

## Healing a Broken Relationship after Betrayal

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### *Easing the Pain and Re-building Trust*

#### For the 'Injured Party'

- Do not blame yourself. It is not your fault. We choose our own actions and are responsible for them.
- Maintain and build trust within yourself. Focus on your resources, and ways you know you will be okay. Remember the obstacles and set-backs you have overcome. Remind yourself that whatever happens you will cope with it. Undertake activities that build your self-esteem and confidence.
- Protect and nurture your emotional well-being. Perform activities that reduce emotional turmoil and build calm. Meditation, relaxation, walks in nature, time with friends and time alone (spent positively not negatively) all help, as well as paying attention to healthy eating, sleeping, exercise and humour.
- See the other person as a whole. What happened is not the whole of who they are. Spend some time reminding yourself of their good qualities and the times together when you felt safe and nurtured.
- Forgiveness is possible. It is not saying the behaviour was okay when it wasn't. It is about releasing negative, constricting emotions and finding emotional 'freedom'. It is possible if you believe it is.
- Give the offender space to mend the relationship. Let him or her in and try to see the best rather than the worst in their efforts to repair the damage. If you reject everything they do, they will eventually burn out and be unable to keep going.
- Communicate honestly. When you are feeling bad, let them know. But also, have times when you focus on the good things in the relationship and put the offense aside. Keep your attention on what is happening right now rather than on something that has been and gone and is in the past.
- While you have the right to expect remorse and pro-active efforts to mend the relationship, don't set impossible standards. If there is an occasional failure, see it only for what it is and don't add something to it which does not really belong. Your partner is human and may be doing their best.

#### For the 'Offender'

- Be 110% sure that you want to keep and mend the relationship. Time for pretending or being deceptive is over. There are to be no conditions – your commitment must be total and unconditional.
- Know that you will have to do most of the work in rebuilding the relationship. You have to re-build the trust that has been broken - and this means re-establishing a firm foundation for the relationship.
- Be totally honest in your communication. Don't fudge or be evasive. Your partner will be able to tell.
- Be compassionate and empathic towards your partner's suffering. It is real, great and deep. Let them know that you care intensely for them, about them and about what they are feeling. Do not criticise them or tell them to 'get over it.' They will in their own time only if you rebuild what has been lost.
- Be pro-active and genuine in thoughtful and romantic gestures. Flowers, gifts, surprises, treats, dates – showing that you know what they like, will help re-start feelings and trust that has been lost. But if your partner is unable to cope with it right now, wait and try again later when some of the hurt has healed.
- Show sorrow and remorse. Don't just say it, show it. Let them know how much you regret what happened. Don't be defensive or make excuses. Take responsibility.
- Be completely open in what you do and say, where you go, who you see etc. Being evasive will create suspicion, so be pro-active to avoid this. If they need to see your phone or diary, don't object. It may be necessary for a while, but not forever. Ensure you have broken off any contacts of any kind with anyone connected with the betrayal. Delete phone messages, email, block numbers if necessary etc.
- The trust you had has been broken. So you need to establish a New Trust. This means agreeing about what that New Trust consists of, including boundaries and expectations. Any promises you make, such as being home by a certain time, must be kept. If something happens to prevent this, ensure you make contact. But first, you must move heaven and earth to keep the arrangement.
- Avoid promises that you cannot keep or have great difficulty keeping. *Do* establish promises that you can and do keep. A broken promise will jeopardise chances of healing the relationship. Promises made and kept will help build a new foundation, essential for the relationship to heal and move into a better future.