

➤ **Exercise**

AffairProofing Your Relationship –Part 1 - Individual

Instructions: This is the most difficult exercise I give people – so please be careful with it. It is also one of the most powerful because it cuts to the core of one of the biggest relationship threats: affairs. We used to think that affairs were byproducts of bad relationships. However, this is no longer the current thinking. With the increasing importance of work in our lives, the opportunities for emotional ties outside of primary relationships has increased exponentially. Unfortunately, the damage affairs cause relationships is immeasurable. It destroys trust, self-confidence, and any sense of being a good partner. For this reason, it is of critical importance that couples take 5 steps to ‘Affairproof’ their relationship. In a separate notebook, answer the following questions, you will not be asked to share the answers verbatim with your partner:

- A. What are the rules you have around friends? (eg is it ok to spend time with friends you are attracted to? Is it ok to make new friends your partner does not know about? What wouldn’t be ok?) What makes a friendship different than an emotional affair?
- B. What are the 3 things you need most in your relationship? If you are not getting these in your relationship, where or with whom do you tend to get them fulfilled?
- C. When you start to feel distant in your relationship – what do you do? What are the ways of re-establishing closeness?
- D. Think about the people in your history you’ve been attracted to. Pay special attention to the people who you’ve had great chemistry with (you know this because when you met them your heart went pitter pat). Write their names in your notebook.
 1. How are they similar?
 2. What are the things about their physical appearance which make them attractive?
 3. What are the commonalities of their personality that make them attractive (eg really strong personalities, very sweet personalities)?
 4. How did they treat you? How did they make you feel about yourself?
 5. Now combine that information into one short narrative about the type of person you are probably going to be the most vulnerable to having an affair with.
- E. If you did have an affair, do you think you would tell your partner? Why or why not? Explore your beliefs about why you should or shouldn’t tell your partner (eg is it really protecting them?)

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AffairProofing Your Relationship – Part 2 - Couples

Instructions: After you have written in your own notebook, have a dialogue with your partner about the following questions.

- A. Have a discussion about rules regarding friends and acquaintances. In the space below, write down the rules you come up with. (examples include “If I’m spending time without my partner with someone I’m attracted to, we will always be in public” or “I will only have one drink if I’m with someone of the opposite sex (same sex for gay couples)”

- B. Talk about the three things you need most in this relationship. Which ones are going well and which ones could be improved?

- C. When distance starts to creep into your relationship, what happens? What are the ways in your relationship you have historically come back together? Below, make a list of the things you can do today if the distance creeps in.

- D. OPTIONAL BUT IMPORTANT. I know it is hard, but talk about the type of person you would be most vulnerable to if the relationship is not going well. For the person listening, please be respectful to how difficult this is for your partner.

- E. OPTIONAL BUT IMPORTANT. Distance is a natural part of all relationships. However, if it goes on too long people become very vulnerable to affairs. These may be affairs that aren’t planned out, but happen because of circumstance or opportunity. Affairs also don’t happen all at one time, there is a progression to the intimacy. In the space below, write your plan for what to do when you find your mind wondering to getting your intimate emotional and physical needs met by someone other than your partner (suggestions include “Have a conversation about what you are noticing and if you are not able to deal with it on your own, come back in for a short course of therapy” or “Go on a weeklong vacation that is just the two of us”).