you find so unappealing about him. It's also responsible for how distant you feel.

**If I tell Brad everything, do you think that I'll want him back?**

There is no way to know until you do it. But you *will* break out of limbo, because it is only an imaginary experience that has nothing to do with reality. Let me give you an example that will help you understand this better. Let's say that I gave your eight-year-old son a new toy and, after he'd played with it for a few minutes, told him that the only way he could keep the new toy was to give me one of his favorite toys in return. If I then demanded that he make his decision immediately, do you think he could?

**I'm sure he could.**

Yes, I'm sure he could too. And I'm sure he would recover quite quickly from the loss of either toy. However, what if I gave him another choice? What if I gave him the option of making a deci-



sion now or at the end of thirty days? Which option do you think he would choose?

**He would wait until the end of thirty days so that he could play with both toys.**

Right. He would assume that by waiting he would postpone the feelings of loss that naturally ensue after giving something up. He would also believe that he might be able to bypass the pain of loss completely, instead of merely postponing it, because he would assume that by the end of the month he would know with certainty which toy he wants. Does this sound familiar?

**Yes, I know exactly where you're going...**

Needless to say, your son would spend the entire month trying to imagine not only his future pleasure with each toy, but also his future sadness over the potential loss of each toy. I'm using this analogy so you can see that your son's future happiness would not be contingent upon which toy he chose. Unfortunately, though, the situation I described would automatically cause him to become preoccupied and consequently unhappy during the entire decision making process, which in this case would only be a month. Imagine how long he would be unhappy if he had as long as he wanted to decide.

Do you realize that this is the exact situation that you are in? And that, in terms of your future happiness, the choice that you make is irrelevant?

**Why do I find that so hard to believe? How can such a big decision make so little difference?**

You've got two toys, Sondra, and neither one of them is going to make you happy. You can only do that for yourself. If you were forced to choose, you could easily make a decision and your pain would soon be over.



## Chapter 6

### *The Seven Steps to Breaking Out of Limbo*

So far you've been using avoidance as a means to deal with this problem; however, avoidance depletes your energy. For example, if you placed a basket of laundry in the middle of your bathroom floor and left it there for a year, even though you could easily walk around it or step over it, you would lose energy every time you went near the bathroom. Avoidance requires more energy than actually doing what needs to be done, which is why you and your husband are at the point where you no longer have the energy to work on your marriage.

This is why I said that there is a point of no return, or a tipping point, where salvaging a marriage is no longer possible. In my opinion that tipping point occurs if problems are not acknowledged and in the process of being resolved prior to entering *Limbo III*.

**So once again what you're really saying is that I should just go ahead and file for divorce now.**

No, I'm telling you that you are trying to make the *wrong* decision. You are making your decisions out of order and putting the cart before the horse. I've talked to many women who were in therapy at the time we spoke. Several of them told me that their counselors said it was okay for them to keep seeing and talking to their affair partners. I think the counselors said this to avoid creating more desire for the affair by making it off-limits.

However, the truth of the matter is, you will never make a decision by conducting what amounts to nothing more than a taste-test between two men. If you allow yourself an unlimited amount of time to choose, as well as an unlimited amount of tastes, you will cause yourself to become *more*, not less, confused. To be more specific, the way you've been approaching this is actually making it impossible for you to decide.

The relationships you currently have with your husband and boyfriend are largely artificial, because you've primarily been relating to them in your head. You probably spend more time *imagining* your life with these men than you actually spend with either of them. In other words, you've been spending the majority of your time engaging in what I call *emotional masturbation*. You have become addicted to masturbating emotionally because you've been using your imagination to get high, or to get yourself off so to speak. You continue to fool yourself into believing that you are using your imagination to become clear about what you want, but nothing could be further from the truth. You are *living* in your imagination. You've become addicted to this particular form of self-stimulation. Like an individual who is addicted to porn, you would rather jerk yourself off emotionally than experience the real thing.

### **I can't believe you just said that!**

Why? It's the truth, and right now what you really need to do is come back to reality. You need to begin using your imagination as it is intended to be used, to preview an event prior to experiencing it in reality. When we use our imaginations properly we preview events and experiences and then decide if we want to bring them into reality. When we use them improperly we preview the same or similar events and experiences over and over again without ever moving forward. We can either use our imaginations to create, or we can use them to masturbate, and you've been doing the latter.

### **When you put it that way I can see what you mean, but I don't think I like seeing it that way.**

From now on, that's how you need to see it, because otherwise you will continue to waste your time, or more specifically, your life. Right now, misusing your imagination by disrupting the preview-then-decide formula is not only keeping you in limbo, it's what propelled you into limbo in the first place.

You're in limbo now because you are *previewing without deciding*. However, you got into limbo by *deciding without previewing*. When you kissed Curt, you acted without first previewing the possible effects of that action. When we don't preview, it's because we already know that, if we did, we wouldn't take the action that we're getting ready to take. When we act on our impulses, what we're really doing is deciding to act without a preview. People will often give the, "I just wasn't thinking," excuse for their behavior after the fact; however, in actuality they started to think and then *made a decision* to stop thinking. So, again, people choose not to preview when they already know that they are making a bad choice and they are afraid a preview will keep them from acting on a momentary impulse.

