

THE TRUST FACTOR

How To Rebuild Trust In
Your Marriage



The Trust Factor

How to Rebuild Trust in Your Marriage

By Tony and Alisa DiLorenzo

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The Trust Factor: How to Rebuild Trust in Your Marriage

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There have been many books written about trust. It's the foundation to any relationship, especially marriage.

Trust can be gained or lost in the small things as well as in the big areas of life. It is something that couples deal with on a regular basis and in so many different ways. There are books on how to trust your spouse financially and how to trust your spouse with your emotional well being. There are books dealing with broken trust in regard to an affair, be it emotional or physical.

There has been a LOT written about trust.

The Trust Factor is different from those books.

The Trust Factor isn't just about some theory on how to trust, and it isn't about what you have to do to rebuild trust. It isn't written by two people who have the perfect marriage. This book is the culmination of our own journey and the thousands of hours that we have spent impacting marriages through our website, podcast, live online events, and other programs as well as coaching couples around the world.

This book was written for you, a couple just like us—two people who have experienced the pain of broken trust (sometimes repeatedly) yet desire to rebuild and have a marriage that is truly extraordinary.

Here's what we know about this process:

- You don't have to live in the past.
- You don't have to carry the weight of your past mistakes around forever.
- You do have to commit to making change.
- You do have to have a desire to make your marriage better tomorrow than it is today.

Throughout this book, we will share how trust has been broken and rebuilt during our 19 years of marriage. We will also share stories from those who have worked with us to rebuild the trust in their marriage.

All names of others have been changed for anonymity. Alisa has primarily written the book, so when you see the word *I*, you can assume it's her speaking to you. When Tony is sharing his thoughts, we will be sure to let you know.

This book is built on the idea that when you take action, you can change not only your circumstances but also your feelings. In fact, we believe that if you want to see a change in how you feel, you need to start doing something different.

Each chapter of *The Trust Factor* will have specific action and reflection exercises to develop who you are. It's not enough to just read the words; you have to get involved in the process. You have to take action!

Our promise to you, our reader, is the same promise that we make to the hundred of thousands that listen to the ONE Extraordinary Marriage Show: We promise to be completely transparent with you, to provide you with specific tools and strategies to transform your marriage, to speak from our heart and to love on you, no matter what.

Love you guys!

Tony and Alisa

Your Safety Is Important

If you are experiencing abuse in any form (emotional, physical, sexual), you need to get help immediately. Putting your trust in the words and promises of the person that is hurting you is dangerous. Can they change? Yes. However, it will take outside help to make that change happen. If this is you, please stop reading this book right now and contact the **National Domestic Violence Helpline** at **800-799-7233** or www.thehotline.org. Know that your computer use can be monitored, so calling may be the best option for you. Please get help now to have a safer tomorrow.

Chapter 1: What's the Big Deal About Trust?



I've been having an affair, hiding money, lying to my spouse, [fill in your own answer] and it's impacted my marriage. What can we do to rebuild the trust?

How long will it take for us to have the trust like we had when we first were married?

Can we really trust each other after all the hurts that we've caused one another?

Trust.

Five little letters that carry an enormous amount of weight in a marriage. When things are good, this is a word that brings joy and security.

I trust him with everything.

I know that I can trust her with our whole lives.

I feel secure.

I feel confident.

On the other hand, when there has been a breach in the relationship, these five little letters bring pain and fear. *Will I ever be able to trust again? Why me? Why us? How am I ever going to be able to deal with this?*

This is an area that is a challenge for couples the world over. At some point in time, in any type of long-term relationship, and especially in a marriage, trust will be broken in some way. Why? Because you are human and so is your spouse; because sometimes your selfish desires are more important than what you know you should be doing.

What does that mean for you? It means you, my friend and reader of this book, are just like the rest of us. Every single person reading this book will have to deal with this dynamic.

Now, it may be over small things like saying you were going to be home at 5 but not leaving the office until 5 and forgetting to call, or it can be “big” things like racking up credit card debt or having an affair. Little things or big things, it really doesn’t matter. Once trust has been broken, it opens the door to your partner doubting your commitment to the relationship and your commitment to them.

This questioning behavior takes energy and emotion, lots of it, to work through, and while you are in that space, it can be hard to move past.

A breach of trust does not have to mean the end of the relationship, but it does mean that there is a journey ahead.

The fact is that once trust has been broken, it takes both of you to rebuild the trust. It takes a commitment to do life differently because what you had been doing isn’t working any more. It requires you to take action to see a change in your marriage. Relationships, especially marriage, involve two people working together to be something better than they would be individually.

What is trust?

This word is tossed around so easily in our society. You say things like:

I trust him.

I trust her.

I trust that it will all be OK.

I trust...

What does this word really mean and why does it matter so much? For the purposes of this book, I did what I do when I’m not sure about something. I Googled it.

According to dictionary.com, TRUST is defined as:

reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence

Reliance ON the integrity, strength, ability of a person. Another word for reliance is dependence or belief. So in the space of marriage, I am talking about *dependence on* or *belief in* the character of your spouse.

Let’s first look at trust in the bigger picture. Often trust is given quite easily, even unconsciously. We are designed to trust. Right after the psychological needs of food, shelter, sleep, water, etc., come the safety needs including trust. One of people’s most basic needs is security, and security comes from being able to trust those we are in relationship with.

Each one of you places your trust in other people and things every day. From the alarm clock that wakes you up to the engineer that designed the building you work in, and from the assembly worker that put your car together to the grocery store that provides you with food, we trust others with our lives and well being all day long. You don't spend time or energy thinking about the possibility of something not working; you trust that it will.

In these cases, trust is freely given with little thought as to what might happen if that trust is broken. Most people do not get into a car thinking, "What if it breaks down?" Most people don't go to the doctor thinking, "I hope he/she doesn't give me bad medical advice." Most people don't think that their financial advisor is going to give them the wrong financial instructions. We give all of these people or entities permission to influence our lives. When something does go wrong, there is often a sense of injustice but then we often place our trust in these sources again.

Those few examples that I just listed are areas where you give trust without even thinking about it. While they do impact you on a daily basis, there is very little, if any, relationship with the people to whom you give your trust.

This is not the case with your spouse.

Trust in Marriage

In your marriage relationship, trust is an intimate exchange with your spouse. It is vulnerability. Trust is choosing to believe in another's character and believing that your partner will choose the marriage over personal or selfish desires. Trust is a factor in each of the different intimacies in your marriage: emotional, physical, financial, spiritual, and recreational. Trust is one of the highest expectations within a relationship. No one marries thinking that at some point in time their spouse is going to make a selfish decision and break their trust. It's as if you hold your spouse to a standard that is simply not human. Why do I say that?

Because in case you haven't noticed, you and your spouse are human. By nature you are selfish imperfect beings.

Just like me, you want what you want.

You want things your way.

Sure, there are times when you sacrifice for others, when you put your spouse's needs ahead of yours. I'm not saying that you're heartless. I'm not saying that you don't do for others. What I am saying is that people in relationships, when feeling stressed, neglected, overwhelmed or bored, can make some lousy decisions—decisions that ultimately lead to a breach of trust. And because of the complexity of the marriage relationship, this particular breach of trust can leave you feeling like your world has ended.

How did you get from there to here?

Do you remember the early stages of your relationship and marriage? The two of you spent hours getting to know each other. You spent hours sharing all different aspects of your lives. During that discovery phase, the giving and receiving of information, the two of you developed a deeper connection and eventually a deeper trust. As you felt safer with one another, you would reveal more of who you are, not just the good parts but the bad, too.

Why did you do this?

Using the working definition of trust from earlier in this chapter, it's because you had confidence in this other person; you were relying on their integrity to treat you with love and respect, to hold your feelings and words as precious treasures. That's what you are giving when you give someone your trust; you are giving away the most precious of gifts and it is a gift that shouldn't be taken lightly.

Unfortunately for many of you reading this book, this has not been the case.

Trust is a gift given when a person feels safe. This idea of safety leading to trust should not be glossed over. You need to feel safe before you give your trust. It's why the "getting to know you" phase of a relationship is so important. It's why moms and dads around the world have said, "Wait, don't rush into things. Get to know each other first." Safety is a critical component of trust.

Will you hold my words in confidence?

Will you guard my heart from danger?

Will you honor me in all that you do?

This is true for both men and women.

It's critical for a marriage that trust be built on both sides of the relationship. It's not just the man making the woman feel safe. It's her making him feel safe as well. As you move past those early stages where the other person seemingly can do no wrong, you start to move into reality, that place where little things and big things can come to light. As the two of you became more comfortable with each other, you start to relax and allow the other to see the real you. Maybe your loved one gets irritated when the waitress brings food to the table that is not super hot (Tony has a thing about hot french fries). Maybe it's in how they talk to those in service professions. Maybe it's in the way that he/she leaves their stuff around (yes, I do have piles of paper in our home). This sense of safety with one another leads to you showing some of the less glamorous sides of your personality.

AND taking each other for granted.

Everyone has done this. As the relationship becomes more lasting, permanent even, you come to expect that this other person is not going anywhere, no matter how you treat them. They believe the same thing about you. Then over time you start to see those circumstances where this other person has not valued the gift of your trust but has chosen selfishness over servanthood. The lies, the selfishness, the “my way” attitude.

That is what a breach of trust is. It is effectively saying, “I am more important than you are. What I want takes precedence over your feelings or your belief in me.”

Does selfishness exist in relationships? Absolutely! And it can exist on low levels without breaking trust. Everyone does this in little ways in relationships, it’s when you buy your favorite brand of ice cream or when you buy a gift for your spouse that you would really like to have yourself. These things are not deal breakers; however, if this is the way a spouse acts all of the time with no consideration of the other person, it can lead you to a situation in which trust is broken.

Trust Does Not Exist in a Vacuum

Over time decisions are made to not honor your vows—the vows you made to cherish one another, to forsake all others. It’s so interesting to me that when trust is broken in a relationship, the person that broke the trust often sees this event as happening in isolation. There is an idea that this is NOT symptomatic of bigger problems in the relationship. Really, it’s no big deal. Except that it is a big deal.

Every time you choose to hurt the one that you love, every time you choose to break trust in little ways or big ways, you damage the foundation of your marriage.

A little crack is easily repairable; a big break is much harder.

I lied about the credit card bill.

I cheated.

I had an emotional affair.

It was just this one time that “it” happened.

I’ve never done “this” before.

Trust does not exist in a vacuum and the buildup to a breach of trust is not an isolated incident. Let’s look at the reasons why.

Trust inherently involves at least two people.

For the sake of this book, let’s talk about the two of you: you and your spouse. Life would be so much simpler if you only had to deal with yourself, but marriage doesn’t work that way. In marriage you have his perceptions, her perceptions, reality, his mood, her mood, and what’s been going on in the relationship. Each one of these things is a factor in how trust is earned,

maintained or even broken. The idea that something exists in a vacuum is the idea that something exists in isolation. You do not live in isolation. Your relationship does not exist in isolation. (Even though sometimes it feels that way.)

For example, I trust Tony to make the deposit at the bank so that there is money in the account to pay the bills. Could I do it myself? Sure, however he said that he was going that way and offered to do it for me. He could make three different decisions at the bank:

- He could cash the check and not tell me about it, keeping the money to spend as he wishes.
- He could open another account in his name only and deposit the check into that account for the purpose of having those monies in his name only.
- He could deposit the check into the joint account as I was expecting him to do.

If I want to be in complete control of every situation, I will do it by myself and ONLY for myself each and every time. However, this is a marriage. I did not get married to be by myself; we do things for one another and with one another. To make my life easier and to demonstrate his love, Tony offers to do things with me and for me. Each time he does what he says, he builds trust. Each time he doesn't, it's like a withdrawal from the trust bank. Some actions are obviously bigger withdrawals.

What you do impacts your spouse.

Every action and every choice impacts the person that you have chosen to spend the rest of your life with. If you make choices that establish guardrails around your marriage and foster trust, you have chosen to grow the trust in your relationship. If you make choices that cross over the lines of trust, you are choosing to break down the trust. Each spouse has a responsibility to not just maintain the trust but to foster the growth of trust.

Do you friend the ex on facebook?

Do you show up when you say you are going to?

Do you say you're handling the bills when really you are shoving them in a drawer?

Do you talk about your spouse behind their back?

These are seemingly little decisions, which in the moment, do not seem like they are really a big deal.

Except that without guardrails in your marriage, each of those decisions has the ability to completely violate the trust in your relationship, to crack your foundation. Marriage is a relationship that requires diligence; it requires intentionality. It is not enough to make it to the wedding day only to coast after. The wedding day is just the beginning.

