
Your Partner Is Addicted To Sex &/or Porn

The Partner Survival Guide

By,
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I have also Survived and Thrived From My Husband's Sex & Porn Addiction



Introduction

You just discovered that your partner is addicted to porn and/or sex, he is a liar - and he is finally recognizing that he has a problem, or maybe even showing a willingness to get help. You feel betrayed, alone, scared, overwhelmed and basically like you may never survive this insanity. This is a very scary time for you, I know, I've been there myself.

I am Michelle Perra, Certified Professional Life Coach, and my passion is helping partners, like you move forward from this crazy storm so you not only



survive but thrive. Remember, storms come and bring chaos - but after the storm there is always light and through that light beautiful flowers CAN grow. You CAN choose to be a beautiful flower and grow in powerful ways. (I know it sounds like a cheesy cliché - but it's very true.)

When we are forced to suffer and move forward through our partner's sex or porn addiction, we are often faced with the challenge of HOW to move forward or just simply HOW to get through each day. I know right now it's hard and it may even seem hopeless, but I assure you it is not. You have no idea what the future holds and that's ok ... you will survive - and this guide is going to teach you some powerful techniques and teachings designed to empower you!

Once you begin focusing on and taking care of you, then you open yourself up to how you can use this crap-storm to grow and learn about yourself. I find that

we can all use a little coaching, motivation, inspiration and action to help empower us to begin creating the life that WE want to live.

There are all different ways to manage this crisis or trauma and there also may be lots of work for you to do. Along with that work are many important things that you can do right now to make your life better, help you handle your emotions and empower yourself to make the right choices for YOU.

I am a coach, so my approach is to help you control the one thing you DO have control over - and that's YOU. The steps in this book can help you do just that. And with that, you will be better able to manage this crisis or looking at it from another perspective - this healing or growth period.

This book may not fix everything but it will create a strong foundation for you to build from. This will help you to better navigate these waters for yourself as well as for the relationship.

Again, the reality is the only thing we can control is ourselves. This is one of our most important life lessons. It teaches us that we need to know how to work through this trauma (and any others thrown our way) and live in the present moment to move forward and be happy in whatever way that looks. Moving forward and empowering ourselves helps us make the best decisions that we can. These are invaluable life lessons and although this applies directly to the crisis that you are currently going through, it also applies to the rest of our lives.

I need to take a moment and recognize the traumatic nature of what you've gone through, I've been there too. This book speaks from a place of empowerment and I just want to make clear that this does not diminish your pain and trauma. In fact, it supports it in a very powerful way. Here's how: When you are in the throws of trauma your emotions are swirling, you feel unsafe and your world is literally changing right before your eyes. Because of this you need tools, techniques, teachings and structure to help you find the path that is going to empower YOU.

When faced with a crisis or a challenge, how are you going to cope, learn from it, grow and change in awesome ways? The truth is that you can use this opportunity to do all of these things. And I know right now, you need help doing that. Like I did, you need to learn techniques and tools to drive positive thinking to empower you, I strive to empower my partners and not let the circumstances in our lives suck the life out of us! Life is too short for that!

I put together this “Survival Guide” to help give partners a different perspective and techniques to help you cope in a more positive and empowering way. You need a framework to help you realize that you ARE OK and you WILL be OK -



THAT YOU WILL SURVIVE ... No Matter What!

Often, it helps to know that I have gone through it too, you are not alone and I know a path to finding happiness. There are many other paths, but this is mine and it has helped so many other women as well. Again, this book won't fix everything (and there is more work that you will need to do) but it WILL start you on a journey to calm your emotions and empower yourself so you can open

your mind to receive the challenges that lie ahead. Receiving these challenges from a place of empowerment will begin the path to healing and growth.

Craig and I not only survived but we turned the worst thing that ever happened to us into a place for us both to find our strength and happiness. We've created a deeper love than I ever imagined. We are close and connected. We are a team, both personally and professionally. We've built an international coaching practice that has led to me appearing on Anderson Cooper and both of us on The Katie Couric Show - our great life all built on the darkest part of our relationship - Craig's compulsive sexual behavior.