In *The Book of Secrets*, Chopra says, "It's important not to make critical decisions when you are in doubt...once you take a direction, you are setting a mechanism in motion that is very hard to reverse."<sup>1</sup>

I initially disagreed with his advice. After watching many women go through the stages in such similar ways, I thought it best that women face the facts and decide to divorce, because the outcome was so predictable. I thought Chopra was wrong when he advised, "don't make a decision when in doubt," because women continue to be doubtful throughout every stage and often even *after* they divorce, so there would never be a good time to act.

I've since come to realize that the beginning of the end of a marriage, in many cases, occurs even before couples get married. From the moment a woman decides not to share her needs with her partner she is setting in motion the mechanism for her relationship's demise. She is making a decision without previewing the possible effects while attributing the effects of not having her needs met to her partner's behavior rather than her own. She then slips into doubt because she fears her needs will continue to go unmet. She mistakenly places the responsibility for fulfilling both her unknown and undisclosed needs on her partner.

Women who keep their needs from their husbands set in motion a predictable chain of events that leads to cheating, confusion, separation and, ultimately, divorce. You originally slipped into doubt when you started to question your husband's ability to figure out your needs. For the last year you've been trying to decide if your boyfriend will be better at guessing your needs than your husband is. Much of

your guilt is due to the fact that you already know that you haven't really given your husband a chance to fulfill your needs. Otherwise, you would be able to walk away from your marriage with a clear conscience. Your guilt isn't over leaving your husband. It's over your unwillingness to take responsibility for the lack of fulfillment in your marriage, your unwillingness to take responsibility for cheating on your husband, and your unwillingness to take responsibility for all the pain that these two decisions have caused.

Your confusion can easily be resolved, but only if you take the necessary next step to resolve it. You must take responsibility for what you've done, otherwise you'll never be able to move forward.

So, we're right back to where we were when we started this conversation. When we first started talking, I told you that you needed to get clear about what you were really doing. In other words, you needed to see that all of these problems are the result of your desire to place responsibility for your behavior on someone else, namely your husband.

When you decide to take responsibility for your behavior, you will finally be able to accept that you can't go back and change what's already happened. You will never be able to go back to the time *before* you cheated. You will never be able to erase the fact that you cheated on your husband. So stop looking for the loophole, because you can't get a cheating annulment. **There is no way to make your cheating "not count" and neither is there a way to make continuing to cheat not count.**

**You've allowed yourself to believe that it's "okay" to keep cheating on your husband as long as you're confused. However, you've only been confused because you've been cheating on your husband.** The answer that women in your situation are looking for is simple, but it's also the answer that they don't want to hear. Many women only want a solution that will allow them to keep cheating on their husbands. Therefore, limbo is the preferred solution for these women.

Women stay in limbo because they believe it will help them accomplish their goals.

1. Staying in limbo allows women to continue cheating because women think as long as they're confused their cheating doesn't count,

2. Staying in limbo allows women the opportunity to grow tired of their affair partners and possibly bypass the discomfort of giving something up,
3. Staying in limbo allows women to slowly destroy their marriages so it doesn't appear that they are responsible for destroying their marriages,
4. Staying in limbo allows women the possibility that they can avoid making a decision because if enough time passes their husbands may decide for them, and
5. Staying in limbo allows women to think that they can bypass the pain of getting divorced.

Most women are surprised to find that they can't seem to accomplish the final goal. They can't avoid or bypass the pain of ending their marriages. No matter how much time passes, taking the final step—getting divorced—nonetheless causes them great pain.

The reason it continues to cause them such pain is that the plan failed. Women try to use limbo to avoid the pain of divorcing their husbands. But if they finally make the decision to divorce and feel pain as a result, then all of the stress they put themselves and their families through will have been for nothing. Women don't want to take responsibility for making the decision to divorce because then they would also have to take responsibility for the manner in which they obtained their divorces.

I've spoken to hundreds of women in the midst of limbo and I've also spoken to many women who have moved through the experience and have come out the other side. What I can tell you is this: some women regret getting divorced and some don't. But almost all regret *how* they went about getting divorced.

Staying in limbo will *never* allow you to accomplish what you think it will. It will not allow you to get out of your marriage unscathed or feeling good about yourself.

As you can see, you've been asking yourself the wrong question all along. The question that you need to answer isn't, "Do I want to stay married or do I want to get divorced?" The only question that you need to answer now, or have ever needed to answer is, "Do I want to get out of limbo?"

**I think I'm finally beginning to understand. I've been acting like a child, haven't I?**

No, you've simply been acting like an individual who lacks perspective.

**Well, tell me what I need to do...and please don't just tell me to stop cheating. I'm going to need more than that. I need to know how to go about doing that.**

In order to stop cheating, you're going to need to understand what cheating means, so let me tell you the actual definition. To cheat means to act dishonestly or unfairly in order to win some profit or advantage.