Trust broken in one area impacts other areas of the marriage as well.

Just like those statements at the beginning of the section, broken trust can bring the entire relationship under scrutiny and can wreak havoc in so many areas. It's like a domino effect: One indiscretion leads to another and on and on.

I saw this in a couple I was coaching. She reached out for help because she discovered her husband was having an affair. The affair came after many years of him feeling neglected due to a focus on work and the young children. Once the affair was discovered, there were lies and secrets all over the place. There was moving out and moving back in and moving out again. It wasn't just the infidelity. This decision to break the trust impacted their identity, their children, their jobs, their sense of security, their lifestyle, and their finances. It took a long time to rebuild their sense of being united and their sense of being on the same team because of all of the hurt on both sides. Broken trust does not just go one way.

Thoughts from Tony

You are at the beginning of this journey.

That's what marriage is—a journey. You are dealing with so much right now and there are times that the path ahead can feel overwhelming. It's just like when I started hiking the Pacific Crest Trail in 2000. In front of me was a journey of 2,658 miles. I was standing at the border of Mexico and California. I knew that I was supposed to end up in Manning Park, British Columbia. What I didn't know was exactly how I was going to get there. Sure I was going to put one foot in front of the other, but really how can you envision all of the ups and downs, both literal and figurative, of a journey of that magnitude.

The same is true of rebuilding the trust in your marriage.

It is an epic journey.

I will share with you what got me through the heat of the desert, the non-stop rain in the Cascades, and the months away from Alisa: I was committed.

I was committed to moving forward every day.

I was committed to the task at hand.

I had made a promise that I was going to complete this trail, and to the best of my abilities I did just that.

I started on April 28 and finished on September 12. My journey took 138 days. I don't know how long your journey will take. I do know that if you commit, if you do the work, if you don't ever give up, just like me, you will make it.

Action Step

This may be the hardest action step in this entire book. Why? Because it's the first one and it's the one that asks you to be "all in." Today you have to commit to this process, you have to commit to changing behavior, you have to commit to your marriage.

It's saying to yourself and to your spouse:

I COMMIT.

Date it, declare it and speak it over your marriage.

Chapter 2: Why Would You Hurt Me? Why Did My Partner Break My Trust?

Trust, it's so important. It's the connection, gift, and treasure in your marriage, so what happens when it's been broken? Questions like these may run through your head:

Why did this happen to me?

Why didn't he/she make different decisions?

Why would someone take this gift and stomp on it?

You can think of a multitude of different reasons why your love might break your trust, and really they all boil down to the same six. This is assuming that there are no mental health issues. If there are mental health issues, please seek advice from a medical professional; this book is not intended to give any medical advice.

I want to be very clear here as you look through each of these reasons. The decision to break trust in your marriage is an INDIVIDUAL decision. No one makes you break the trust of your spouse. Each and every one of you has free will. You have the ability to make decisions that either build up your marriage or tear it down. That being said, both of you contribute to the environment in which something like this can happen.

Here's what I mean by that: I have been working with a wife who discovered last year that her husband was not only addicted to pornography but had also solicited the services of an escort. This is not an uncommon scenario. While obviously devastated at this revelation and what it would mean for their marriage, the wife had a perspective that I don't often see. I'll share her thoughts at the end of this section.

6 Reasons Why Trust Is Broken

Before you can begin to restore, renew and rebuild your foundation, you need to take a look at the reasons why trust is broken. Being aware of these reasons allows you to look at your marriage realistically to start with what YOU can change.

The YOU part is a big deal. It took us a long time to learn this in our own marriage, and I see it in every couple that we work with.

The only person that you can change is YOU.

You cannot make your spouse change their behaviors...

No matter how often you give the silent treatment.

No matter how many ultimatums you issue.

No matter how many discussions you have over the same topic.

It is ultimately the responsibility of both of you involved in the marriage to change your OWN behaviors.

Trust is usually not broken for any one reason but a combination of reasons. It's human nature to want to try and narrow things down to one point. The reality is that we live in a world with a lot of options, with many factors that influence our lives. As you go through each of these, think about or write down which one or two or maybe all 6 are a factor in your own marriage.

Unresolved Pain

Hurts that happened before the two of you were ever together or earlier in your relationship can lead to a breach of trust. When you or your spouse haven't dealt with this pain, it's hard to trust others. It becomes easier to look for a way out instead of ways to stay in the marriage.

- Have you been involved in relationships where you have been hurt in the past?
- Did something happen early in your relationship that you thought was resolved but it really wasn't?
- Are you still holding onto a hurt from your childhood that needs to be worked through so that you can trust your spouse?

Pain from the past can create pain in the future. It's there simmering under the surface, looking for an opportunity to break free. This is the reason why it's so important to get healing in all areas of your life before you get involved with anyone and during your marriage as well.

Choosing to experience healing is choosing to not allow the past to have control over your future.

Lack of Connection

Over time couples can struggle with a breakdown in their connection. This can take the form of less talking, less time together and even less sex. When the two of you aren't connected, it's easy to look outside of the marriage for connection or satisfaction. There is a strong need to satisfy the missing sense of connection or belonging to someone. This can look like an affair, secret shopping, confiding in others, focused hobbies, etc.

We often hear things like:

We have nothing in common anymore.

We don't talk. [see resource below]

We don't spend any time together.

We don't have sex.

If you're looking to break the silence between you and your partner, check out these [6 Easy, Awesome, Lighthearted Prompts to Get Your Partner to Open Up](#)

Client Story

Remember that couple from the beginning of this chapter?

With work and the kids and well, life, they stopped having any kind of connection. They barely talked to one another, they never dated and sex—what's that? Besides the fact that they occupied the same house, they really didn't have any sort of connection. This led both of them down the path of broken trust. The husband sought physical and sexual outlets for his lack of connection with his wife. He did this through pornography and encounters with other women. The wife chose extensive “retail therapy” as her outlet, spending money they didn't have and then playing both “hide the bills” and the credit card shuffle to keep her husband from knowing. They weren't connected to each other so they sought out artificial connections. This became a vicious cycle of both of them feeling less connected and less involved in the marriage.

No one gets married to be by themselves. When you choose not to be connected to your spouse, either physically or emotionally, you open the door for someone or something to create that connection for them, something outside of your marriage.

Boredom

Routines in marriage can be both good and bad. The good part is that certain routines help you function through your day and eliminate the need to always be making decisions. On the flip side, routines can lead to boredom, lack of anticipation and taking each other for granted. You do the same thing, the same way every time. This can be everything from what you have for dinner to where you go on a date to your sexual positions. Often when people get bored, they look for excitement in other places or in other people.

For those of you old enough to remember the Batman television show, it always ended with, “See you next week: Same Bat Time, Same Bat Place.” It was a great way for the viewers to know that the show would be on again the following week. It was a comfortable routine. This is perfect for a television show, but it's not so great for your marriage or your sex life.

Some signs that boredom may be happening in your marriage:

We never do anything different.

We wake up, go to work, have dinner, sit on the couch (computer, tv, phone), go to bed.

Our sex life is the same thing every single time.

We never really talk anymore.

Date night is ALWAYS dinner and movie.

We always talk about the same things.

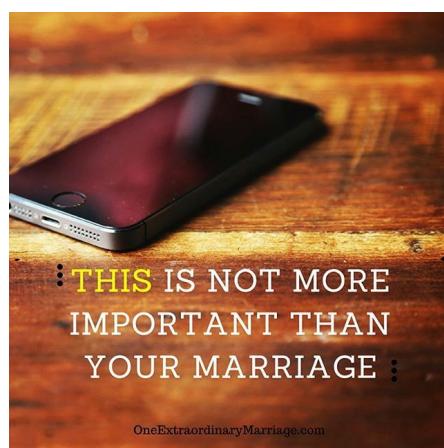
When aspects of your marriage begin to take on that same sense of routine, when there is no excitement or anticipation, when there is nothing to look forward to, boredom sets in and many will look to something or someone else to give them that thrill, that electricity.

This was us. You could tell time by our sex life. Always at night. Always in the dark. Always after the kids were in bed. Always the same position. Why do something that was so routine? Where was the enjoyment? Where was the anticipation?

FREE CHECKLIST: If your bedroom feels more like a fizzle than a spark, use our hit-list of all the top items we've discovered in the last 19 years of marriage to ignite intimacy, connection and comfort in the most important room of all: the bedroom!

GET THE CHECKLIST NOW: [11 Must Have Items in the Bedroom](#)

Feeling Neglected



Most people don't get married saying, "I'm going to ignore my spouse. I'm going to put other people/things ahead of my spouse." Unfortunately, in so many marriages, it happens over time. Every human being has a need to feel valued and desired, especially in a marriage. When other things come first, some will seek out opportunities to feel important or desired. This can manifest itself in affairs both physical and emotional.

The kids come first.

Work comes first.

Friends come first.

Housework comes first.

Everything comes before your spouse.

No one gets married to be at the bottom of the list. No spouse wants to feel like you would rather cuddle with the kids than with them. Or spend time with your friends instead of them. Or stay late at the office. Putting other people or other activities ahead of your marriage is a recipe for disaster.

When we wrote our first book, [*Stripped Down: 13 Keys to Unlocking Intimacy in Your Marriage*](#), we included a chapter called "From the Top Down." This chapter is all about getting your priorities in order. Why is this so important? Because that feeling of being neglected, that feeling of "I don't matter to my spouse" can be avoided when your priorities are in order. Nothing but God comes before your spouse.

Feeling Nostalgic

People tend to look at the past through rose colored glasses, especially when it comes to past relationships. You don't necessarily remember all of the struggles that you had with an ex, especially when you and your spouse are having difficulties now. With the rise in social media, it's easy to have an on-going "relationship" with someone in your past. It has also become a lot easier to connect with and confide in someone who already knows you.

It's so fun to look back and think of all the good times. You get a text, a Facebook message, someone mentions a name and you are skipping down memory lane. This is especially dangerous when your marriage is going through a rough spot; when things aren't going well you look at those past relationships with longing. Honestly, though, if the relationship didn't last then, why would it now?

Client Story

This can happen to both men and women.

In this particular case, a name and a face came up on Facebook. It didn't seem like that big a deal. Just friend them, say hi, and get caught up. Where's the problem?

The problem was that both of these individuals were having challenges in their marriages. Instead of turning towards their respective spouses and dealing with their marital issues, they began to turn towards each other, to remember how good their relationship "used to be." Trust was broken as these two turned toward each other instead of their spouse for emotional intimacy. They rekindled their relationship reminiscing about the past and commiserating about the present.

This reconnection ended up devastating two families as these individuals left their original marriages to be with each other. Trust was broken on many levels, between spouses, between parents and children, amongst extended family. What seemed so harmless in the beginning became a heartbreak to so many.

Lack of Guardrails

Most couples don't start off their marriage saying, "This is how we are going to set up our marriage in regard to friendships, money, telling the truth, etc."

There seems to be this expectation that things will just go the way that they are supposed to. Unfortunately, without expressed guardrails, the ability to step over the line into lies, deception, and secrets is quite easy.

What your spouse doesn't know can hurt your spouse and you.

Speaking of Facebook, what are your guardrails for Facebook friends, text messages, spending money, spending time (meals, business trips, hanging out) with members of the opposite sex? These are not things that are going to just "work themselves out."

Have you or your spouse ever said or thought one of these lines:

- *It's no big deal if I just have a couple of drinks with my co-workers on the business trip.*
- *I've always had best friends of the opposite sex; why does that have to change now that I am married?*
- *I should be able to text whomever I choose.*
- *It's no big deal if I go out to lunch with him or her. We're JUST friends.*

You need to have a plan. Remember the saying...

Fail to plan, plan to fail.

That same thing holds true in your marriage. If the two of you don't have a plan for these types of situations, you are opening yourself up for problems down the road.

As you have been reading through each of these reasons why trust is broken, some felt like they were written just for you; others not so much. Knowing the reasons why trust is broken, allows the two of you, or maybe just you, to look at what is going on in your marriage, to take a long hard look at your involvement in the situation that you find yourself in now.

I know that early on in our marriage our emotional intimacy was not good; that's probably an understatement as it is human nature to minimize the not-so-glamorous sides of our pasts. Anyway, in those early years we had a number of factors working against us: working opposite

shifts, pornography in our marriage, less than stellar communication, and an almost absent sex life.

This led down the road of:

Chat rooms (lack of guardrails)

Sadness and loneliness (feeling neglected)

Sex always in the same way—same time of day, same position. Conversations about the same things (boredom, lack of connection)

Four out of six—this is definitely one of those areas in life where more is NOT better. It played out horribly in our own marriage. On business trips to the East Coast, Tony would try and pick up girls in bars. At home I would try and shop away my loneliness, filling my emptiness with “stuff.” I was looking for things to make me happy, to cope with the pain of disconnectedness. Any one of these reasons would have been and are a problem. When you start stacking them one on the other, it’s a recipe for a trust disaster.

