

# Is it gutsy to stay in a marriage after infidelity?

Hilary Clinton was speaking to ABC's Good Morning America this week to promote a book she wrote with her daughter Chelsea 'The Book of Gutsy Women. '

When asked "what was the gutsiest thing Hilary had ever done" she replied "politically running for President and personally making the decision to stay in my marriage with my husband – just getting up every morning and keep going."

Esther Perel whose book 'The State of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity' challenges the stigma of shame we face in choosing to stay with a partner. whereas it used to be choosing to divorce that carried the stigma.

This raises very challenging questions for couples facing issues of infidelity and seems to be what brings more and more couples to couples therapy.

Is it gutsy to stay in a marriage with someone who has cheated on you, or is it cowardly and self destructive to stay with someone who has broken your trust and let you down so very painfully?

Knowing the relationship will never be the same again, does it take more guts to leave a marriage and leave the mess behind you? Or is it more gutsy to stay with a partner when you have been betrayed to try to make sense of what has happened rather than justify ones behaviour.

Although infidelity is still the main reason why couples split up and is the most painful and agonising to go through, it can also be the most incredible turning point in a relationship where a very different relationship can be created and thrive.

Both partners have to make the decision to really work on their relationship there is no simple answer to this horrific situation – to stay can be seen as self defeating and fearful. What message am I giving you by deciding to stay?

Lots of things have to change after an affair. It takes a great deal of courage to admit to being so hurt and betrayed by your partner. Just as it is so shameful for the betrayer to face up to how much hurt and humiliation they have caused.

How do you show contrition? The person who has strayed demonstrates how sorry they are, but after time can get irritated by continually having to show remorse.

This is what psychotherapist Lucy Beresford calls 'The Museum of Hurt.' If the betrayed partner is constantly reminding the betrayer of what they have done, after a while this is doesn't help and perhaps signifies that only one partner is doing some of the work to repair.

Saying sorry is not enough - actions have to speak louder than words and give the message that they are not going to hurt their partner again. There are, however,

people who either find it very difficult to do the work, or are not prepared to put in the amount of time and effort that is required to heal this trauma.

If you are in a long term relationship where there is a lot of care and love, when was the last time you really took time out to really work together to check in with each other, to make time to show real interest and connection? Affairs are very rarely about having more sex or falling in love with someone else. More often they are a commentary on the individual as well as the relationship as it is at this moment in time, where we are and what we have lost or what we feel is missing.

Lucy Beresford in her conversation with Vanessa Feltz on BBC Radio London says that infidelity forces us to look in the mirror and take a long hard look at ourselves. Do I like what I see? Who have I become in this relationship and what do I need to change?

Taking time out to talk to a couples therapist often feels risky for some couples but it can really help to make sense of what has happened to us. It gives us the opportunity to show the responsibility we both take in taking care of ourselves and our relationship and what changes we both need to make. Placing trust in an experienced couples therapist to shine a light on a relationship that has been in hibernation and help you as a couple make decisions whether you can stay together and grow together or address the need to end the relationship. Now that's gutsy!

If you would like to discuss things further or to make an appointment, you can call me on **07976 403741** or **(020) 8959 9528**. Alternatively you can contact me by email: [dawn.kaffel@couplescounselling.com](mailto:dawn.kaffel@couplescounselling.com).

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