Cheating has nothing to do with sex. Cheating is about deception. People deceive others in order to gain an advantage. Women use limbo as a means to beat the system—they use it to avoid the consequences of their behavior. So in order to get out of limbo, you have to stop being deceptive. You have to stop pretending you are single, because the fact is—you are married. You and Brad agreed to live as a married couple and up until a year ago you both had an idea or understanding of what that entailed. Then you began to create a different relationship model, but didn't get the consent of your husband. Therefore, you either need to:

- a. Talk to your husband about designing a new relationship model that includes remaining married but living apart and having relationships with other people, or
- b. Talk to your husband about taking the necessary steps to end your marriage, or
- c. Talk to your husband about rebuilding your marriage.

You'll notice that every option involves talking to your husband. However, unlike the past conversations you've had, your next conversation should end with the two of you choosing a course of action. If you choose to rebuild your marriage, all of your thoughts, words and behaviors should align with that goal. You and your husband will both have to fully commit to and engage in the process of rebuilding your relationship.



Likewise, if you choose to end your marriage, all of your thoughts, words and behaviors should be in alignment with that goal. In other words, if what you really want is a divorce, then tell your husband so. End your marriage like an adult, instead of trying to wiggle your way out like a child trying to wiggle his or her way out of doing homework. This is what you have to do if you want to get out of limbo.

If you understand what I've been telling you, then you realize that your first decision isn't about staying married or getting divorced. That would be putting the cart before the horse. The only decision that you need to make right now is, "Do I want to get out of limbo?"

If you choose to continue doing what you are doing, then you need to know that in the end you probably won't wind up with either of these men. People in limbo live in fear and, ironically, that fear brings about the very thing they are trying to avoid. Because limbo is one the most painful experiences to endure, over time you will begin to associate both your husband and boyfriend with pain. Likewise, they will both begin to associate you with pain. In fact, this has probably already started to happen. Right now you're not only killing the love you have for Brad and Curt, you are also killing the love that each of them has for you.

**I can see that...it is already happening. So you believe telling Brad the truth is the only way for me to fix this?**

Well, some women are able to resolve the problem without telling their husbands about their cheating, but only because they recognize that what they're doing is wrong. They don't view ongoing cheating as an option. Therefore, they either don't slip into limbo to begin with, or they don't stay there for very long because they are not searching for justifications.

First you decided to cheat on your husband and then you decided to keep cheating on him. This has led to you being very much involved in a relationship with another man. Thus far you haven't wanted to go through the pain of ending either your marriage or the affair. You've continued to see both men in order to keep your options open. On the few occasions when your husband has made half-hearted attempts to remove himself as an option you've responded by working to win him back. However, your intentions up until this

point have not been to win him back to a committed relationship; they have been to win him back as an option.

Your primary goal through all of this has been to keep both men as options. But as long as you have them as options you will continue to view your husband as your last option. You view your husband as your last option because you know that he loves you and also that he can't just walk away from you unless he divorces you first. Whereas your boyfriend could tell you to get screwed tomorrow and there would be nothing that you could do about it. Therefore, keeping your boyfriend as an option has required more effort than keeping your husband as an option, which is part of the reason you chose to separate.

So again, you are not in limbo because you are unsure about whether you should stay married or get divorced. You are in limbo because you cheated on your husband and instead of taking responsibility for doing something that you believed to be wrong, you chose to change your view about cheating. You now view cheating as an option, at least under certain circumstances. In order to break out of limbo, you have to stop seeing cheating as an option under *any* circumstances.

Just as you've been deceiving your husband, you've also been deceiving yourself. You've allowed yourself to believe that you are handling the situation in this manner because you don't want to hurt your husband. However, **absolutely nothing you are doing right now is being done to lessen your husband's pain. The truth is just the opposite. You are doing everything you can to keep him in pain.** Because as long as he is in pain you know you have power over him and that he is still an option. This is why women experience so much pain after their husbands move on. Their pain stems from knowing that they can no longer cause pain for their husbands, because their husbands have removed themselves as options. And that's what women in limbo are afraid of losing—their options—including the option to cheat.

If you really want to stop hurting your husband you need to give up cheating as an option. After you've given up your option to cheat, then you will be able to decide what to do regarding your marriage.

The moment we accept our fate, regardless of what it is, we can begin to heal. We have a psychological immune system that only

kicks in *after* something happens. In other words, waiting to find out if your wife is going to leave you is much more painful than finding out that your wife has left you.<sup>2</sup> So stop deceiving yourself about why you've been doing this; it hasn't been for your husband's sake. You've only been doing it for *yourself* and it has been at *his* expense.

**All of this is very hard to hear. It is very painful and very difficult to face the truth.**

Yes, it is. However, the good news is, once you *face* the truth you can start *telling* the truth. In fact, once you stop being deceptive you will be able to decide about the future of your marriage. Telling your husband the truth will bring both of you back into the present moment, which is where you need to be to make this decision.