Thoughts from Tony

I wish I had known then what I know now. A lot of you are probably saying these same things to yourself.

If only I had known...

Why didn't anyone tell me?

Why didn't I listen?

Stop.

Stop beating yourself up for what you didn't know or didn't pay attention to. You have this moment to make a change in your marriage. You have this moment to create a new future for the two of you, a healthy future.

Don't get stuck in all of those things from the past. Instead, use them as a tool to move forward. Once you know the reasons why trust is broken, you can begin to make a plan to heal, to change your behaviors.

One of the most important things to know about the trust factor is that each and every one of us possesses the ability to increase our trust factor. You can become that person that you want to be. You can become the husband or wife that your spouse needs.

It's up to you.

Action Steps: Journaling and Self Reflection

Journaling

Every client that I work with is encouraged to journal the process. It doesn't matter if it's one line in your calendar on your phone or three handwritten pages or something in between. What matters is that you take the time to clear out the noise in your head. Scientific research backs up the idea that it is incredibly cathartic to take the thoughts that are swirling in your head, through your body and out through your hand onto the paper where you can see and process them. Sometimes the noise gets so loud that the only way that you can sort out where you are and where you want to go is to get the words out of your head.

**This is not something that you have to do everyday. That being said, choosing to do this exercise everyday will reveal so much about you to yourself. You will see your journey and how far you have come.

Today, choose how you are going to record your journey through *The Trust Factor*. Commit to the minimum number of times that you are going to journal and record your first entry.

Husband:

I will journal times/week.

Wife:

I will journal times week.

I completed my first journal entry.

I completed my first journal entry.

Self Reflection

This is all about being introspective. It's very easy in today's visual culture to always be looking at external forces, to say that this happened because of something that someone else did. The truth is that every person has to take personal responsibility for their actions. However, in order to do that you have to be away from the distractions of life. Yes, this means your phone, your tablet, your computer, your kids, your work. You have to sit and reflect on this life experience, evaluating your role and dreaming of the future.

This week, find two five-minute pockets of time where you can sit and reflect on your situation, specifically the reasons why the trust has been broken in your marriage. Using the six reasons as a guide, identify those areas where you feel that your marriage has been challenged.

Chapter 3: How Can I Hurt You? Let Me Count The Ways

It's unfortunate that when we are dealing with issues of trust, it feels like this famous line, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways", has been re-written to be...

How can I hurt you? Let me count the ways.

Mention the words *broken trust* in marriage and immediately people think of lying, cheating, hiding money. The reality is that there are nine key areas where trust can be broken.

1. not telling the truth
2. physical affairs
3. emotional affairs
4. financial infidelity
5. confiding in friends, family, others about your spouse or your marriage
6. having your priorities out of order (God, spouse, kids, work, other activities)
7. being an absentee parent
8. choosing not to engage in your marriage
9. reconnecting with exes

This is one of the worst lists to type out. No one ever wants to make a list of all of the ways that one spouse can hurt the other. However, by being aware of this list and seeing these different areas spelled out for you, the two of you can begin to uncover what's been happening in your marriage—not just what is on the surface but also what is in the depth of your marriage.

Now, the first couple of areas listed where trust can be broken are blaringly obvious. These are also the areas that most people expect trust to be broken. But what about the rest of this list? Some of you might have trouble with some of the other areas on this list. You might not see these as areas where trust can be broken. The steps in *The Trust Factor* apply to your situation no matter where in your marriage you are dealing with broken trust.



Truth

This is the big one. The reason this gets mentioned first is that all of the other areas where trust can be broken involve some aspect of keeping the truth from your spouse.

"The whole truth and nothing but the truth."

This has been said in every court scene you can remember; yet, in our personal lives there is a tendency to "fudge" things a little bit, or a lot. People lie to protect their spouse, they lie to protect themselves, they lie to protect others. The problem with lying is that the truth always comes out, some way, some how.

Phones get left out, bills come to the house, the other woman or man makes a phone call. Someone sees you.

If you think it won't happen to you, let me share with you the much publicized story of the former head of the CIA, General Petraeus. This man had access to every secret technique, every way of hiding something and still his affair was splashed across headlines around the world.

Do not be fooled into thinking that your lies will never be discovered. If you want to avoid the stress that comes from not telling the truth, don't lie. More importantly if you want to have a relationship, a marriage with a rock solid foundation, choose integrity **ALWAYS**, choose truth over protecting yourself, choose to live a life where you don't have to lie.



Intimacy

Your body is for your spouse alone. Sex with someone else is a big no-no, but so are those lingering hugs, the pat on the arm, a stolen kiss.

If you wouldn't want your spouse to find out that you have done XYZ with someone else, don't do it.

When you enter into the covenant of marriage, you have made a promise to yourself, to your spouse and to God that you will forsake all others. That means that there are no other options for you for your physical needs. Seeking physical satisfaction through anyone or anything else is a breach of trust.

"But Tony and Alisa, my spouse doesn't touch me anymore. I need sex and we've been sexless for so long. I can't remember the last time we hugged, held hands, or kissed."

I get it.

You still don't have permission to seek connection in this way outside of your marriage. You made a covenant with your spouse. Your job is to honor that covenant, to work through and work out whatever the challenges the two of you are facing. It is better to tackle the tough issues in your marriage than to create a monster by having an affair and ruining many people's lives.

Yes, this also refers to solo masturbation for both men AND women and the use of pornography and erotica. Each of these are seeking to have your needs met outside of your marriage. You are not allowing your spouse to meet those needs for you. Satisfying yourself physically without your spouse is not what a marriage is about.

Any time you substitute another person or a fantasy of another person (pornography/erotica/chat rooms/etc.) you are breaking trust in regard to the physical intimacy of your marriage.

Finances

Money.

No one wants to talk about money—how much, how little, what you are spending it on, what you are saving up for. It's all a big secret. Unfortunately, this silence often leads to broken trust. What you don't know or don't talk about can hurt your marriage.

It can be challenging to maintain financial fidelity in the marriage. You want this or that. You keep purchases hidden in the trunk of the car. You split purchases up so that no large dollar amounts show up on the credit card bill. You make excuses about where something came from. A little extra here or there. This won't hurt anything or will it?

The only answer to this question is: YES.

Keeping any type of secret about your finances from your spouse is a breach of trust.

Why?

Because it impacts how the two of you relate to one another. Because it becomes a source of tension in the marriage. Because at the end of the day, you know that you need a certain amount of money to run your household, to provide for one another and for your kids if you have them.

Overspending, secret spending, spending without concern for the household resources, spending on others outside of the marriage—these are all actions that can result in broken trust. The two of you have a finite amount of financial resources, and no matter how much or how little you have, there is a limit at which point there will be no more. Choosing to willfully disregard your financial picture puts your entire relationship in jeopardy. It becomes a security issue; you are threatening the security of your marriage and your family by choosing to destroy your finances. Keeping secrets about this further compounds the difficulty.

If you're looking to break the silence between you and your partner, check out these [6 Easy, Awesome, Lighthearted Prompts to Get Your Partner to Open Up](#)

Client Story: Why are we spending so much money on groceries?

A husband came to us after he had discovered his wife's affair. It took him a while to figure it out because there wasn't any extra spending going on, or was there?

Over a period of time, he noticed that the grocery bill seemed to be getting higher and higher although it didn't seem like they were necessarily eating any more or having more food in the house. When questioned about the grocery spending, his wife would just say that groceries were more expensive or the kids were eating more as they became teenagers.

The truth was not good. Groceries were not getting more expensive. The kids were not eating that much extra food. The reality was that with every shopping trip, the wife was getting cash back—cash that she was using to finance her affair. She discovered that this was an easy way to fund her behavior without having line items show up on credit card statements.

Discovering the financial infidelity led this husband to realize that his marriage had much bigger problems. The trust was broken through actions discovered via the debit card.

Emotional Intimacy

I can't talk to you like I can talk to him.

She gets me.

I can really open up to him/her.

I find myself more and more talking about my marriage, our challenges.

This other person has become my best friend. Nothing has ever happened but I feel like they know me better than my spouse does.

I can tell him/her anything and there's no judgment, no backlash.

When you start turning to another person to meet your emotional needs, when you check out of the emotional side of your marriage, you are breaking the trust, you are breaking your vows.

This is an area that often starts out with little thought that it's going to be a problem. It's having lunch with a co-worker, it's having a "work husband" or "work wife," it's talking to another parent with a kid on the team, it's volunteering together and finding out that you have so much in common.

And then you continue to share. You share your most intimate, emotional self with this other person, shutting out your spouse in the process.

As the emotional dependence on this other person grows, you distance yourself from your spouse, you begin to look at your spouse differently, shutting them out of what is going on with you.

But when I start to talk about an emotional affair, not everyone sees it as a problem. I can't even begin to tell you how many people I have heard refer to their work husband or work wife. It makes me cringe. EVERY. SINGLE. TIME. Or the folks that tell me that they had best friends of the opposite sex prior to getting married and they don't understand why the rules have to change after they get married.

Let me be very clear here.

Having close, very close friends, of the opposite sex, the types of friends that you can and do tell everything to, opens you up to the proverbial slippery slope. One day you're commiserating about the challenges of the job or complaining about the boss. The next day it turns into conversations about the challenges in your married life, how your husband or wife is not meeting your needs or you get the sense that there is a growing drift in your marriage. This person is there to listen to you in ways that you may not be getting at home. They can be encouraging because let's face it, they only have your side of the story.

This encouragement, the listening ear, the shoulder to cry on, and having someone who finally "gets you" makes you wonder what you are doing with that person at home. Why aren't you with someone like this? What starts out as just friendly conversation becomes text messages, phone calls, and getting together to talk. When you start to get that excitement about meeting with this person, when what they think or say matters more to you than what your spouse thinks or says, when you choose to confide in them instead of your spouse, you are breaking trust in your marriage and you are doing harm.

I know this first hand. I worked for a company that was roughly 95% male; on the sales force team, there were only two other women besides me. At lunch time, who was I hanging out with? The guys. Who was I sharing my life challenges with? The guys. Who was telling me about the problems in their relationships? You guessed it, the guys! I was spending more of my waking hours with these guys, specifically two or three of them, than I was with my own husband, especially with my commute. This happened early on in our marriage before we had any guardrails in place, before I knew better, before either of us knew that a situation like this could be a recipe for disaster. Fortunately for us, I got laid off before I crossed any type of physical line, but I can tell you that there were things that I shared with my "friends" that they had absolutely no business knowing.

Priorities

Let's face it, there are a lot of demands on your time making it difficult to put the marriage first.

In our first book, *Stripped Down: 13 Keys to Unlocking Intimacy in your Marriage*, we wrote about how you have to have God at the center of your marriage, then your spouse, then your kids, work and everything else. Unfortunately, this wasn't always the case in our marriage and it probably hasn't been in yours.

No one gets married to be at the bottom of someone else's priority list.

Choosing to put the kids or work or even other activities ahead of your marriage and your spouse is a breach of trust. It is a violation of the promise that you would forsake all others, meaning anything that would draw you away from the relationship.

Now, it is understandable that there are seasons where other things may come before your marriage. It's important though for the foundation to be solid for the two of you to have strategies in place so that you come back to one another.

When one of you is continuously putting work or the kids ahead of the marriage, there is no security there. There is no foundation. The relationship feels fragile and is fragile.

I have done this so many times. It's probably the #1 way in our marriage that trust is broken. In the early years of our marriage, we had no idea of the damage that was being done when we committed ourselves to other "things" outside of our marriage.

There was that one year when I was room mom for both kids in elementary school. At the end of the year, I was running around like crazy to make sure that all of the kids, the teachers and the school were taken care of. Unfortunately, I wasn't giving my marriage the same attention and it all came to a head when Tony said, "No more, this isn't working for us. You care about them and making sure they are happy more than you care about me."

Busted!



Parenting

Kids bring a whole new dimension to marriage and can be one of the easiest ways in which you can see broken trust.

Just like no one expects to get married to be at the bottom of the to-do list, no one chooses to create a child with the expectation that their spouse will be absent in the child's life, effectively forcing them to be a single parent.

Being an absentee parent in this case refers to "choosing" other things or people ahead of your family. It's choosing not to take an active role in your child's life. It's choosing to tell them that you are too busy. It's choosing to let things parent your children instead of your involvement in their lives (yes, I am talking about the electronic babysitter, which I have been known to use).

