

“Out of the Doghouse” Healing Relationship Betrayal

How couples get past the initial stage of shock, blame and trauma that accompanies profound infidelity

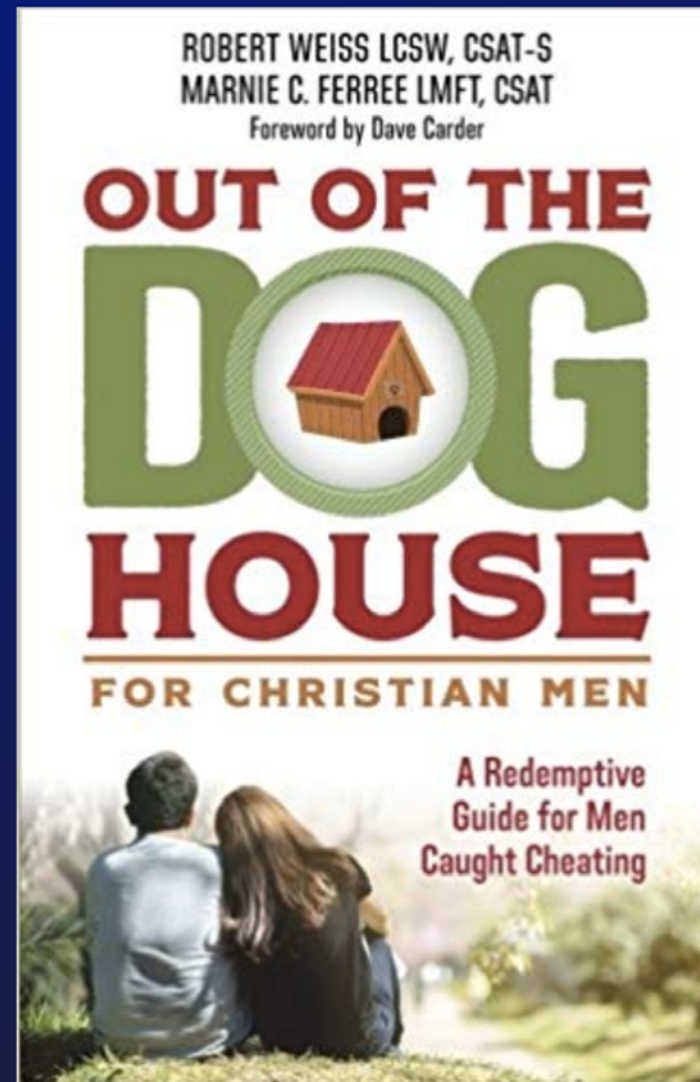
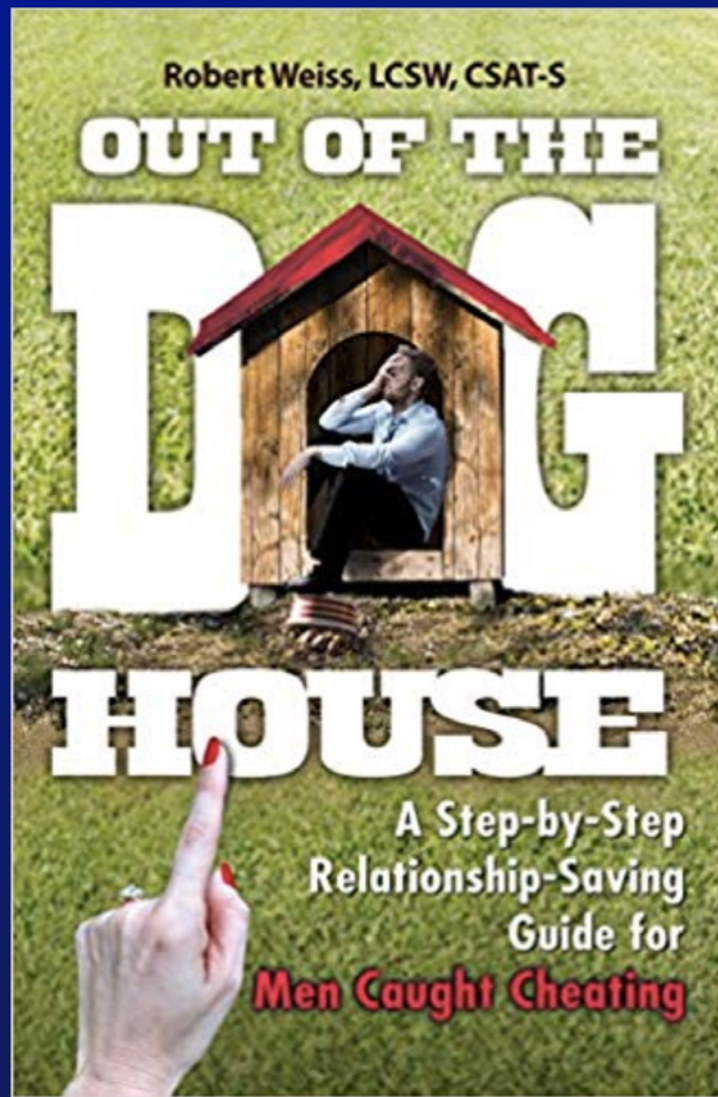
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For Cheating Men seeking to understand and heal the hurt caused by cheating on a female partner

Spousal/Partner Betrayal

In a primary relationship,
active cheating by one partner
results in both betrayal and
trauma for the other.