When we are in the present moment we stop living in fear. We are able to make decisions according to our own inner intelligence instead of based on the endless conflicting thoughts continuously running through our heads. These thoughts are nothing more than beliefs, or stored judgments, from past conditioning. Beliefs hinder our ability to take appropriate action, because beliefs don't allow us to see what is right in front of us.

You will automatically begin to become clearer and clearer about what you want when you let go of your beliefs because they have kept you from being honest. The answer to your problem has been right in front of you this whole time, but you've refused to take responsibility, because to do so threatened your self-image.

When you let go of your image, you can take responsibility for your behavior. When you take responsibility for your behavior, you can eliminate cheating as an option. After you eliminate cheating as an option, you can forgive yourself for cheating. These are the steps that you need to take in order to get out of limbo:

1. Let go of your self-image,
2. Take responsibility for what you've done,
3. Eliminate cheating as an option,
4. Forgive yourself,
5. Talk to your husband and don't stop talking until you choose a course of action,

6. Break your attachment to the problem, and
7. Commit fully and start taking action.

We've talked extensively about Steps 1, 2, and 3. Now let's focus on the remaining steps. In order to successfully break out of limbo, you're going to have to forgive yourself. Plenty of information is available to help the spouse who's been cheated on, yet very little information is available to help the spouse who cheated. A lot of relationships end as a result of infidelity, not necessarily because the deceived spouse finds out and can't forgive the behavior, but because the deceiving spouse can't forgive himself or herself. I know you feel a great deal of guilt for cheating on your husband, but you need to start viewing cheating for what it is—a bad choice. It's nothing more and nothing less. You were not "good" prior to cheating on your husband and you're not "bad" now for having cheated.

People like to use the old adage "once a cheater, always a cheater," but that saying merely reflects a judgment intended to deter people from cheating in the first place. So don't buy into that belief about yourself. Who you are today is not who you were yesterday. Likewise, who you are in a burning building is very different from who you are at a picnic. Your circumstances at any given moment can change who you are. Once you understand this about yourself, meaning once you stop believing that you are your self-image, you can begin to live at a level of awareness where choosing your behavior is possible.

In *A Brief History of Everything*, Ken Wilber says, "Evolution is a process of transcend and include."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it would seem that only when an individual includes all aspects of human behavior into his or her existence will he or she be able to transcend a particular behavior. This would certainly explain why the most judgmental and self-righteous among us are often caught with their pants down, so to speak, engaging in the very behavior they so vehemently rail against. They haven't included certain behaviors in their existence and therefore are unable to transcend those behaviors. This also explains why so many women are getting caught with their pants down today. Most women have denied that the seeds of infidelity and many other negative behaviors exist within them, so they have been unable to transcend them.

With your new knowledge, you need to view this experience in your life as a learning experience. You now know that the seeds of infidelity and many other negative behaviors exist within you and now you have the opportunity to transcend those behaviors—you have the opportunity to become a *conscious* choice-maker.

You are not tarnished because of what you've done, Sondra. You made a bad choice; however, no single decision has the potential to define who you are. You haven't lost anything from this experience except the ignorance that allowed you to judge yourself and others. You can now *choose* to be faithful instead of naively or childishly assuming that faithfulness is an inherent part of your makeup. You are empowered now because you have the wisdom and experience to be truly trustworthy.

**Hearing that makes me feel so much better. I have thought of myself as tarnished...it's nice to get a new perspective.**

I'm glad, because it will be impossible for you to be truly loving and giving to the people around you until you forgive yourself. Forgiveness is a crucial step in moving forward.

Now, let's move on to the next step—talking to your husband. You've been trying to make a decision about whether you should stay married or get divorced, which you now realize isn't the first decision that needs to be made. Having an honest conversation with your husband will bring him back into the equation where he belongs. Your husband's reaction to the truth will help you determine what course of action is next. If he is unable to let go of his image of you, then obviously you won't be able to continue to grow if you stay married to him.

In *The Way of The Superior Man*, Deida says, "The whole point of an intimacy is to serve each other in growth and love, hopefully in better ways than we can serve ourselves. Otherwise, why engage in intimacy if your growth and love are served more by living alone? Intimacy is about growing more than you could by yourself, through the art of mutual gifting."<sup>4</sup>

Many women feel they can't grow in their marriages. However, often women feel this way because they never reveal their true selves to their husbands. This is why it's so important to tell your husband the truth about how you really feel. When you tell him the

truth, his reaction will tell you clearly whether your marriage has the potential to be saved.

Some women in limbo already know that they don't want to stay married, but their attachment to the happily-ever-after image prevents them from ending their marriages. These women usually separate from their husband and have little interest in working on their marriage or spending time with their husband. These women have no qualms about letting go of their husband, but still have difficulty getting divorced, because they can't let go of their image of happily-ever-after. If you find that this is the real problem you're experiencing then you need to stop clinging to the picture in your head and let your husband go. It's not fair to keep him hanging on because you want to maintain an image in your head.

Remember, the majority of women with whom I have spoken over the years regret *how* they ended their marriages. So, regardless of your decision, you can save yourself a lot of unnecessary pain in the future if you start handling the situation with integrity now.