It's choosing not to provide emotional support or encouragement to your child. It's choosing to not be there for them when they need you the most.

Breaking trust in your parenting impacts ALL of you. Your spouse realizes that family is not important to you. Your children realize that they are not important to you. Just like in the section on trust not existing in a vacuum, your relationship with your family does not exist in a vacuum. Those dominoes getting knocked down can cause harm that goes very deep and takes a LONG time to heal from.

For those of you that have children, the choice not to be an involved parent is another area where one of you can feel that trust has been broken. You don't get married expecting to be by yourself you also don't make a family expecting that you are going to have to be a single parent to your children. Now, I know that there are a lot of reasons why you might find yourself a single parent, what I am specifically referring to here is when one parent CHOOSES not to be involved in the child's life. This doesn't just break the trust of your spouse, but also the trust of the child. You are creating your own legacy by choosing not to teach your kids what trust looks like and how to create it within the family unit.

Spiritual Intimacy

This area of marriage encompasses your prayer life, your faith walk, raising your children in faith and even attending church.

I've heard from too many couples where one spouse promised that they would attend church, they promised that their faith was a priority, they promised that they would raise the kids in the church and then...nothing.

Faith, prayer, and your spiritual life are not little things to be tossed around on a whim. If you are not being completely honest with yourself and your beloved prior to marriage about your intentions, only telling them what you think they want to hear, you are not doing your marriage any favors. In fact you are jeopardizing the very foundation of your marriage

Your spouse has trusted you with their spiritual life as well as their physical life. It's no small matter.

More and more couples want to share their faith with their spouse. They want it to be an active and integral part of their marriage and are marrying only to find that what they thought was the case really isn't what they got.

As in all of these areas that we are discussing, realize that you have an incredible responsibility to your spouse to honor your vows, to maintain the trust that they have given you in each area, including here in spiritual intimacy.

Confidentiality

*You aren't going to believe what my husband/wife said.
Just wait until I tell you what he/she did.*

There is a problem in your marriage when you are talking about your spouse or your marriage, NOT to solve the problem but just to vent, when you are just joining in with the crowd. It's one thing to [seek out the help of a coach](#) or pastor to get help in a particular area of your marriage. It's something we encourage and have done ourselves.

It's a whole other story though when you are just talking about your marriage and sharing the intimate details, you know the ones that I am talking about, the ones where in the back of your head you hope this doesn't get back to him or her.

It's running to your girlfriend or buddies when the two of you have had a fight and saying something like, "You won't believe what he/she just did!"

It's turning to your parents with this same kind of situation and speaking poorly of your spouse or their behavior.

It's posting on social media a status change or some other cryptic relationship update.

This isn't just violating the sacredness of your marriage; it's causing those other people to see your spouse in a completely different way, one that is not so easy to change once the two of you have made up.

Your marriage is YOUR business. I know that due to the rise in reality TV, the tabloid magazines on every grocery checkout, live Twitter feeds on celebrity marriages and the Facebook change of status, it's easy to think that it's no big deal to share what is going on with the two of you.

STOP IT

Your mom, your brother, the friend in the cubicle next to you-they don't need to know the challenges that the two of you are struggling with, or the intimate details of your marriage.

Here's what happens when you talk bad about your spouse to friends and family: they have your back, they go into protective mode and will fight tooth and nail for you. It doesn't matter if you eventually reconcile, fix what was wrong, or simply get over the argument. Once they have heard bad things about your spouse it's hard for them to let that go. And then, it will taint the relationship for a long time to come.

Our Story

This happened to us when I was a senior in college. I was in Indiana at DePauw University and Tony was in Colorado at CU-Boulder. In the spring of my senior year, DePauw offered me a job as an admissions counselor which I had been doing as an intern that whole year.

I was so excited that I called Tony to tell him. When I got him on the phone, he was out celebrating with a class that he had been a TA for and they were at a bar. It was not the best time to share news that I had been offered a job that would keep us apart after graduation.

Tony got upset that I would even consider it and said that he wasn't willing to do another year long distance. I got upset at his reaction and called my parents to vent. I shared the story with my mom, who then shared the story with my dad; yes, this was the game of telephone.

In the end my dad wrote Tony a letter and mailed it to him. The letter was a father's displeasure at the direction my life had gone since meeting Tony. When Tony got the letter, he called me, read it over the phone and I immediately called my parents. I gave my dad an ultimatum: either apologize or don't come to my graduation. My dad did apologize but graduation was very tense.

It took years for my dad and Tony to really get along. It wasn't until after Tony had hiked the Pacific Crest Trail as a fundraiser for the Thalassemia Action Group that things started to soften and then when we had our son, six years into marriage, the ice had thawed. In retrospect I should have better evaluated Tony's reaction and talked to him at another time before dumping on my parents. They really were trying to protect me but it got ugly before it got better.

Other Interests

Please, please, please have other interests outside of your marriage. Your husband or wife CANNOT be everything to you.

That being said it's all about balance.

Get together with your girlfriends.

Go shoot a round of golf.

Take a hike.

Join the PTA.

Volunteer.

Just don't be so busy doing that you forget to be present in your marriage.

All of the things that I mentioned are worthwhile and can be important. The problem begins when they become more important than your marriage. When doing things with and for other people is more important than doing things with and for your spouse you have a problem.

It's a problem where the commitment to the marriage is not there. It's a breach of trust in that your spouse does not feel valued or desired for their role in your life.

Choosing Not to Engage in Your Marriage

This is a continuation of having upside down priorities. If your marriage isn't a priority, you aren't going to engage in building the relationship. Relationships only have two options: growing or dying. Not a single one of you reading this book got married because you wanted to stay in the exact same place for the rest of your life. That isn't to say that you sometimes wish that things would never change however you knew when you married that things weren't going to stay the same forever. So when your priorities are upside down and you make the choice not to engage in the marriage, you are breaking the trust of the one who married you.

You married expecting that the two of you would be partners facing life and its challenges together. You married with the anticipation that this person would have your back, that they wouldn't head in the opposite direction when things got tough or when life didn't work out the way the two of you expected. Think about your actions over the life of your marriage. I'm guessing that you can see those times when you chose not to engage in your marriage, those times when you broke the trust of your marriage vows.

Reconnection With Your Past

Your past...past relationships, past behaviors, past connections. All of these can be dangerous to your marriage now. Your past is part of your past for a reason, it doesn't have a place in your future.

Let's talk about those exes first. There is a reason that you are no longer with an ex, right, I mean the relationship did not work out. The two of you were not compatible. Did you have good times? Sure. Did you feel something for one another? Yep. Did it not work out?

Absolutely.

So when you reconnect for whatever reason—and let's face it, Facebook, Instagram and really all forms of social media make it easy to reconnect or at least virtually snoop on them to see what's going on—you are not doing your current relationship any favors. You are inviting drama

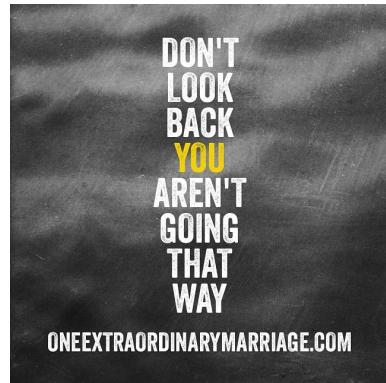
into your past. What seems harmless can easily become a fixation. What seems like it's no big deal can be devastating when those lines get blurred between the past and the present.

And, your past behaviors are things that you have chosen to leave behind, they don't have a place in the present either. These are activities that you have grown from. Are they part of who you are? Yes. Do they define your character? No. Do they have to have an influence on your future? NO!

The same can be said for those people in our past who were not the best influences. You know, the ones who encouraged you to make poor choices, to take unnecessary risks. The ones who were always whispering garbage in your ear. Cut the ties! Get plugged into people who are encouraging, people who make good choices. It's said that you are who you hang out with. Make that choice carefully.

When you invite a part of your past into your present and future, you run the risk of destroying everything, of undermining the trust that you have built up in your marriage. It brings a level of uncertainty, of insecurity into your marriage.

If it was supposed to be a part of your present it wouldn't be only in your past. Don't look back on the past with rose colored glasses. There is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost from actively reconnecting with your past.



Thoughts from Tony

It's time to own your "stuff"

I know it's not easy. I know that there are a million other things that you would rather be doing than looking at the not-so-good parts of your marriage.

It was not easy for me to tell Alisa about my choices on business trips. It was shocking to discover how her financial choices were going to impact our future. I hurt her time and again when I would make my bike or doing other things more important than her.

We hurt each other time and time again. We didn't know how to change that pattern. Honestly, we didn't even know that we were in those patterns. A lot of the things that we were doing seemed like things that everyone was doing, so what was the big deal?

The big deal was that we were destroying our marriage. All of those little hurts and the not-so-little hurts were tearing away at the foundation of our marriage until what we had seemed more like a shell of relationship than an actual relationship.

MAN UP! (or WOMAN UP)

Stop looking only at the things that your spouse has done. Own your role in this place. It takes two to get into a relationship and it takes two to destroy a marriage. It also takes the two of you to rebuild the marriage.

Action Steps

Identify the areas where trust has been broken in your marriage OR the areas that are most vulnerable.

- Truth
- Physical Intimacy
- Finances
- Emotional Intimacy
- Priorities
- Parenting
- Spiritual Intimacy
- Confidentiality
- Other Interests
- Reconnecting with Your Past

Knowledge is power and knowing where your marriage has been vulnerable or where it has the potential for vulnerability allows the two of you to be proactive.

It allows you to be deliberate in shoring up those areas. It allows you to be proactive in making decisions that are going to build trust instead of tearing it down.

Finances an issue? Devise a cash plan that you both discuss and implement.

Priorities a struggle? Devise a plan to make your actions match your words.

Emotional intimacy a challenge? Set up guardrails around friendships with the opposite sex.

What you know about your marriage allows you to create the marriage that you desire. Be truthful with yourself and with your spouse. Take the time to evaluate your actions and the decisions you are making.

Chapter 4: Get Over “It” Already

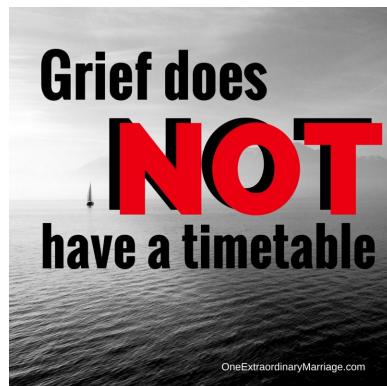
I have worked with many couples where, when a breach of trust has been discovered, the spouse who broke the trust doesn't understand why the other can't just get over it.

Why can't my spouse get over it?

Move on?

Forget this happened?

Discovering that your spouse has broken your trust, no matter how big or how small the incident is leads you into a period of grief. When your trust is broken, what you thought the relationship looked like or was based on has changed and that means that the two of you have to change as well.



I share this with you as a wife who has dealt with the discovery of pornography in her marriage and as a wife who has engaged in financial infidelity. Healing is a process that does not have a SET timetable and emotions are a part of that process. Expecting the other person to just get over it or just move on is expecting the impossible.

If you are the one who broke the trust, you knew what was going on, but your spouse is just now finding out and they have to process everything. You have known for awhile what type of behavior you have been engaged in, whether it's excessive spending, flirting with a co-worker, pornography, sharing details of your marriage with others. You have come clean, you've dropped the "bomb" on your spouse (or they have found out), so the prevailing thought is let's tidy this all up, say I'm sorry, promise I won't do it again and let's move on.

If you are the one whose trust has been broken, you have not had the luxury of knowing what your spouse has been doing. You are at the beginning of this journey and that's exactly what it is....a journey. You are processing a lot of information. You are dealing with emotions you didn't even know existed in you.

You are...
Confused
Scared
Angry
Hurt
Disappointed
Sad...

There's no switch to just get over it. How many of you have been asked, "Why can't you just get over it?" And struggled with this request. Expecting or requiring your spouse to just get over "it" is unrealistic.

You don't get from San Diego to Boston in the blink of an eye. In the same way you don't find out that your marriage isn't what it has seemed and then go off into happily ever after the next day.

Healing, trust building—these things take time. If you are the one who broke the trust, do not be unrealistic in your expectation for healing. If you are the one whose trust has been broken, don't expect that you are just going to flip a switch and it's going to be all better.

What's up with my emotions?