Initial concern for betrayed spouse = safety

- Physical health - STDs, pregnancy
- Family safety - Children at risk?
- Specific betrayals that might overwhelm or undermine later

Stay or Leave?

We advise: If violence or harm to spouse/partner or family are not present and there remains love, hope and commitment on both parts, give it 6 months to a year.

Considerations for leaving involve:

Social and Family Resources

Finances

Childcare

Healthcare

Commitment to Healing (on both parts)

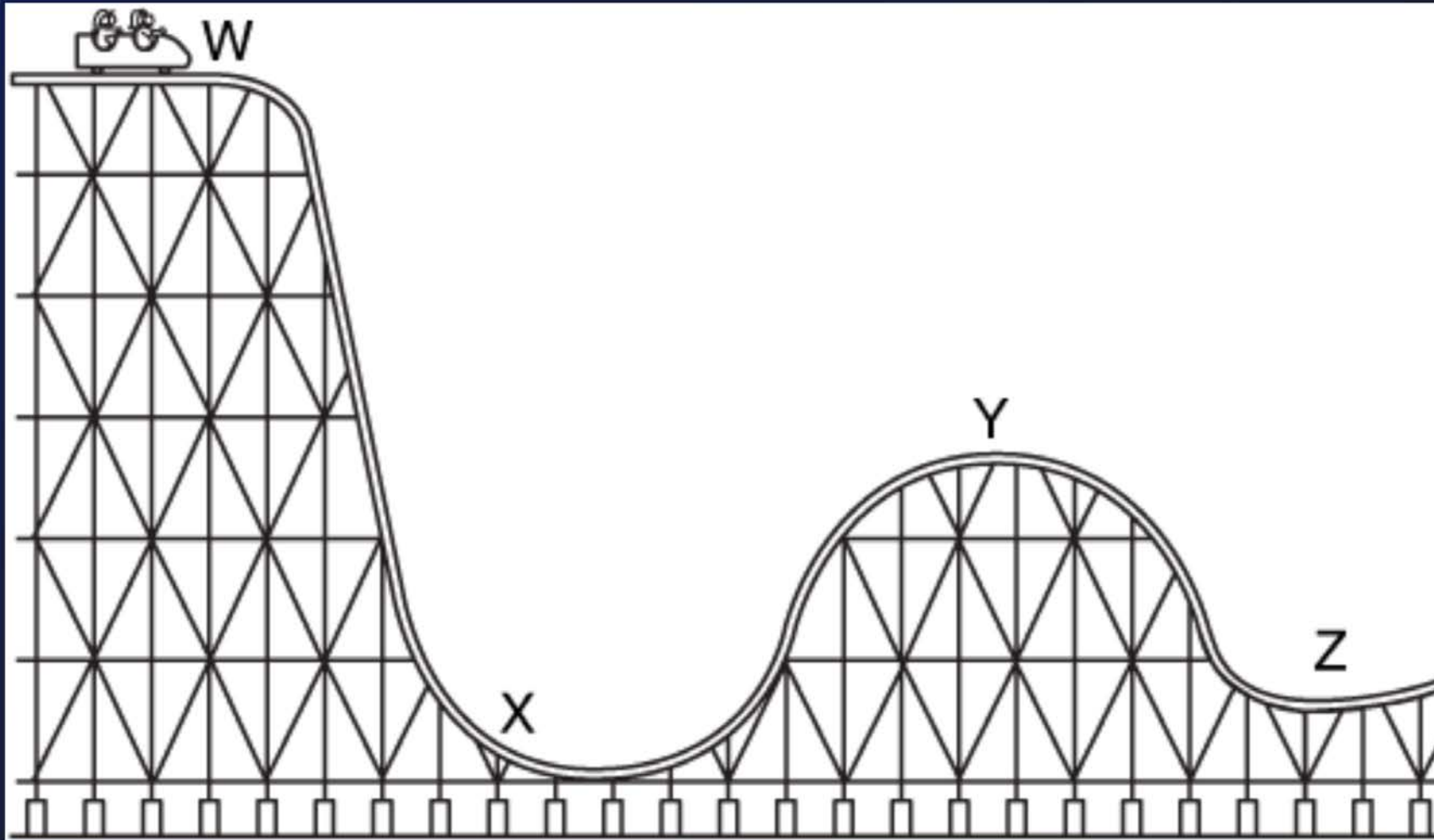
Spouses/partners are often newly introduced to information the cheater has known about for years. In early healing, each partner is in a different emotional place for this very reason.

What is the emotional state of a betrayed spouse?

The betrayed partner's emotional state is a form of trauma where he/she is understandably:

- Fearing further loss and abandonment
- Ashamed, self-hating, self-doubting
- Anxious - easily triggered to previous levels of trauma
- Worried about the future - parenting, finances, separation
- Having intrusive thoughts and images

Welcome to the
*Emotional Rollercoaster, where CRAZY is
the new norm.*



How long can it take to get off this ride?