During your conversation with your husband, pay close attention to how you are feeling. Try not to get taken over by fear, guilt or sentimentality. In other words, don't confuse fear, guilt or sentimentality with your true feelings about the marriage.

Basically you have three relationship options open to you at this point. As I said before, the two of you can choose to have an open marriage, to divorce, or to rebuild your marriage. Pay close attention to how each relationship option makes you feel. Each will either energize you or deplete your energy. Paying attention to these physical changes in your body will show you the right choice. The right choice will be the option that makes you eager to move forward.

In fact, think back now to how you felt after each conversation with your husband during the past year. Conversations with him left you drained, right?

**Yes, very drained.**

You felt that way because your body was trying to tell you that leaving the problem unresolved was a wrong decision.

Not too long ago, I spoke with a divorced woman. Because of her religious beliefs, she had had a difficult time making the decision

to divorce. Prior to filing for divorce she made one last attempt to reconcile with her husband. However, after making the decision to reconcile she became very ill. She told me in the end it came down to what her body would and would not let her do. So keep in mind during your conversation with your husband that your body will be giving you signals as to which course of action is right for you.

Now let's move on to Step 6: breaking your attachment to the problem. You may find it hard to believe, but you have become attached to this problem. There are two basic reasons for this attachment. The first reason, *addiction to longing*, usually evolves into the second, *addiction to limbo*. Many women are addicted to longing and confuse longing with love. Limbo allows women to remain in a perpetual state of longing similar to the state of longing experienced prior to getting married. When women are in limbo they long for their lovers, they long for their husbands to be different, and they often long to be single, too. Prior to marriage many women long to meet a man, they long for their boyfriends to be different, and they long to get married. Ironically, women are reluctant to take responsibility for their own happiness, because they would have to break their addiction to longing. You simply can't long for things to be different in your life if you know you have the ability to create the life you want.

You see, the reason it's so difficult for women to break out of limbo is that on some level they enjoy the experience. Unfortunately, over time, remaining in limbo only creates another addiction. Because you have remained in limbo for so long, thinking about this problem has actually become a habit for you. In fact, being in limbo has become a part of your identity. Many women simply replace their previous "good girl" image with a "confused woman" image.

Earlier, I explained that the mind is only happy when attention is focused *on* something, because otherwise it has nothing to do. When the mind has nothing to do, it will seek out or create problems. Having this problem has not only given your mind something to do, it has kept you from worrying about other problems as well. As I've mentioned before, prior to getting married and having children, you had specific goals upon which you focused your attention. Once you achieved everything you wanted you became restless, because your mind had nothing to focus on. As a result of living unconsciously, your mind created problems for you.

In *The Power of Now*, Tolle says,

...The mind is a superb instrument if used rightly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive. To put it more accurately, it is not so much that you use your mind wrongly—you usually don't use it at all. It *uses* you...You believe that you *are* your mind. This is the delusion. The instrument has taken you over.<sup>5</sup>

Tolle also says,

The mind unconsciously loves problems because they give you an identity of sorts. This is normal, and it is insane. "Problem" means that you are dwelling on a situation mentally without there being any intention or possibility of taking action now and that you are unconsciously making it part of your sense of self.<sup>6</sup>

This is why so many women continue to think about the problem even after they divorce.

When we first started this conversation, I told you about a woman who continued to think she had a decision to make even while she was standing in court divorcing her husband after having falsely accused him of molesting their daughter. So you see, women often continue thinking about the problem even though the problem no longer exists and has nothing to do with what's actually going on in their lives.

Another woman I interviewed continued to go back and forth in her mind about whether she should get back together with her husband for several years *after* her divorce. She said it eventually dawned on her what she was doing, and when she finally let go of the problem, she felt very scared. She said she felt naked because she didn't know who she was or what to do once she no longer had that problem to think about. The problem had become a security blanket. It was a safe thing to worry about because it was an imaginary problem, yet it occupied her mind. Unfortunately, like many people in limbo, the problem had become a part of her identity. It had also become her excuse for not living.



## Chapter 7

### *Commitment and Purpose*

Well, we're at the last step—Step 7, which is to commit fully and start taking action. I want to talk about these two things separately. First let's talk about commitment. This may surprise you, but contrary to popular belief women are not really the committed sex. It appears men are. Women seek commitment, but that doesn't mean that they are naturally committed themselves. In fact, women are often only partially committed to men. I touched on this briefly in *Women's Infidelity*. I would like to discuss it with you now in detail.

