

# Betrayal and Rebuilding Trust

Betrayal between people can take many forms, and most often the first thing we think of is **infidelity**. But betrayal can be any a violation of the trust that one person has placed in another. Some other examples of betrayal may be:

- \* Lying
- \* Revealing too much information to another or a secret
- \* Manipulation
- \* Consistently saying one thing but doing another
- \* Committing a crime
- \* Financial indiscretion
- \* Non-sexual infidelity

We are all imperfect, and sometimes we hurt a person we love. When it is severe enough that you consider it a betrayal, there are steps that you can take to rebuild trust and strengthen your relationship.

The first step is to name the problem as a betrayal and acknowledge that it needs to be healed between you. Once the hurt is acknowledged, it is going to take time and effort for both parties. The actual work that is done and how long it takes it unique to each relationship and how deep the betrayal is. It is best to openly discuss each of the items below to understand which ones are most important to each partner and why, to determine how the two of you will work on rebuilding trust between you. Each of you should utilize [healthy communication skills](#) through this entire process.

**Sincere apology** - the emphasis here is on making your apology sincere, this is easier when you truly understand the pain that has been caused and you wish you had not hurt the other person in this way. When you apologize, express your understanding of the pain that was caused. It is never appropriate to indicate that the betrayed person was at fault; each of us makes the choice to act one way or another and the responsibility for that lies within our self. With each of these included in your apology, it is more likely to be received as sincere.

**Complete confession and disclosure** - It is important for the person who was betrayed to feel like there won't be any "surprises" later when he or she finds out something more that is hurtful. If there is a long history to the betrayal or if it is a deep betrayal between you, you may find it helpful to work with a counselor who is experienced in working on a formal disclosure and/or restitution letter. It is important for the betrayer to work hard to disclose all of the hurtful behavior in an appropriate way. In some cases, there are aspects of the betrayal that should and also should **not** be disclosed, and a counselor can help you accomplish this in the most healthy and helpful way, even though it is a painful process.

**Make restitution** - How restitution looks is going to be unique for each relationship. This may be simply a change in the behavior with the betrayer's acceptance that for a while the person who was betrayed may feel the need to ask a lot of questions or "check up" until trust begins to build. It can help very much for the betrayed person to "catch" the betrayer being trustworthy, without knowing that they are being "checked on." There may be actual acts you discover that you can do that are acts of repentance that are meaningful to the person who was betrayed. The person who was betrayed may need the betrayer to express and understanding of what went wrong, so they both are better able to prevent this from happening again.

**Why do you want to stay in this relationship?** - It will be important for both of you to know and understand why you want to continue this relationship. The reasons may be as simple as you care deeply for each other, have been married a long time, or have children you want to raise together. It can be helpful and healing to reaffirm this commitment to each other. However, a concern with this question is to explore your reasons and also evaluate whether your reasons indicate one person is manipulative, one gains far more than he or she gives, one is giving up too much of his or her self to continue the relationship, or other unhealthy patterns.

**What is the cost of crossing this boundary again?** - To the best of your ability, it should be clear to both of you what would happen to the relationship if this type of betrayal or even this level of betrayal were to happen again.

All of your efforts hopefully lead to **forgiveness**. Forgiveness is good for both of you. It is healing to the relationship. For the betrayer there is of course an element of absolution in being forgiven. For the person betrayed, forgiveness brings a sense of peace and moving forward in life - and to not continue to carry around the weight of what has happened between you. Don't forget that it is important for the betrayer to forgive herself/himself as well.

Another purpose to these steps is that they allow the person who was betrayed to have more of a sense of knowing the betrayer again. Before you can trust someone, you must feel as if you know that person. And once trust is re-established, the emotional intimacy between you can rebuild as well.