There are so many different emotions that you may experience following the discovery of a breach of trust. It can feel like you are being bombarded with the following:

- Denial. *This can't be happening to me. There's no way my spouse would ever do something like this.*
- Pain. Why would my spouse hurt me like this? This hurts more than I ever could have imagined.
- Anger. *I can't believe my spouse did this to me, to our family. My spouse has absolutely no regard for me.*
- Betrayal. *How could my spouse do this to me? Doesn't he/she value our relationship?*
- Shame/humiliation. *What will others think of me, of us?*
- Disappointment. *Why would my spouse think that this is OK?*
- Loss. *I thought that we had a perfect/good marriage. Why did this happen to us?*
- Panic. *What does this mean for my life, for our marriage? What steps do I need to take now to protect myself.*
- Sadness/depression. *I don't know how I'm ever going to make it through this.*

The truth of the matter is that these emotions can show up at any time once the initial shock wears off and yes, there is a period of shock when you realize that your spouse has done something completely unexpected.

Can I give you a friendly piece of advice? Don't stuff your emotions. Don't pretend they aren't happening. Don't put on the happy face while you are crumbling inside.

Be real with your spouse.

Be real with those who care for you.

In so many marriages, the masks have been on for so long that it's hard to take them off. When you wear those masks all of the time, when you don't acknowledge your feelings, when you stuff them down...it hurts you deeply. It keeps the two of you from growing. It prevents you from being loved for who you really are.

Emotions are a part of marriage and they are a part of the healing process.

The Shocking Truth

Let's just talk about that shock period for a moment. Life is going along seemingly well when out of the blue you get that bomb dropped on your life:

An affair
Massive credit card debt
A web of lies
A secret life
Hidden purchases
Unpaid bills

_____ (fill in the blank from your own marriage)

It doesn't matter what the discovery is—you feel as if time is standing still, everything is going in slow motion and you feel lucky if you can just remember to breathe. Some of you may feel numb, like you can't even figure out what's going on. A part of you moves into slo-mo. "What am I going to do? I don't know what to do now." And then everything speeds up, almost as if you are going through hyperdrive. It's like your brain is thinking through all of the *what ifs* and *how did this happen?* Your brain feels like it's going to explode with everything that you are processing. You have a million questions and you're trying to think through every possible scenario.

THIS. IS. NORMAL. I know, I've been there.

Life as you knew it has changed. You will have a new normal. There is a before and an after. You will survive this. How do I know? How can I be so sure? Look around you. Behind every happy Facebook picture and behind every smiling Christmas card are couples just like the two of you experiencing the pain that comes from bad decisions and then making it through.

You may feel like you are the only one that this has ever happened to, but you are not. There is a whole world of people who have discovered addiction, lying, cheating, broken promises and more and they are survivors.

You are too.

All marriages have a before and an after.

The time before trust was broken and the time after. It's very hard to find any marriage where at some point in time, trust has not been broken. Maybe it was over a little thing, maybe it was a big thing, but the fact is all couples experience this. And it can happen multiple times in marriage.

Our Story

Thirty years ago, at the age of 12, Tony was introduced to pornography. Back then it was magazines hidden under the bed. This behavior continued through junior high, high school and college. I knew Tony read *Playboy* and *Penthouse*; in fact, we read them together when we were dating. I didn't know at the time that this was potentially the sign of a bigger problem. I didn't know that this would have an impact on our intimacy after marriage. I thought that this was "no big deal." Tony didn't think it was a problem, so it must be OK, right?

Wrong.

This "problem" with pornography would well into our marriage when Tony was 30. It would destroy the connection between the two of us. It would reduce our sexual intimacy to being mere encounters instead of opportunities to truly connect, to give of ourselves wholly to one another. It wasn't until we had been married eight years that Tony came to me and shared this secret life with me. He didn't just share it, he admitted that he wanted to stop and he wanted me to help hold him accountable.

This would begin our journey toward healing. Our journey of unexpected revelations. Our journey of questions, of periodic doubts. Our journey of rebuilding. Our journey of restoration. We are now 11 years post discovery. I can tell you without a doubt that my marriage is better than it has ever been, that we are more secure in our marriage than I ever expected. Those first days, weeks, months and years were not easy. And yet, it's no longer an issue that causes us pain. We have chosen not to make it be a secret that destroys us but rather a life lesson to build on.

Here's the thing: you can't rush the healing process. You can't wish yourself into recovery or just "put it all behind you." Our amazingly complex minds do not work that way. We have to work through all of this.

Many of you are probably familiar with the Kubler-Ross five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance). I didn't even know that there were other models until I began this book. In doing so, I discovered a more comprehensive 7 stages of grief that I feel encompasses more of what you and I experience when our world gets turned upside down. Together, we will dig into this in the next chapter.

Healing is not just for the one who has had their trust broken. Healing is for the two of you. In order to rebuild the marriage, to restore your foundation and renew your commitment to one another, you both have to be involved. It's messy and it's hard and there are days when you are going to want to throw your hands up in the air and just say "I give up."

That's OK. Everyone reading this book has been there. The difference is in those couples that move through that place, through the pain to build something stronger. The couples that hang in there, the couples that continue to not only fight for their marriage but also invest in it, will make it through.



Both of you. One person CANNOT, by themselves, repair the trust in the marriage. Trust by its very nature implies relationship, so when it has been broken, it takes both people involved in the relationship to repair it.

It takes the one who has broken the trust to both change their behavior and to remain consistent in the changed behavior. Doing something different for a day, or a week, or even a month, does not promote trust. It's putting actions together day after day, month after month, year after year, creating new habits—each time you do this, you allow your spouse to move one step closer to you. It's choosing transparency over secrets, loyalty over impulses, serving over selfishness.

If you have had your trust broken, it is daily, sometimes hourly, choosing to forgive, choosing to seek and see the positive. It is giving yourself permission to let go of the hurt.

One client described it this way. He said that when you go through the initial hurt, it's like you are out in the ocean floating in boat in the middle of all of this garbage (the garbage is the hurt,

the broken trust). He went on to say that as you begin to paddle together, you start to move away from the garbage. It's still there but you move farther and farther away from it. Eventually you get to the point that you know that it's still in the water but it doesn't hamper your process anymore.

This is why it simply doesn't happen overnight.

Thoughts from Tony

I wanted the pain to be over.

I'll tell you there were times when Alisa and I were dealing with the broken trust in our marriage when I just wished that it was all over. When I wished that we could just move on.

It didn't matter how much I wished to speed things up or how much I wanted the pain to be over—we still had to go through the process. I couldn't rush her anymore than she could rush me.

We live in a world that is all about instant gratification. It's all about right now. Make my pain go away, right now. Fix this situation, right now. Let's stop talking about this, right now.

Broken trust in marriage doesn't respond well to the "right now, get over it already" mentality. It's about giving your spouse the time and space they need to process what is happening. It's about being present and patient—two things that can be really tough when there is so much pain surrounding the two of you.

I'm so glad that I didn't push Alisa. I'm so glad that we gave each other the time to work through things when we had hurt each other.

Instead of thinking, "Get over it already," communicate this: "I'm here for the long haul and will do what it takes to rebuild my life with you."

Action Steps: Breathing, Exercising and the Power of God's Promises

Breathing

Everyone of you knows that broken trust is an incredible stressor on the body. No matter how trust has been broken, each person has a physical and emotional response to stress.

The first thing that you need to do is to keep breathing. You will find yourself holding your breath without even realizing it. Or you will be hyperventilating from anxiety. Slow deep breaths allow you to center yourself, to focus mind and body on dealing with the situation in front of you.

I had a wonderful yoga instructor share this fabulous insight with me. She said that with as little as three deep breaths, you can activate your parasympathetic nervous system promoting relaxation and calmness throughout your body. When you start to feel the anxiety coming, the sense of overwhelm, the anger, whatever the emotion, you have to BREATHE. Your body wants you to be calm. Practicing the art of breathing allows you to have power over your body. When life seems out of control, this gives you a way to feel in control.

Inhale.

Pause.

Exhale.

Pause.

Repeat throughout the day.

Exercising

Exercising is also a must. It's so easy when confronted with a situation that breaks your trust to forget about taking care of yourself. You need that self-care now more than ever. Exercise allows you to focus on something else besides your problems. It allows you to stretch your muscles, keeping your body strong for the journey ahead.

Walking

Weights

Running

Swimming

Yoga

_____ (your favorite way to move your body)

It doesn't matter what it is; what matters is that it happens.

And finally, visualizations and affirmations are key. When your world gets turned upside down through unforeseen circumstances, you can begin to get stuck in the negative self talk, in the idea that you are always going to be in this dark place. You need to create a vision for what you

want you life to look like so that you know what you are working toward. You need to fill your mind with positive messages so that you can retrain your brain to look for the positive.

The Power of God's Promises

"Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield, your very great reward."

Genesis 15:1 New International Version (NIV)

At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?"

Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven."

Matthew 18:21-22 The Message (MSG)

"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part."

Matthew 6:14-15 The Message (MSG)

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14 New International Version (NIV)

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9 New International Version (NIV)

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

1 Corinthians 11:1 New International Version (NIV)

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Galatians 6:10 New International Version (NIV)

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

James 1:19-20 New International Version (NIV)

Chapter 5: Get Me OFF This Emotional Roller Coaster

Let's face it, part of the reason that you can't just get over things is that you are riding one insane roller coaster. It's a ride with no way, that you can see, to get off. A ride with crazy loop-the-loops, a ride that accelerates from 0-60 in mere seconds and then drops you straight over the edge. You can't see what's coming and the bummer part about this ride is that you didn't ask to get on.

Buckle your seatbelts; you're are on the ride of your life. Broken trust straps you into the wildest emotional roller coaster that you could possibly imagine. It's the up and down, two steps forward, three steps back emotional whirlwind. There is no straight line to rebuilding and restoring trust. Wouldn't it be nice if there was? Understanding the stages of grief and the healing process is a key component of this process. Knowing the stage that you are in and the next one that you can be working toward is key.

Both men AND women feel deeply and the roller coaster is real. You can't rush this. Your marriage did not get to this place overnight, restoring your marriage is also not an overnight process. There is no magic wand, no fairy dust that is going to repair your relationship, it's going to take the both of you putting forth the effort. It's the old fashioned idea of "having to work" for what you want.

What now?

In the healing process, one of the first things that both of you have to learn to deal with are triggers. There are triggers everywhere that can and will bring forth memories of the incident or actions. Isn't that a pain? You think, "Here we are dealing with this situation and now I have to worry about other things that might bring forth more emotions? One more thing on top of everything else?!"

So, what exactly is a trigger?

- A trigger is any person, place or thing that can cause a flashback to the stressful situation OR an unexpected emotional or physical reaction.
- What sets you off?
- What makes you remember that bad time?
- How will you choose to deal with those triggers?
- Is it possible to avoid them or will you have to have coping strategies in place?

With triggers you don't always know, especially in the beginning, what is going to upset you or your spouse. Things that seemingly have no connection can be very strong triggers.

Some examples include:

Driving in a particular part of town

Hearing a name or place mentioned
Getting a bill
Dealing with medical conditions

[Stop bickering in 5 minutes or less.](#) Discover the #1 technique we use with our clients (and ourselves!) to instantly dissolve tension and restore harmony in our relationship.

Client story

Here's an example of triggers seemingly coming out of nowhere. A couple that I had worked with had infidelity in their marriage. One of the areas where this manifested itself was through the solicitation of escorts for massages. During our coaching calls, whenever the idea of massage would be brought into conversation as a form of self-care or relaxation, the wife would get visibly upset. When asked she shared that because her husband had received "massages," she had a negative association that was triggered every time that massage was even mentioned. Something seemingly neutral created a tremendous emotional trigger for her. This wife could be going along just fine and in an instant find herself back in a place of pain and anger.

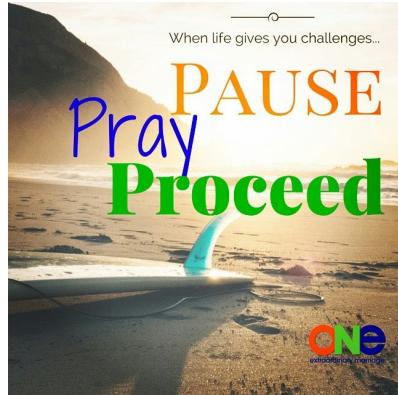
The same thing happens to men. I worked with another couple where the wife was very assertive in the marriage. She would often talk down to her husband and make him feel inadequate. As they worked through their challenges, there were certain words or gestures that were practically ingrained in her behavior that would cause a very unconscious reaction in him. In an instant he could be taken back to where they were when their marriage was in crisis and his behavior would quickly sink into that place of despair.

Things are going to set you off. It's already happened or you have seen it in your spouse. The question is what to do when it happens. Initially, you are like a race car, and you go 0-60 in an instant. That's no fun for anyone. What if there was a different way, a healthier way?

Pause. Pray. Proceed. (AKA "How to make it through the day.")