Whether it's with your partner or without **You Can Survive & Thrive!**

Use the tools in this guide. And remember:

You Are Not Alone!

Here are a few additional resources that might help you right now:

Our FREE podcast **Sex Addictions & Porn Afflictions** where Craig and I talk candidly about relationships and healing together as a couple:

<http://www.spreaker.com/user/sexaddiction>

You can learn more about Craig and what **The Mindful Habit** is and how it promotes and creates powerful behavior change quickly in our men. Craig works with men in 15 countries and has developed an international reputation for driving change fast. Click here to learn more about his programs:

<http://www.themindfulhabit.com>

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1. Take Time To Make Any BIG Decisions



Once you discover your partner's sex or porn addiction, you are bombarded with an intense barrage of emotions. I know - I've experienced all of these emotions too. Anger, fear, resentment, anxiety, confusion, humiliation ... I can keep going but I think you get the idea. The big decision of "Should I stay or should I go?" is different for everyone. At this point (if you haven't bolted already) it's a good idea to take some time to take care of yourself, process your intense emotions, and see how your partner embraces this opportunity to jump into a recovery program and begin creating a passion-filled life. It's also a great opportunity for you to learn more about yourself and grow.

You Do Not Need To Make Any Big Decision About Your Relationship Immediately!

No decision does NOT mean that you have to stay or that you have to go. It is OK to just be right here and right now and take it one day at a time. In fact, that is the healthiest place you can be. You are free to leave at any point and at any time in your relationship. It's important to recognize that you can CHOOSE to take time and process this. You did not choose for this to happen but you can CHOOSE what you want to do. And you don't need to rush into making that decision if you don't want to. You can choose to see what happens ... with an understanding that it doesn't mean that you have forgiven your partner. It just means that you are taking this one day at a time and aren't leaving or kicking him out today.

The important thing is not to judge yourself right now and rush into a decision because of fear or insecurity. We tend to think, “what kind of person would I be if I stayed?” or fear how others will judge us if they knew the truth. But I want to stress that it is ok if you need time to figure out what you want to do and what YOUR path will be.

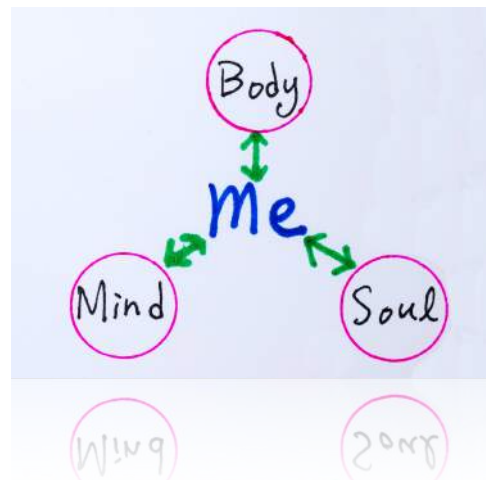
For me, I didn't know what I wanted when my husband and I went through this. In fact, I wanted to bolt (there was no way I could stay with him — but there was a small part of me that did not want to give up on our marriage) but I needed time to get myself together financially. So, I chose the slow route which really helped me sort through the mess. I wasn't ready to rush into a decision and that ended up being a good decision for us. Many of the women I work with aren't ready to make a decision ... they just need time.

One thing to remember is that people CAN change. We see it everyday. Some men embrace recovery and completely change their lives — some don't. Some couples embrace the hard work and end up with a completely happy, fulfilled relationship, and some just can't move past this. That is why sometimes a quick decision may not allow you the time to see what it is that you TRULY want.

This can also be a powerful time for YOU, a time where you can grow, learn new ways of coping and connect with yourself in powerful ways. It is so important to make decisions on your relationship from a place of strength and empowerment and not a place where you are reacting out of fear or your overwhelmed emotions.

2. Take Care of YOURSELF

This is a time when you need to focus on taking care of yourself. It is not a time to crawl into a corner and let the crap of life bury you alive. You cannot begin to heal if you don't take care of you. Remember, we *want* our men we don't *need* our men (although, right now you may not want him at all and that's ok too). Nurturing comes from within ourselves, it doesn't need to come from him. In fact, the more you begin to nurture yourself, the more empowered you will be.