The difference between men and women regarding commitment in intimate relationships appears to be biological. According to Dr. Driscoll, men feel a natural obligation to women. In *The Stronger Sex*, he says:

The common opinion that women are more emotionally dependent than men shows how nature tricks us. A woman wants a higher level of emotional involvement and is readily upset when she does not receive it, thereby appearing more dependent. Yet she is more independent...it is easier for her to leave a relationship and to go on with her life. A typical man is more emotionally dependent...he is less able to leave or to withstand the loss if the woman leaves. The logic of genetic selection accounts for these perplexing traits. The woman who *appears* dependent obligates her mate to stay and provide for her, thus giving her children an advantage. She makes a man feel responsible for her because she could not make it without him—or so it seems. Yet when it is in her

practical interest to leave, her relative independence makes it easier for her to do so than it would be for him. For men, genetic selection works the other way around. The man who *appears* strong and stable gives a woman confidence that he can support her, thereby increasing his chances of mating with her and producing offspring. Yet the sense of obligation that bonds him to his wife and children leaves him with less real independence than she has... some combination of obligation, love, and emotional neediness holds men more strongly in their relationships.<sup>1</sup>

I don't know if you remember, but I also mentioned in *Women's Infidelity* that women seem to fall in love instantly whereas men tend to fall in love over time. However, this is not due to biology; it's due to social conditioning. The fact is, men not only fall in love faster than women, they tend to be more idealistic, generous, and appreciative about love than women.<sup>2</sup>

To put it simply, males tend to think of love as a commitment, whereas females think of love as a feeling.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, females tend to leave their relationships once the feeling is gone. Men often have a hard time understanding how women can be in love with them one day and suddenly out of love with them and in love with someone else the next. However, with women this isn't uncommon at all because feelings come and go.

This helps to explain a great deal. In particular, it explains why men and women avoid dealing with the problems in their relationships. Women believe that men try to avoid dealing with relationship or marital problems, often without recognizing that they avoid it as much as men do. Women simply use avoidance for a different reason than men. Furthermore, women use men's avoidance to excuse their own avoidance.

For example, when a woman tells a man how she feels and the man disregards what she says, women seldom take any *obvious* action. This is one of the main reasons men mistakenly think that their wives are just emotional or that they like to complain. Men don't realize that women only *appear* not to be taking action. Women don't like to end relationships when they still have feelings for men so they wait until their feelings die. However, men have no idea that women do this. On the contrary, men think their wives and girlfriends

actually get over many of the things that they've been complaining about, when in fact the women are just waiting until they no longer care. Women think men are clueless for not "getting" this about them. They think men are clueless for thinking that women will just put up with not getting what they want. In fact, this is often how women get revenge in their relationships—they console themselves with the idea that one day they'll feel nothing.

Many men in your husband's situation think that their wives are going to get over whatever it is that's causing their unhappiness. They think their wives will just do what they've always done: get mad, get over it, and go back to being loving toward them. Most men have no idea that over the years their wives have been letting their feelings die. This is what I meant when I said that women don't tell the whole truth. In actuality it would be more accurate to say that women avoid taking the necessary steps to resolve their relationship problems. Women avoid taking those steps because they are afraid of losing their relationship *prior* to losing their feelings.

Because men view love as a commitment, they often avoid dealing with problems in their relationships in order to *preserve their relationships*. Because women view love as a feeling they often avoid dealing with problems in their relationships in order to *preserve their feelings*. Women know that if their needs go unmet their feelings will eventually go away naturally, so they let their feelings die gradually while they are still in their relationships. This way they can keep the high "in love" feeling for as long as possible, and often this allows them to avoid the pain of ending the relationship altogether.

**Yes, that is exactly what we do. When men don't take our complaints seriously we assume they really don't care about us, so we stay until we couldn't give two shits about them. But then we find out that they really do care and the only reason we didn't know it to begin with was that we never had the guts to stand up to them. By the time we find out, we really don't care anything about them anymore, at least not in the same way. We may still love them, but we have no desire to be with them.**

Exactly. However, as you can clearly see, the problem is due to both parties in the relationship. It isn't any more men's fault than it is women's. This is why women feel so guilty. When their feelings are dead and they no longer care if they lose the relationship, they voice

all of their dissatisfactions. Often it's at that point that they discover their own role in the problem, realizing that had they voiced their desires and stuck to their guns afterward, they could have resolved their relationship problems. Unfortunately, many women are not risk-takers in this respect. The high of being "in love" is too important to them so they won't risk doing anything that might cause them to lose a relationship when they're experiencing those feelings.

For this same reason, women are often unwilling to give up their boyfriends. Many women simply will not do anything to jeopardize the way they are feeling. Consequently, the behaviors of many women in limbo are not only unjustifiable, they are utterly ridiculous. By the same token, though, the responses of men to their wives' behavior are often ridiculous too.

These behaviors make sense when you consider the fact that men view love as a commitment and women view love as a feeling. Unfortunately, women often think men are pathetic for putting up with their behavior. However, when you understand the reasons behind the inaction of men you can see that in many ways it's quite admirable. Often the commitment and obligation men feel toward their wives is not unlike what they feel toward their children.

This natural obligation men feel also makes them less judgmental than women. Driscoll says:

In the face of hardships and shortages, the tendency to be upset and to judge and accuse provides a distinct advantage. The woman who condemns a man for his failings pressures him to work harder and provide more for her. Yes, women are more easily offended than men and more judgmental. See it not as a simple weakness, but as the adaptive asset that it is.<sup>4</sup>

What may once have been an adaptive asset has now become the cause of many problems. As long as women are unaware of their natural tendency to judge men's performance, they will not only continue to be impossible to please, but they will also only be partially committed in their relationships with men.