This is instruction, not just for dealing with triggers but for dealing with your emotions throughout this whole process.

Your regular, fast-paced lifestyle lends itself more to be reactionary, to flying off the handle when something happens. Putting these three steps into practice will cause a shift in how you do life.



1. Pause. In dealing with emotions very little good comes from immediately reacting to a situation. It's good to take a breath and focus on the current situation. (Remember the action step we talked about earlier at the end of chapter 4? Too much of your life is done without stopping to think of the consequences. Most people don't stop to take their emotional temperature before laying into someone else. The HALT acronym is perfect for these situations. Stop (HALT) and think, "Am I hungry, angry, lonely or tired? What has set me off right now?"
2. Pray. Making it through stressful life circumstances, like those involved in broken trust, require more than we can sometimes humanely give. Asking for God's guidance, wisdom and help allows you to lean in and lean on God. Don't ever think that God has turned his back on you or won't listen to you. It's true that you don't always get the answers you want or in the way that you wanted. That doesn't mean that God isn't listening to you. When all else fails, when everyone else has let you down, God is there. He can handle your anger, your tears, your disappointment and your fears. You can scream, cry or sit in silence while being unconditionally loved. Prayer provides an outlet that no human can match.
3. Proceed. Now that you have stopped, taken a breath and prayed for your circumstances, then you can proceed with more clarity and direction than if you had just reacted. Calm, directed action, both thought out and thought about, is so much better than a fiery reaction. (In the interest of full disclosure, Alisa's natural tendency is explosive fireworks followed by the silent treatment. Much work has been done over the life of our marriage to be more effective in communicating.) Making the choice to proceed is making the choice to stay engaged in the relationship. Continuous "reacting" results in one or both of you checking out.

It does sound cliché to say that time does heal wounds but it is true. With time, comes perspective, with time comes reflection, with time comes understanding. But the real question you all want to know is how to move through this ride called the emotional roller coaster.

You have to acknowledge you are on it. Acknowledge that things are upside down right now, that you are not yourself. Just like a roller coaster ride where you can't see all the twists and

turns, the emotional roller coaster is similar. You don't know exactly what is coming up next. However, with an understanding of the journey, you can both make it through.

Commit to getting through this process. When life seems upside down, it's easy to want to throw your hands in the air and say, "I quit!" Healing does not come from quitting the process. Healing comes from working through the "junk" in the process.

Give grace, both to yourself and to your spouse. Working through these stages of grief is not easy. You both need to extend grace and understanding for what you are attempting to do. The easy way out is to simply say, "It's over." The couple who takes the hard road is the couple who says, "We made a commitment, we lost our way, we are going to work together to rebuild."

The Powerful 7

This list was discovered on [Recover From Grief](#) and more than the familiar Kubler Ross model, this list allows for more fluidity and clarity between the stages. As outlined on the site, the 7 stages are:

1. Shock and denial
2. Pain and guilt
3. Anger and bargaining
4. Depression
5. Upward turn
6. Reconstruction and working through
7. Acceptance and hope

Did you take the time to read through the list or did you just jump from #1 to #7? It's OK if you did. A lot of people want to make that jump from denying that this breach of trust could ever happen to them to "let's move on and sail off into happily ever after." You have to go through these stages, sometimes back and forth through them, to get to the final stage of acceptance and hope for your future.

THERE. ARE. NO SHORTCUTS.

Read that line again.

Healing from broken trust takes time and it is a journey not an event. You are going to wish that you had a magic wand, fairy dust or even a time machine to make things like they were before.

Newsflash: You don't have any of that; you only have the here and now. So you both need to get to work.

Shock and Denial

- This can't be happening to me.
- I can't believe he/she would do this.
- There's no way that he/she is capable of something like this.
- I don't want anyone to know.
- You can't talk to anyone about this.
- What if someone finds out?
- What happened to our fairytale?
- Is this for real?

The first reaction is known as the shock phase. It's one that you will go back to often and it will rear its ugly head at the weirdest times. Remember those triggers we talked about earlier in the book? They are everywhere and it will be the triggers that send you back into shock and denial.

You don't want bad things to happen to you. When it happens, it's overwhelming and you just want to pretend it's not real. You also don't want anyone else to know. Who puts up the really bad stuff on Facebook? When was the last time that you saw a post that said, "I just found out that my spouse is having an affair," or, "My spouse has racked up thousands of dollars in debt and I have no idea how we are going to pay the bills?" The bad news definitely does not get shared, ever. It's human nature, especially in this time of social media, to want to always paint a pretty picture of your life. There is a tendency to hide the bad stuff, to bury it deep or talk in convoluted ways about what is going on.

Our Story

When Tony shared with me about the women in the bars on business trips, I literally couldn't believe it. I remember we were sitting in our kitchen. It was late morning because I remember looking at the clock thinking that I was going to have to go and get our daughter from preschool in just a little bit. The sun was coming through the side window and I absolutely couldn't breathe or think for that matter. I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. My mind was spinning with different scenarios. How? When? **WHY?**

Shock and denial are the natural response to any sort of trauma. Our brains go into a self-preservation mode because processing everything at once can be overwhelming. Our body, mind and soul work to protect us to push back against pain and hurt. This is the aspect of stage 1 called denial.

Pain and Guilt

- *It hurts to be betrayed.*
- *I feel like my life has been kicked out from underneath me.*
- *I feel like I have lost everything.*

- *I should have done more of.../less of...*
- *What did I do to cause this?*
- *What could I have done differently?*

Discovery hurts. It doesn't matter what the revelation is, how long ago it happened or any of the other details. The hurt comes from the realization that your perception is not your reality. This is when you start to physically see the effects of the revelation. It can become hard to eat or sleep during this phase and as a result you tend to feel like you have less emotional/physical resources to deal with the stress you are under. It can feel absolutely overwhelming just trying to get through the day.

A lot of your friends may have experienced the “broken trust diet,” which is the diet that helps you drop the pounds because your heart is broken. While this is one way to lose weight, it’s not healthy for you to not be eating or sleeping. You find yourself in survival mode, just getting through each day is an accomplishment. You are trying to figure out what you did to cause this situation. Let me be clear here. It is true that trust is based on the behavior of two people. It is also true that both people are involved in the reasons that trust is broken. HOWEVER, it still comes down to one person making a decision to engage in behavior that is detrimental to the relationship, one person deciding to break the trust be it...

An affair
 Financial secrets
 Absentee parenting
 Neglect of the marriage and so forth

Anger and Bargaining

- *I'm so angry that he/she would do this to me/us/our family.*
- *What kind of person would do this to their spouse?*
- *Why me?*
- *If only I had been...*
- *If only I was...*
- *I promise I will always/I will never _____ if the situation changes.*
- *I'll do this_____, if you'll just quit/stop/change, etc.*

You are going to be angry. Even if you are not generally an angry person, there is going to be strong emotional reactions to the fact that your trust has been broken. You want your world to be the way it was before and because that can't happen, you act out on your anger, say things that are hurtful, or say nothing at all. You make bargains with God, with your spouse, with anyone or anything you think can make a difference in your situation.

Anger is legit.

When your dream is destroyed, it is normal and expected that you are going to be angry.

Depending on what the breach of trust is, there may be more people impacted than just the two of you. People have lost jobs. Couples have gotten divorced, declared bankruptcy, faced health crises and unplanned pregnancies. Some have even lost their kids.

How the two of you handle your anger during this time is so important.

Do NOT get physical with one another.

Do NOT swear at each other.

Do NOT call each other names.

You cannot undo any action done in anger.

Anger, even when justified, can be an incredibly destructive mindset. Be specific in what is making you angry and if you need to journal to get your feelings out on paper first, do so.

As for the bargaining, we as humans want to fix things right away. We try and make deals so that this pain, this embarrassment, can all just go away.

Bargaining is saying:

If you don't ever do this again, I will...

I promise I'll never...

I'll be a better husband or wife, just don't...

If you would only...

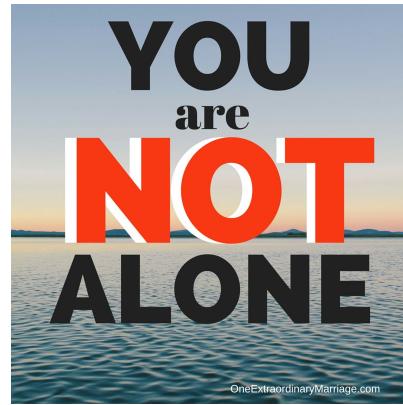
Bargaining is temporary. The two of you will need to choose new behaviors for your marriage. Simply bargaining your way to change will not be lasting change. You may be tempted to make promises, to offer ANYTHING to fix the relationship.

Repairing the marriage is not simply about the words that the two of you choose to say to one another. It's about the actions that come with those words. Bargaining comes from that sense of desperation that you'll do or say anything to fix the situation. You both may be tempted to bargain in the process. Another word for bargaining is ultimatum.

Ultimatums ultimately don't work; the change is an external motivator. Do this or ELSE. It's fear. It's not love. For lasting change and healing, the motivation has to come from within.

Depression

- *We are never going to make it out of this.*
- *I just want to curl up in a ball and shut the world out.*
- *No one else has ever experienced this the way that we are.*
- *I'm the only one going through anything like this.*



Everyday relationships are going through the same problems that you are. Hearts are breaking around the world because of broken promises, lies, cheating. Yes, your specific circumstances are unique but you are not the only one who has ever had to deal with this. You need to get up and get out. Breathe fresh air, listen to the birds, get engaged in life, find opportunities to not focus on yourself and your situation but ways to help others.

The pain of broken trust can easily lead you into a dark place, a place where you see no way out, a place where everything seems hopeless. The sadness at this sequence of life events can feel overwhelming. The loss of a dream hurts. Each and every one of you have experienced some form of loss in your life and you are here.

You will make it through.

If it feels like the depression or anxiety is beginning to take hold of your life, and that it is something more than you feel you can deal with, please go and see your doctor or other healthcare professional. There is NO shame in asking for help. I have had many clients who have sought medical intervention to make it through the initial stages of the roller coaster.

Seeking help is a sign of strength, a sign that you are strong enough to realize when you cannot do it all by yourself. There's this belief that things like this should be kept quiet. NOT TRUE. When you stop leading a secret life and start living your authentic life, you will experience an amazing change in your outlook, your choices and the fruits of all that you do.

Upward Turn and Hope

- *Maybe we can make it through this.*
- *I think we might be able to repair our marriage.*
- *What could our marriage look like in the future?*

This is when you start to look at the future for the first time. This is the glimmer of hope that shows itself when you start to see small changes in behavior. This is when you start to ask yourself if you can make it through this.



Hope is the idea that life can be better tomorrow than it is today. It is the idea that you have to be moving forward, that you cannot stay in this stuck place forever. When you start to hope in the future, you have a sense of optimism that no matter how hard things are now, there is the possibility of change in the future.

As the two of you begin to take more steps toward your future and to restore your foundation, you are going to have moments or even days when you think, "I don't know how we are going to do this. Maybe we are crazy, there is no way we can make this work." But together you CAN. Together you continue to put the marriage first, to have more good days than bad.

Your body responds to positivity. It seeks out more of the same. Finding small glimmers of hope in your situation puts you on a path of progress. This is where acknowledging those things that you are grateful for allows you to realize the blessings in your situation and your experiences.

It is taking time each day to acknowledge that today I am grateful for...

Reconstruction and Working Through

- *What does our new normal look like?*
- *What systems do we need to have in place to avoid a repeat of this?*
- *What support groups/accountability do we need to have in place?*
- *What programs do we need to get involved in?*

- *What baggage have we been carrying for WAY too long?*
- *What are those things that I have been reluctant to share for fear of the repercussions?*

This is the down and dirty time of recreating your relationship. This is when you work through the challenges that brought you to this crisis. You cannot change your future if you don't change the thoughts and behaviors that brought you to that point. This involves the two of you working on yourselves and on your marriage.

You cannot change your spouse; they have to desire to create change in themselves and then work to bring that change into their life the same way that you do. Implementing systems, working through the unspoken past, creating a solid foundation, these are all things that ideally you would have done before you got married. The reality is that for most people, marriage comes during an idealized time in the relationship, no one ever expects to have someone break their heart.



And yet...

That is what life is after broken trust. The rose colored glasses have come off and there is more reality in your marriage. You are becoming aware of the fact that you cannot coast through marriage and have it be extraordinary; you have to be involved in the relationship. At this stage you start to think about those guardrails that you are going to have in place and you create a foundation that is sustainable.

What guardrails will you add to your marriage: transparency, filters, boundaries?
 What do you need to let go of or change to have the relationship that you desire going forward?
 Is it friendships that are no good?
 A job that no longer works for your marriage?
 Habits that don't make your marriage a priority?