9-18 months

- Provided there is an active recovery process in place in place *for both*
- Provided the lying and cheating have stopped

At the heart of the spouse's concerns

- ✱ How do I know if this is all there is to know?
- ✱ How will I know if he/she acts out again?
- ✱ Should I stay or go?
- ✱ How is trust re-established?

What emotional *engine* drives this 'coaster'?

Fear - Rage - Hurt - Disappointment - Loss - Grief - Shame

- Spouses are understandably fearful of further loss and abandonment (what else will I learn?)
- Ashamed, self-hating, self (and other) doubting
- Anxious - potential triggering of previous trauma
- Worried about the future - parenting, finances, separation
- Having intrusive thoughts and images, swiftly shifting moods
- Sleep and mood problems
- Overeating, under-eating

What helps spouses get off the Rollercoaster?

- Support & Validation: Consistent, nonjudgmental feedback and availability from friends, family, therapy, etc.
- Education: About the problem, the path to healing, encouragement for her/his boundaries
- Clear boundaries and structure for what is and is not acceptable to her/him going forward
- The Truth
- Creating and leaning into a community of caring women
- Therapy (cause they live with a crazy person...)
- Forgiveness - for themselves

Fatal Attraction reference for time



Typically, how does he BETRAY her right in this scene?

- He is still lying.
- His primary goal is forgiveness for him, NOW.
- He takes a passive (little boy) role.
- He has no sense of what he has brought into his home - the hurt, the harm, the fear, the uncertainty.

Partial Truths

It is tempting for an unfaithful partner to attempt damage control by initially revealing only some information, or none at all.

A majority of cheaters (58.7%) and partners (69.7%) reported that there had been more than one major disclosure (Corley & Schneider, 2002).

This is a nightmare for the spouse.

What is disclosure?

- ✱ **When the keeper of secrets reveals the truth**
- ✱ **It's not an apology**
- ✱ **It's not a plea for forgiveness**
- ✱ **It's not a bargaining chip**

Why Disclose Secrets?

- It's the road to intimacy.
- Secrecy is a powerful intoxicant. Healing means no more "double life".
- Reduces the cheater's shame which can often fuel relapse .
- Allows an adult-to-adult relationship on an equal basis.
- Empowers the spouse/partner with truth while helping them to feel less *crazy*.
- Gives the spouse/partner the ability to make healthy choices based in fact.
- Introduces potential for genuine intimacy.

Reactivity by a cheated-on spouse can sound like this...

- Expecting the cheater to be 100 % emotionally available now with no emotional unavailability - YOU OWE ME.
- Not allowing the cheater a learning curve toward better communication, emotional availability, empathy, etc.
- Questioning erections, inner thoughts, looks and fantasy - A SIGN!
- Dismissing a partner's natural need for solitude, reflection, healthy self-care (meetings, therapy groups, etc).
- Demanding the cheater now meet all of the spouse's needs as soon as they occur.
- **Physical or verbal abuse - This is unacceptable.**

**Welcome to the Doghouse! You've earned
your spot**



Cheater Attitude Problems

- The problem is that people who have been cheating are used to living in a world where they perceive they have control (especially over the truth).
- By “giving-in” to going to therapy, support groups, workshops, disclosure, etc., they, in effect, feel like they are giving up control to their spouse.
- They express this as “being enough,” as in “can you get off my back now” kind-of enough.

What does it mean to be “In the Doghouse” for someone who has cheated?

- 1) To listen and reflect rather than react
- 2) To listen with context of what has happened in mind
- 3) To be non-defensive, even if you have to bite your lip
- 4) To be grateful and express humility
- 5) To not assume your partner will see your point or understand
- 6) To not expect a **gold star** for meeting minimum relationship requirements
- 7) To find other recovering people to meet healthy needs and not *demand* them of the spouse (now)

How to remain in the
Doghouse? “Poor me”



What happens now?

- The original trust in the relationship is gone forever and cannot be regained.
- The partner is in a trauma state and cannot move forward without first working through the trauma.
- The cheating person destroyed the foundation of trust in the relationship and is therefore no longer an equal in the relationship.
- The cheating person is responsible for building a new foundation of trust, which is how they regain equality in the relationship.
- The relationship must be put in a 'safe harbor' during the course of the recovery process (both agree to stay together).
- During this safety period - both spouses advised to place their primary emotional needs onto peers, support groups, therapy, and not their spouse.
- Put sex on hold until trust is restored.
- Trust is key now, thus the cheater must demonstrate trustworthiness.

How is Trust Regained? Hard, Consistent Work!

Trust is restored over time through...

- Reliable and consistent actions (not words)
- Fearless truth-telling - even when facing disapproval
- Keeping and meeting commitments!
- Acting as a full adult contributing family member
- Patience, empathy & understanding of the spouse's anger and hurt
- Healthy boundaries and self-care

The Trust Triangle *



* J. GOODMAN AND S. JASON 2012

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