You CAN take care of yourself, so think about how you would do that. Focus on what you need to feel positive and healthy. This is about you and understanding HOW to take care of YOU. As women, we often spend so much of our time taking care of everyone else that we forget to prioritize ourselves and our own emotional health. This will force you to do just that — it is very important. Be proactive in your own healing and not just in how to “fix” your husband.

The only thing we have complete control over is OURSELVES.

This is obvious, I know, but when we are going through this phase we focus so much on our pain that we forget about the things that we need to be healthy. We cannot heal emotionally if we don't also take care of ourselves physically. This is VERY IMPORTANT. I'm going to teach you five things that you can start doing right now to improve your well being.

We call these things the *FUNDAMENTAL FIVE*. These are 5 things that you need to do to put yourself in an emotionally stable place. Without focusing on these things you are going to have a harder time not getting sucked down the toilet bowl of despair. This is part of taking care of you, and I strongly believe

that you cannot take care of yourself emotionally and begin to heal if you are not doing these things.

These 5 areas are often overlooked when we feel we are suffering ... but that is exactly the time when we should focus on them. When we have suffered a trauma or betrayal such as this we often find it hard just to get through the day. So, you do whatever you can to just survive. Your mind can't focus, you feel like crap, you can't sleep you get the idea. So, those are the things that you need to focus on first, the basic things that keep us well. We can't begin to heal or "survive" unless we take care of ourselves.

This is a great life lesson for your entire life as well. We need to prioritize these things, each and every day so let's start now!

Here are the **Fundamental Five** — the 5 things you need to focus on right now to begin taking care of yourself:

Fundamental Five

Eat Well

Don't forget to eat healthy. Take care of your body and the mind will follow. There is a time when we eat a treat (like ice cream or chips or a big chocolate or yummy latte) to soothe our soul but there is also a line between treating ourselves and using food to cope. Make sure you are making healthy eating choices that feel good and not over-eating to numb your pain or allowing food to become your self soother. This is very important.

Sleep & Rest

This is another crucial thing that you need to do. Get plenty of sleep. If you don't sleep, your brain won't work properly and you will feel more anxiety and depression. It may be hard to sleep because of the craziness that is swirling

around you, but if you absolutely can't sleep, try to rest your body. If you need to lay on the couch and watch a mindless movie (a Twilight marathon was my choice) then do it without feeling guilty. Take care of you and get the rest you need. Now, this doesn't mean lay in bed without being able to lift your head off the pillow for 3 days but it does mean allow yourself to be unproductive at times, allow yourself the space to escape into a good book and not fold the laundry, and allow yourself to get to bed early so you can get a good night's sleep ... you get the idea!

Hydrate

Don't forget to drink enough water throughout the day. If you don't drink enough water you will become dehydrated, feel like crap and get a headache. You are probably close to getting a headache from all of your stress right now so not drinking enough water will just make that headache worse. You cannot heal your soul if you aren't taking care of the basics and we forget the basics when we are depressed and angry. If your pee is really yellow you need more water. This is a simple way to bring your mind to the present moment. So drink water, it's crucial.

Exercise

We all know that exercise is critical to our physical and mental health. It has been proven that exercise alleviates depression and anxiety. Exercise releases endorphins, the brain's pleasure; or "feel better" substance. So, as hard as it seems to get up and exercise — do it. Even if it is just a walk around the block, do something and prioritize this, it's important. And do it every day!

Mindfulness

This concept is so important, and new to a lot of people, that I go into a bigger explanation in chapter 6. It is crucial for healing, health, trauma and just going about life. The point of mindfulness is to learn to relax your mind and focus on the present (without the onslaught of thoughts, emotions, planning, fixing, etc.) It's being present with the moment, right here and right now. Doing this can

help you cope with intense emotions and find comfort in grounding yourself and finding peace.