Reconstruction doesn't mean that you just build the same thing over again. It means that you look at what worked and keep that. You look at what didn't and make steps to improve in those areas. You want what you build to be STRONGER than it ever was before.

Acceptance and the Future

- *This is a new chapter for our marriage.*
- *I have chosen to forgive my spouse.*
- *I have chosen to release the pain, hurt, and disappointment.*
- *I know that our relationship is stronger because it is now built on a solid understanding.*

Acceptance does not mean that you will forget what has happened in the past. One of my coaching clients described it this way. He said, “When the crisis first hit, it felt like I was in a boat being tossed in a horrible storm on the sea. As we begin to build the future, I see now that the challenges we were facing are slowly drifting away from us, a little bit more each day. They are still there; they just aren’t impacting us as much as they used to. I can look over the side of the boat and see it but the boat isn’t being rocked by the past.” This is what acceptance of the future may look like for the two of you.

- Acceptance is NOT giving permission for the behavior to continue, it does not mean that you will tolerate these same decisions in the future.
- Acceptance means that you BOTH acknowledge the decisions that brought you to that point.
- Acceptance includes forgiveness and grace. Why? Because without forgiveness, it is virtually impossible for you to move into a place of acceptance.

You must choose to release your spouse from the pain that they have caused you. It serves no purpose for you to continue to hold onto the pain in your life. So many times the “wrongs” spouse wants to continue to wallow in the pain and make the other spouse “pay” for what they have done. There is no future in this mindset, only more grief and frustration.

When trust is broken it feels like a death, the end of the road, the end of the story. You can make the choice that it’s not the end you can choose to forgive, you can choose to release your pain, your hurt, your transgression, your shame. You can choose life over death in the figurative sense.



Creating your new future means that you need to do just that. It comes from a place where the two of you are working on building a new future—a future that has transparency and honesty as cornerstones of the relationship. A relationship that is now built on the values of security and safety, one for the other. A relationship built on trust is one where the two of you commit, daily, to engaging only in those behaviors that will foster and grow your marriage. It's a marriage where the two of you choose to be proactive instead of reactive.

Thoughts from Tony

Men and women are different.

It probably comes as no surprise to any of you reading this book. The way that men and women process the world is radically different. We can experience the same situation and have dramatically different perceptions of what happened.

This has been true whenever there has been broken trust in our marriage. It's not that either viewpoint is right or wrong; it's just different.

Remember this when the two of you are riding the emotional roller coaster. Remember that your husband or wife sees things through their own lens, their own experiences.

I could not predict when I shared with Alisa about my pornography how she would react. I could guess how much pain it would cause her when a week later I would have to tell her (my accountability partner) that I had looked at porn. I did not know that there would be days when she would seem fine and then there would be days when I would be thinking, "What just happened?"

This will happen to you.

Knowing that the two of you are going to experience the roller coaster makes it easier in that you understand it's part of the process. It still doesn't make the mood swings for either of us any easier to bear.

We put up a post on Instagram a while back that talked about the fact that when you are on the roller coaster, you know that while the ride may be absolutely crazy, it does come to end.

So will this season in your marriage.

Action Steps: Forgiving, Accountability and Coaching

Forgiveness

This is NOT condoning what the other person did. It is not giving them permission to engage in the behavior again. It is not sweeping it all under the rug.

It IS making a conscious decision that you are not going to allow that person's decision to negatively impact you and your life. It is releasing the negative feelings about that person. It is a change in your attitude and behavior. Forgiving your spouse is not something that you necessarily do for them, you do it for yourself, to make yourself healthier.

It is saying to yourself and to your spouse, if you are able, "I forgive YOU."
I forgive you for...

Do you have to say this over and over again? YES

Do you have to choose this when you don't want to? YES

What do you need to forgive today?

Who do you need to forgive?

What has been stopping you? _____

Accountability

Accountability is being responsible to another person for the actions or choices that you make. Your accountability partner can be a pastor, a coach, a mentor, a friend who will speak truth to you as you navigate the changes in your life. This is someone who will NOT just pat you on the back, or tell you what you want to hear. It is of the utmost importance that this be someone you can be honest with. We all need those people in our lives to help us create the discipline we are often lacking on our own.

List three people that you would like to ask to be your accountability partner? The reason we suggest three is that they may not all be in a position to say yes at this time.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When will you contact them? _____

Coaching

If you struggle with doing this on your own, don't be afraid to reach out and get coaching. People, just like you, have coaches for their physical fitness, their career path, their finances and their hobbies. Why not for marriage and relationships? If you need new strategies in your marriage, if you need to work through a particular area, be bold and be brave to get a coach to come alongside you.

[Learn more about coaching with ONE Extraordinary Marriage today.](#)

Chapter 6: More Than Just a Band-Aid: The Healing Process



Throughout this book you have been looking at different aspects of the trust factor: what it is, how you can break it, and areas where it can be broken. The truth is that you need a plan for healing. It's not going to just happen on its own. These situations don't magically disappear, no matter how much you would like it to.

This chapter focuses on the healing process. As we discussed in the Powerful 7 section, there is a process to all of this. The two of you didn't just wake up one morning and find yourself hurting. As you have realized, through reading this book, there was a process in motion that brought you to a point of crisis, circumstances that collectively broke the trust in your marriage.

If you have made it this far in the book you realize that things have to change. No more bandaids, no more burying your head in the sand, no more ignoring what's going on. You know that you have considered doing each of these. How do I know? Folks just like you who have been scared and hurting have shared this with me and I have done it myself.

The healing process, is the next step. What do each of you need to do to create an environment of healing in your marriage? The first step to take is to realize that each of you has actions that you have to do individually and there are actions that you have to do as a couple.

This chapter is broken into three parts: actions for the one who has betrayed the trust, actions for the one whose trust has been betrayed and actions for the two of you. Don't just skip ahead to what your spouse should be doing. It's important to read each of these sections so that you can understand all of the responsibilities in the marriage.

For the One Who Has Broken the Trust

You know what you have done.
You know the pain that you have caused.
You know that this is not going to be easy.

State your desire to rebuild.

Do you want to rebuild the relationship?
Are you committed to making this happen?

This may come as a newsflash to some of you: Your spouse does NOT have ESP. Do you want to rebuild the relationship? My prayer is that if you have made it this far in this program the answer is a YES. Are you committed to doing what it will take to make this happen? Your spouse does not know what you want or what you are thinking. If you are ready to commit to rebuilding and renewing your relationship, you must state that. You need to recognize that this is not a quick fix. That your actions will need to speak MUCH louder than your words.

Complete Transparency

No more secrets. The whole truth and nothing but the truth. This is not the time to think that they can't handle everything; rather this is the time to get all of the skeletons out of the closet. Surprises down the road will only serve to weaken your fragile foundation and may even cause irreparable harm.

Accept Responsibility and Explain Your Actions

You made a bad choice or bad choices. You engaged in behavior that damaged the foundation of your marriage. You chose to break your vows. Now is the time to accept responsibility for your actions and to explain, NOT excuse, yourself. No one else made you break the trust in your marriage. Why did you make that choice? "I don't know" is not an answer to this. If you feel like you don't know then you need to spend time in reflection to analyze your motives. What was going on with you that led you to make this choice?

Provide a Sincere Apology

Saying I'm sorry is one of the first phrases we are taught as kids and over time it becomes so easy to just apologize and expect the other person to move on. That's not what is happening here. Just like in the last step where you choose to accept responsibility and explain your actions, in this step you are sincerely apologizing for your behavior and asking for forgiveness.

End the Destructive Behavior

This one might seem to be obvious. However, I've learned on more than one occasion that sometimes you need to state the obvious.



If you are engaged in any behavior that is destroying the trust in your marriage, it must stop. If it is an addiction, get help. If you feel you can not end the behavior on your own, get help. If you are struggling with ways to end the behavior, get help. You do not have to do this on your own. However, you do HAVE to do it.

Answer Questions

By now you know that your spouse is going to have questions about your decisions or behavior choices. Answer them. Remember the earlier step about complete transparency. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that transparency

Allow Your Spouse to Express Emotion

We've talked a lot about this during different sections of this book. There are going to be emotions and they are going to come and go and sometimes they are going to surprise the two of you. It's not only OK but also healthy to express the emotions. Stuffing emotions is not healthy nor is it productive in rebuilding a relationship. That being said expressing those emotions is not a free pass for abuse, either physical or verbal. You still have to play fair.

Keep Your Word Going Forward

Your word is the verbal expression of your heart.

Do what you say you are going to do.

Give all passwords.

Break off all contact.

Call when you are going to be late.
Only spend cash.

Whatever the issue has been, whatever behavior you are trying to change, commit to it and your marriage. Every time that you choose your marriage over your selfish desires, you build trust. Every time that you choose transparency over deceit, you build trust. Every time that you volunteer information instead of waiting to be asked, you build trust.

For the One Whose Trust Has Been Broken

Life has been turned upside down.
You have been wondering what comes next.
You have felt hopeless and helpless.
No MORE.

Evaluate the Situation

What has happened in your marriage? What created this situation? What has been going on and for how long? What do the two of you want next? You have to begin by looking at the circumstances you are in before you can make a plan for the future.

Ask Questions

You know you have them, so ask them. As you saw earlier in this chapter, we have encouraged your spouse to answer your questions. Why? Because curiosity can be a dangerous thing. The mind can imagine all sorts of scenarios that may or may not have any basis in reality. That being said, there is one thing to keep in mind. You cannot unknow or forget any details once you have learned them. Before asking the question of your spouse, ask yourself how the answer may impact you. Example, if your spouse has had a physical affair, do you really want to know everything they did together? Or is it enough to know that they were intimate. If knowing what they did together will keep you from moving forward you probably have all the details you already need.

Express Your Emotions

You will have emotions and they will seem like the craziest roller coaster. You need to express them so that they do not get stuffed inside. It's common to not want to express everything, to try and hold it all together. This can create a situation where you are now wearing masks around each other, walking on eggshells to keep everything in balance.

Expressing Emotions in a Healthy Way is Important

This does not mean becoming physically, emotionally or verbally abusive. You do not have permission to swear at each other, to call each other names or even to lash out physically. When the emotions threaten to overwhelm you physically, get out and do something physical. This is where exercise can play a huge role in your recovery. This is also where journaling can be instrumental as it allows you to say all of the things without screaming them at one another.

Identify Your Needs

What are those things that you need your spouse to do to demonstrate trust? Is it full access to all devices? Is it all the passwords? What about guardrails around your marriage-social media accounts, finances, business trips? What are the things that you think that you need in order to make you feel more secure. This is not about punishing your spouse and making them feel more like a child, requiring them to lead a restrictive life. Rather this is a step to bring more structure to your foundation.

Adjust Your Expectations

Your normal looks different now. What you thought your marriage was and is must be adjusted for the two of you to move forward. It's important to be able to verbalize those expectations so that both of you know and understand where the other is coming from. Your expectations change based on your assessment of the situation, you needs being met and your spouse's behaviors.

Acknowledge Your Own Role

The two of you did not get in this situation only because of your spouse's actions. You each have aspects to work on. A lot of the work, so far, has focused on what the person who betrayed the trust has to do. It's time for you to own your role in this situation. Reflect on 6 Reasons Why Trust is Broken, what have you been doing in the marriage that has helped create an environment where trust can be broken? More importantly what changes do you need to make to help in the process of rebuilding?

Give AND Receive Love

Moving through a painful life experience requires that you learn to both give and receive love again. At first this may feel awkward and challenging. You may even say, "Alisa I don't want to do that." That's fine, you don't have to want to. I'm asking you to do it anyway. Your spouse is going to be working on him or herself. One of the ways that you can restore your marriage is to allow them to demonstrate their love while you love them as well. Easy? No. Worth it? Yes.



For Both of You

It has been a long time since the two of you were doing your marriage from the perspective of being on the same team. Rebuilding and restoring your marriage does mean that you are going to have to work together.

Stay patient and present.

It's normal for you to want to rush this process of healing and growth, of rebuilding. However, you are not completely in control of this process. Your spouse is on their own journey and choosing to stay patient with them, choosing to stay present in the marriage is one of the biggest gifts that you can give.

Turn off your devices and focus on one another (this DOES mean the phone/tablet/computer/laptop/TV/etc.).

Learn to take a deep breath before you speak. Choosing to think before speaking can be the difference between a discussion AND a blowup.

Keep in mind that this is a process for both of you. A process that does NOT have a timetable.

Make your spouse a priority.