In *Stumbling on Happiness*, Gilbert gives an example that illustrates how humans behave when they are uncommitted. He says:

Most of us will pay a premium today for the opportunity to change our minds tomorrow...But if keeping our options open has benefits, it also has costs...Committed car owners attend to a car's virtues and overlook its flaws...but the buyer for whom escape is still possible...is likely to evaluate the new car more critically, paying special attention to imperfections as she tries to decide whether to keep it.<sup>5</sup>

This is exactly what's going on in many marriages. Everyone in a woman's life pays a premium so that she has the opportunity to change her mind tomorrow. Due to her lack of commitment, the woman evaluates her husband more critically and pays special attention to his imperfections as she tries to decide whether or not to keep him.

Women's judgmental nature keeps them from happiness, because it keeps them from making a full commitment. Plus, their constant judgment and assessment of men's behaviors drains them emotionally, fooling them into thinking they do a whole lot more than they actually do.<sup>6</sup> To put this into perspective, think about how draining it can be to care for children. It's draining because you have to constantly monitor their behavior. You have to watch what they are doing so they don't hurt themselves. The relief women experience when they separate from their husbands results from dropping their perceived role of wife, which typically includes the constant, albeit unnecessary, judging and monitoring of their husbands' behaviors.

Unfortunately, instead of being fully "in" their relationships, the natural tendency of women to judge men's behavior causes women to always be standing just a little bit outside of their relationships. Although women believe themselves to be naturally committed, in fact they are naturally inclined to judge and assess the behavior of men to determine the man's level of commitment to *them*.<sup>7</sup> As a result, many women are unable to resolve the real problems in their relationships that stem from their own lack of commitment.

Commitment is the first ingredient that is necessary to having a fulfilling relationship. Commitment comes first and everything else follows.<sup>8</sup> In *The Book of Secrets*, Chopra says, "Many relationships end in divorce because of a lack of commitment, but that lack didn't grow over time; it was present from the outset and was never

resolved.”<sup>9</sup> I didn’t understand this initially. I felt that most men and women did enter into their marriages committed. I believed their commitment merely waned over time as a result of unrealistic expectations. However, I now know differently. The mindset of an individual who gives a partial commitment is, “I hope,” or “I’ll try.” The mindset of an individual who gives a full commitment is, “I will.” The dieter who fails to lose weight is the dieter who hopes to lose weight. The smoker who hopes to quit smoking is the smoker who fails to quit smoking. The woman who hopes to stop cheating on her husband is the woman who will continue to cheat on her husband.

Interestingly, people often believe that their inability to stop thinking about their affair partners is an indication that they are supposed to be with their affair partners. However, when I quit smoking the first time, all I thought about were cigarettes, yet I don’t think anyone would see that as an indication that my cigarettes and I were meant to be together.

### **That’s a good point.**

The person who makes a full commitment doesn’t indulge in thoughts that run contrary to the goal they have set out to achieve. For example, when you tried to stop seeing your boyfriend, you allowed yourself to keep thinking and fantasizing about him. As you now know, you are not your thoughts...you are the chooser of your thoughts.

Therefore, you must make a choice and then commit fully. Committing fully means that you will not allow yourself to indulge in thoughts that run contrary to the path you’ve chosen. You must immediately stop the thought process when a thought of that nature enters your head. This is the difference between the person who accomplishes what he or she sets out to accomplish and the person who doesn’t. One does not indulge in thoughts that conflict with his or her desires and the other does. One is fully committed and the other isn’t. One knows that he or she is the only person responsible for the outcome and the other believes that success is contingent upon something outside the self.

Women allow their needs to go unmet in their relationships and marriages because of their lack of commitment. For example, had

you been fully committed to your marriage, you would have made Brad aware of your needs from the very beginning, because you knew if your needs were not met the relationship would eventually deteriorate. This is the primary problem women have in their relationships. Every woman knows from the outset that she will not go on indefinitely without getting what she wants and needs from the relationship. However, most women are only committed to getting a commitment from a man. Then they hope, and wait to see if that man can fulfill their needs. In other words, instead of creating their happiness, most women wait to see if someone else, a chosen man, will create it for them. Yet, it is impossible for someone else to make us happy, and this is why many women find themselves unhappy regardless of the partner they are with or the circumstances they are in.

Interestingly, growing apart is the most common reason women give for wanting to end their marriages. I've found that many women think they've grown while their husbands haven't. Yet they go on to repeat the same pattern in succeeding relationships. They choose the men they want to be with, create the relationships they think they want to have, and then try to wiggle their way out of those relationships by slowly deconstructing what they painstakingly created.

In fact, many women are simply trying to end their marriages in the same way they tried to end their relationships prior to getting married. They are trying to blow off their husbands, thinking that if they are cold and distant long enough, their husbands will eventually take the hint and disappear. However, this method of ending a relationship doesn't work in marriage. Contrary to what some women believe, men are not willing to just walk away from their families.