Try this technique:

- **Keep a journal and track what you are doing in each of the Fundamental Five areas each day for 7 days.**
 - Eating
 - Sleeping & Resting
 - Hydrating
 - Exercise
 - Mindfulness
- **Record the positive things you do and also the negative things you would like to work on.**
- **Set 1 mini, teeny, tiny goal for each category each day. Make each goal small and attainable.**



This is a time when **YOU** should be proactive in **YOUR Own Healing**.

3. Find Support for Yourself



It is so important during this time to find support for yourself to help you navigate this scary storm. Remember, storms CAN calm and bring forth amazing beauty and peace. Connect with a coach, counselor, spiritual advisor, trusted friend or family member, bloggers, or a support group. Connect with other people so you don't feel so alone. Many people have been through what you are going through right now! It helps when we can voice our emotions and our fears, in a safe non judgmental environment. We are

better able to move forward when we have support.

The one thing that I caution you about is getting too immersed in researching on the internet. The internet can provide much needed support and it can also send you into a tailspin. You want information that can support and empower you - resources that provide hope and strength not judgements and absolutes.

Just remember, it's important to reach out for some support during this journey. Reach out and don't isolate yourself. Connect with others who are open-minded and supportive, not judgmental.

Here is a link to our podcast that Craig and I do together to provide that kind of positive healing and support that so many of you need. We survived and thrived from the insanity of this and that is why we started doing what we do. We know what you are going through because we have been there too.

Here are a few resources that may help:

[Sex Addictions & Porn Afflictions Podcast](#)



The image shows a podcast player interface. On the left is a square cover image of a couple embracing on a beach at sunset. To the right of the image, the text reads: 'Sex and Porn Addiction Help' with a 'PRO' badge, followed by the title 'Embracing Change Through Crisis'. Below the title are icons for likes (0), views (1,163), comments (0), and a timestamp 'about 1 year ago'. A list of tags follows: '#change', '#crisis', '#growth', '#katy perry', '#opportunity', '#porn', '#recovery', '#relationship', '#sex addiction'. Below the tags is the channel name 'Sex Afflictions & Porn Addictions'. The player controls include a play button, a progress bar with a volume icon, and a timestamp '00:00/51:44'. At the bottom are buttons for 'LIKE', 'SHARE', 'EMBED', 'DOWNLOAD', 'EDIT', and 'STATISTICS'.

[Partners Of Sex Addicts Resource Center](#)

[Feed The Right Wolf Partner Support Forum](#)

[A Couple's Guide To Sex Addiction](#)

[I Survived My Husband's Sex Addiction Blog](#)

I just want to give you a quick warning here; support forums are ripe with horror stories and inaccuracies. The forums can be supportive and helpful AND they can also send you into a tailspin. I've seen it many times. Find a balance and make sure what you're reading is moving you toward your goals and not creating more anxiety for you. Gravitate toward positivity and empowerment, not anger and bitterness.

4. Feel Your Feelings Without Judgement

This is a time where your emotions are ALL over the place. You are so confused and there are so many questions going through your mind. It is good to feel all of those emotions — the bad *and* the good. The negative, traumatic emotions can co-exist with positive emotions too. Actually this is important. Don't push either one away — you are allowed, in fact you should, feel them all. It's important to feel them in their entirety and allow the negativity to run its course while not tainting ALL of the good feelings.



You can't push the negative away so that you are blind to the truth of what happened. You also can't push the positive away so you get so sucked into the trauma of what you have experienced that you see no way to survive. The truth is that you WILL survive no matter how this turns out. You need to be in reality and your reality has more than one side, so don't try to tell yourself how to feel right now.

You can hate your man right now AND also love him and want him to get better. It's OK to want to run as far away as you can and also want badly to fix your relationship. It's ok to feel like you will never be able to get past this and at the same time feel unsure if you truly want your relationship to be completely over. Feel it all, because time will tell how he embraces recovery and how you work on your relationship and how you work on you. So, right now you need to feel it all so you can sort through the crap and heal yourself.

Remember, the sadness can co-exist with what is great and amazing in your life too. Focus on those things as well and once you do, you will find that negative feelings will have less of an impact on your mind and on your life.