Throughout this book we have talked about the importance of making your spouse a priority. How a lack of this can lead to feelings of disconnection and neglect. Now is the time to change all of that. It's time to get the focus back on the two of you, on who you are as a couple. It's time to start doing the little things for one another, it's time to start dating again, it's time to start talking again. And yes, you both have to do this.

Set aside 10-15 minutes each day to work on one question from [Connect Like You Did When You First Met: 101 Proven Questions for Couples](#)

Take turns planning a date night. It doesn't have to be long but it does have to happen. Try a new restaurant, go for a walk in the park, sit and share an ice cream cone.

Look to your spouse before you look toward your kids. It's so easy to meet the needs of the kids first or to focus on the kids when things between you and your spouse haven't been going so well. Choosing to turn toward your spouse instead of your kids realigns the priorities in the marriage.

Show affection and respect.

Every single person has a need to be needed and desired. As the two of you work to rebuild and restore your marriage choosing to show affection is part of that process. Does this mean that sometimes you will show affection when you aren't necessarily "feeling it," sure. However, one of the concepts that I have seen play out time and again in working with clients is this: You can't necessarily feel your way into change; however, you can always change the way that you feel.

As for the respect component of this, grownups extend respect to one another when they see that effort is being made. Respect is by definition admiration of abilities. Is it easy? No. Does that mean it shouldn't be done? Nope. When you see that your spouse is trying, when you see them taking the baby steps toward change and healing, extend respect.

Part of this giving of respect is also in the giving of forgiveness. It took both of you to get to this place in your marriage. It bears repeating, you are both imperfect human beings. Choosing to extend forgiveness is a way of moving beyond the pain of this moment into the promise of the future.

Thoughts from Tony

We both had to change.

When Alisa had first disclosed to me about the excessive spending, I was so angry. She knew better.

- *How could she do this to our family?*
- *How could she do this to me?*
- *Didn't she know what that was going to do to us?*

Take a deep breath, Tony. The truth is out; what are you going to do now?

That's the thing. No matter how much I wanted it to all be about what Alisa had to do differently, I came to realize that I also had to do things differently. Together we had to figure out where the breakdown had occurred. Together we had to put new systems into place. Together we had to extend forgiveness.

It wasn't all about her.

It's not all about your spouse.

Healing a broken relationship takes the people involved in that relationship re-engaging with one another. Do you remember at the beginning of the book? The first action step was to state: I COMMIT.

Every day.

When you both commit to growing and strengthening the marriage every day, real change occurs.

Action Step

Just Do It

Gotta love the Nike slogan. It's simple to understand even if it may be a bit harder to implement.

The fact is that YOU have to just do it. You have to make a decision and take action.

Just do it.

Don't continue to talk about what you need to do. Just do it.

Don't wonder about whether or not it will work. Just do it, assuming it will work.

Don't overthink all of the different scenarios. Just do it, and show through your actions what your priorities are.

Do it.

If you both want to restore, renew and rebuild your marriage, do it. Get in the process. Work your way THROUGH the mess. Get doing.

It's not going to change through wishful thinking but rather from the two of you doing what it takes to make the future different from the past.

It's time to one key decision for the future of your marriage.

Today, fill in these sentences...

(The next two pages have a sheet for each of you so that you can make multiple copies to come back to this in the future. Plus we have added these to the Resource Section at the end of the book.)

His

My 30-day goal for OUR MARRIAGE is:

My 30-day goal for MYSELF is:

I know a key area that I have to work on is: _____

In order to make our marriage what we both desire, I commit to doing the following for the next 30 days:

Hers

My 30-day goal for OUR MARRIAGE is:

My 30-day goal for MYSELF is:

I know a key area that I have to work on is: _____

In order to make our marriage what we both desire, I commit to doing the following for the next 30 days:

Chapter 7: Divorce Is Off the Table

There's one more factor that you need to consider in rebuilding the trust in your marriage.

Are you willing to take divorce off the table while you are working on your marriage?

This is a concept that may be new to some of you. Those of you that have listened to the [ONE Extraordinary Marriage Show](#) or who have heard us speak know that this is a big deal to us. **TWICE** in our marriage we found ourselves at the brink of divorce due to situations where trust had been broken, where for a variety of reasons, one or both of us had checked out of the relationship.

I have told Tony, "I love you but I'm not in love with you."

I have looked up numbers for divorce attorneys because it seemed easier to walk away than to deal with the crap in our marriage. I have contemplated what life would be like as a single mom. How would I handle things on my own? Did I even want to go down that road? Would it be easier than the struggles that we were facing as a couple? I had so many questions and the answers were never easy.

Obviously the answer for me, for us, is that our marriage is a relationship worth working for.

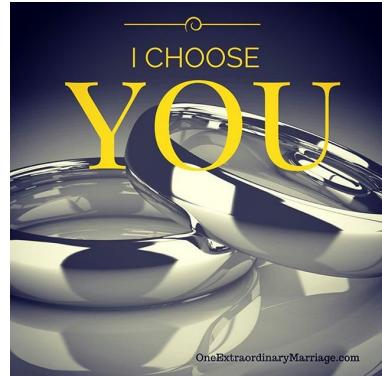
Marriage is a relationship where, because you know each other so intimately and spend so much time together, you also know how to push each other's buttons like nobody's business. Often you do this without even thinking about it. Look at your own marriage; when you are feeling a little bit feisty you can say or do just that one thing that will set off your spouse. Tony recently shared at one of our small groups how early in our marriage he would, on purpose, play devil's advocate when we were in a discussion, simply because he could! That's not the best philosophy for growing a marriage.

Here's where that changes.

When you make the decision to take divorce off the table you also make the decision to do things that are in alignment with that decision. If divorce is not an option then you have two choices:

Live your marriage as you have been and be miserable **OR**
Get radical and do something different to make your marriage the best it can be.

It's completely **YOUR** choice.



Taking DIVORCE off the table is not a free pass to do whatever you want.

It's an opportunity for you to create an environment in your marriage where divorce is not even an option for you. Taking divorce off the table of your marriage is one of the most significant things that the two of you can do to foster the trust in the relationship.

What does this look like and how is trust a key component of this?

When we took divorce off the table in 2000, it meant that we had to make specific decisions that would not compromise that decision. It meant that we would set up the following guardrails in our marriage:

- Neither one of us have meetings that the other does not know about.
- We will only meet clients of the opposite sex in public places.
- When working with couples, I include both the husband and the wife on emails that pertain to their marriage.
- We each have full access to any and all accounts and electronics.
- We each have full access to any and all passwords (lucky for me, he tends to remember the passwords better than I do).
- We discuss our finances at least once a month.
- We do not look at, listen to or seek out those things that are not supportive of marriage or the integrity that we wish to have in our relationship (people, places or things).
- I answer Tony truthfully when he asks what is going on with me (most of the time, I'll admit there are times when I am in a mood that this one can be a bit challenging for me). I always come clean though.
- I share with him when I am struggling sexually—be it with my body, my level of desire or simply where I am in my cycle.
- I have a decision to [take rejection out of the bedroom](#).

Now before you put yourself in the category of "I could never do that" or "of course, she can do that; look at their marriage," I want to be very clear this doesn't always happen. We are human after all and things like fatigue, stress and other factors can definitely take their toll. The point is

that this is our goal for our marriage, what we strive for, our way of being proactive instead of reactive.

One thing that taking divorce off the table is NOT is a free pass to do whatever you want. When you take divorce off the table, you are making a conscious decision to put your marriage first, to make decisions that are in line with and supportive of the vows that you made to each other on your wedding day.

You want to see trust grow in your marriage.

You want to create a different future for the two of you.

It's time to create that life.

This matters to us so much that we recorded a podcast to explain this in even more detail.

[Episode 193 - Divorce Is Off the Table](#)

I know that if I want Tony's trust, I have to continue to demonstrate it through the little acts done on a regular basis. The same as he does for me. Trust is not a monumental act that is either built or destroyed in a moment but a series of little acts done over time.

So, here you are at the end of the book and the beginning of your journey. The road is long and winding. There are no shortcuts in this relationship called marriage. There is no quick fix. For those of you willing to make the commitment, willing to put in the time and effort, you truly can create an extraordinary beginning from where you are today.



Thoughts from Tony

It changes everything.

Everything that I do now, I do with the understanding that divorce is NOT an option in my marriage. I choose not to put myself in situations that could be misinterpreted. I choose not to have secrets from Alisa. I choose not to hide any part of my life.

Why?

The simple answer is because it's not worth it. It's not worth losing the gift that I have been given in Alisa. It's not worth destroying my family. It's not worth the pain.

Is this hard? Sometimes. Does it make a difference? All the time.

My wife knows that I value her above all things. Our children know that our marriage is a priority to the two of us. Our friends and family see what has happened in our marriage over the years and they know that life is different now.

The difference is the commitment. The difference is choosing my marriage and being intentional about it.

Marriage isn't something that you can just sit back and not be involved in. It takes the two of you making the choice to create something extraordinary.

Love You Guys

Tony and Alisa have been married for 19 years and not all of them have been happy ones. Like you, they came together with every good intention and “forever” in mind, but then “life” happened and they found themselves ill prepared to deal with their marriage challenges.

Not only were they struggling as a couple but they were also both struggling with their own personal hurdles independent of one another. Their “bumps in the road” were actually mountains in their eyes and they knew that in order to get to the other side, keep their family together, and experience a loving, intimate marriage, they were going to need to dig deep and address their circumstances head-on.



Dealing with it all was their commitment to each other. Together, they overcame Tony’s 18-year addiction to pornography, the loss of a child at 18 weeks, debt in excess of \$50,000, poor communication, lack of collective interests, and questioning trust. But, the key word here is “together.”

They have learned some hard knock life lessons and have discovered key principles that have kept their marriage (and sex life) alive and flourishing...and they did it together. You can do the same!

Love you guys,

Tony and Alisa DiLorenzo

A Prayer for All Marriages

Father God,

You are the healer. You heal the emotional wounds of our lives and in this moment I know that you are at work in this couple's life. You tell us throughout the Bible to be not afraid. In this dark hour, it can be hard to live out those words. I pray strength and commitment for this couple that they will lean on you and lean into you when they feel weak, when they feel like they cannot go on.

It is your joy to see marriages whole and thriving.

You will provide the resources for this couple, the people who will help to build their marriage, the strategies that they need to change their behavior. You reveal to them, through the Holy Spirit, the changes that they need to make individually so that they can be better for one another.

Two become one. For too long, God, they have been acting more as two instead of one. Now, God, it is their time. Their time to rekindle the bond that they once had, their time to make a difference in their future. I know that this is your desire for them. I know with you and with a commitment to each other they will have that trust factor restored.

Your word tells us that when we cry out to you, you hear us. In this season of crying, Lord, we thank you that you are the ultimate comforter, that your arms are always wrapped around us, that you will never send us away, no matter what we have done.

Empower this couple, God, with the strength and the wisdom to make their marriage one that is a testimony to your glory.

Amen.

God's Promises

"Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield, your very great reward."

Genesis 15:1 New International Version (NIV)

"At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, 'Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?'

Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven."

Matthew 18:21-22 The Message (MSG)

"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part."

Matthew 6:14-15 The Message (MSG)

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14 New International Version (NIV)

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9 New International Version (NIV)

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

1 Corinthians 11:1 New International Version (NIV)

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Galatians 6:10 New International Version (NIV)

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

James 1:19-20 New International Version (NIV)

Gratitude Sheet

Today (Monday) I am grateful for...

Today (Tuesday) I am grateful for...

Today (Wednesday) I am grateful for...

Today (Thursday) I am grateful for...

Today (Friday) I am grateful for...

Today (Saturday) I am grateful for...

Today (Sunday) I am grateful for...

His Goal Sheet

My 30-day goal for OUR MARRIAGE is:

My 30-day goal for MYSELF is:

I know a key area that I have to work on is: _____

In order to make our marriage what we both desire, I commit to doing the following for the next 30 days:

Her Goal Sheet

My 30-day goal for OUR MARRIAGE is:

My 30-day goal for MYSELF is:

I know a key area that I have to work on is: _____

In order to make our marriage what we both desire, I commit to doing the following for the next 30 days:

Resources from ONE Extraordinary Marriage

[Trust Me! Restore, Renew & Rebuild Your Foundation](#)

[He Zigs, She Zags: Get Your Communication on the Same Path](#)

[Connect Like You Did When You First Met: 101 Proven Questions For Couples](#)

[7 Days of Sex Challenge: Rock Your Sex Life and Your Marriage](#)

[Stripped Down: 13 Keys to Unlocking Intimacy in Your Marriage](#)

[Intimacy Reignited: Bring Back the Spark In Your Love Life](#)

[Contract of Reconciliation](#)

[Core Values Workshop](#)

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