I sincerely believe that many women do want to grow. In fact, I think growth is a priority for many women today. But the growth women are seeking can't occur until they are willing to accept responsibility for everything in their lives. The problems we experience result from one of two things—our action or our inaction. We are each responsible for our own happiness, because our lives are simply a reflection of *our* choices.

**Everything you are saying makes me feel like I should stay in my marriage. It almost seems like you're saying that women need to just buck up and do what they're supposed to do.**

No, that's not what I'm saying at all.

As I said before, the last step to breaking out of limbo consists of two parts. You have to commit fully and take action. I've described the natural tendencies of women that can hinder them in that regard. But those tendencies amount to only half of the story. People can't stay together if there is no reason to stay together. The majority of people are still getting married with the intention to *stay* married. If staying married were the goal, then at this moment your marriage could be considered a success even though you and your husband live separately and you have a boyfriend. Couples are continuing to get married without having a clear vision or purpose for their lives together; yet purpose is no longer built into marriage because people no longer need to stay together for survival. What this means is that many people have made, and are continuing to make, a commitment to stay together for no reason and to do nothing *forever*.

In the past couples didn't have a choice about whether or not to stay together; they were forced to by circumstance and the need for survival. We glamorize marriages from the past by pretending that people *voluntarily* stayed together, instead of acknowledging that the majority of people didn't have alternatives. In fact, many marriages in the past were not only highly dysfunctional, but highly abusive. So feeling nostalgic for the perfect marriages of the past is like feeling nostalgic for the time when money grew on trees.

Many people see the things happening in relationships today as morality problems, but morality isn't necessarily the issue. The sanctity surrounding marriage was a manifestation of the necessity of marriage. Marriage was necessary for survival—it served a purpose. Today, survival is not contingent upon staying together, so marriages and relationships no longer have a *built-in* purpose. In order to last, today's marriages and relationships must serve a *new* purpose.

In *The Seven Levels of Intimacy*, Matthew Kelly lists ten reasons people don't have great relationships. The first reason on his list is purpose. He says:

Most people meet someone, become infatuated, fall in love, date, marry, without ever taking the time to discuss or explore the purpose of their relationship. As a result, they are constantly disoriented in their relationship, which is always



being driven to and fro by the conflicting and competing winds of individual ego and selfish desires. Our essential purpose is the foundation upon which we build a life filled with passion and purpose.<sup>10</sup>

It's impossible to make a commitment if you don't know what you are committing to. People in limbo often fear recommitting to their marriages, but they also fear getting divorced, because they don't know what to do next. I remember one woman telling me that after spending a long time in limbo she decided to divorce her husband and start a new life with her boyfriend. She said she was ecstatic about having finally made a decision. Less than a month later, she was lying in bed with her boyfriend and out of nowhere she got a sinking feeling in her stomach. She said it dawned on her that, although she had changed relationships, the main problem in her life was still there. She had entered her new relationship with no more direction or purpose than she'd had in her marriage. She knew it was just a matter of time before she would find herself floundering again.

When people enter into marriage without having a clear vision and purpose for their lives together they will, at some point, end up where you are now. In order to fix this situation, you and your husband need to reevaluate your marriage. The two of you may find that you share a similar purpose and vision for your life and relationship. Or, you may find that you don't. When you got married you had no idea what you were committing to, other than staying together and having kids, so your life just followed a very predictable course, eventually leading to stagnation.

So far, you've been trying to choose between your old life with Brad and a new life with Curt. But you don't want your old life, so your old life should not be an option at this point. You need to reassess your marriage to your husband and determine either to rebuild the marriage and start a new life *with* him, or to end the marriage and start a new life *without* him.

This is why I told you several times that you didn't want the life that you had with your husband and at the same time, you don't have any idea what a life with your boyfriend would entail. If you leave your husband and make a commitment to a different man based only on your feelings then you will once again be choosing your old

life which you already know you don't want. The only difference is that this time it would be with a different man.

Today, many people are afraid to enter into a committed relationship because they don't know how to make a relationship last. But that's the very problem. People focus their attention on staying together when they should focus their attention on creating a great relationship instead.

Great relationships foster mutual growth and fulfillment. Great relationships serve to inspire, help and support each partner in discovering and following their passions and in fulfilling both an individual *and* a shared purpose. This is the transition that relationships today are making. The purpose of relationships is changing from survival to mutual growth and fulfillment. Many couples have arrived, and will continue to arrive, at the same relationship crossroads that you now face. The degree of pain and suffering they experience will depend on whether they confront the situation head on or choose to avoid it. Unfortunately, many people are choosing the painful route of avoidance, which means they are choosing to live in limbo instead of moving forward into a more passionate and purposeful life.

You and your husband have many gifts to give to the world and hanging in limbo is only preventing the two of you from giving those gifts. Both of you deserve to reach your full potential and to accomplish what it is that you are meant to do. This is a very solvable problem that is keeping you from living a passionate and purposeful life. Breaking out of limbo isn't difficult to do. In fact, all you need to do is ask yourself one question: "Do I want to break out of limbo?" When your answer to this question is yes, you'll already be 99% of the way there.

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