This is also a time to NOT judge yourself for the choices you have made, or how stupid you feel, or how shameful this situation is for you. It's hard - and we sometimes end up in situations where we wake up one day and wonder "how could I be in this?" or "I always told myself I would never be with a guy like this" or "how can I stay?" or "what kind of person would I be if I forgive him?" or "how could I not have seen the signs?" I could go on but I won't.

The point I want to make is that we often judge ourselves because of the choices we made or didn't make. The important thing is that you give yourself compassion for everything you are feeling and for you to look at this as a way to learn what you could do different in the future.

Try This Exercise:

The goal of this exercise is to bring awareness and compassion to your negative thoughts or feelings AND help you stay in reality and not get sucked down the drain of despair. You feel the negative, right now it's natural, but this exercise will help you then temper it with reality and bring more positivity to you during times when you really need it.

It's important to feel the negative right now but it's more important not to get stuck there because that is not the place for us to heal.

Track Your Triggers & Thoughts

- Track your triggers and thoughts for 7 days in writing.
- Track what **triggers** you and what your immediate **thought** is that follows. Be precise.
- Do your thoughts come when triggered of something that reminds you to be sad, angry, overwhelmed, scared, etc?
- Understand the triggers. Is there a pattern?

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- What can you do to snap yourself out of the stuck-like effect of the trigger/thought pattern and not let your emotions snowball out of reality. You are here and you are now.

Challenge The Reality Of Your Thoughts

- Our negative triggers and emotions fuel our negative thoughts. The negative thoughts seem so intense and so accurate and so factual - but often they are not. The energy around them comes from anger, resentment, vulnerability, protection (of ourselves), insecurity, etc.
 - Although this is very understandable, this emotional energy doesn't empower you. Rather it's disempowering - it's a scary, unsafe feeling that's ridden with anxiety. It doesn't connect you with your true needs.
- We CAN bring the thoughts out of our emotions and understand them from a place of empowerment and true reality. For example:
 - When you have an angry thought and you want to lash out - your true feeling may be actually that you feel hurt and insecure. Ask yourself, what do you really need?
 - When you feel like you aren't going to make it another day - the reality is that you will be ok! Tell yourself that. BECAUSE IT'S TRUE!
 - If your partner upsets you - the reality is that you can choose to not let his negativity suck the life out of you. You can choose to meet up with a friend, play with your kids, exercise or do something that makes you happy.

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- What are your thoughts saying to you? What do they truly mean?
 - Are they realistic statements or are they projections developed and snowballed by what you feel?
 - What could you say to yourself instead of that thought? Challenge the thought and actively create a more positive thought.
 - Develop arguments against the thought and see whether the thought is based on true reality. Develop arguments against them as to why they aren't necessarily true. Actively change that thought and SAY IT OUT LOUD to yourself.

This literally is the difference between swirling in the toilet bowl of despair and moving forward. This is a great place to begin to understand how **YOU** can control **YOU**. This control helps to build a foundation for your own emotional safety, empowerment, and also communication with your partner.

Gratitude

- Make a list of 20 things that you are grateful for in your life.
- Every morning, mid-day and before bed say these things to yourself to remind you what you are grateful for.
- Retrain your **BRAIN** to think positively and focus on what is **AMAZING** and good in your life.
- Even throughout your day recite them to yourself often, especially when you feel yourself spiraling into sadness. It helps remind you that

you WILL survive this with or without your partner. There are many other things to be grateful for.

Throughout your day pay attention to the little things that make you smile. We often go through our life with blinders on, just focused on the one thing that is in front of us — and that one thing is not the entire picture of life. Don't lose sight of everything else around you. So, when you experience something small that you are grateful for — take a moment, stop, and say to yourself “That made me smile.” The more positivity we say in our heads to ourselves, the easier it is to cope with negative situations.

One quick tip — feeling your negative feelings and being there for yourself does not justify yelling, screaming, belittling, etc. Remember, we are trying to support YOU and although yelling and belittling your partner feels better in the moment, it won't help you get closer to what you want. And what you want is support, empathy and change. So, start supporting yourself in a positive and nurturing way.

The next section is about good communication. Feel your feelings and be honest with them, but remember that your goal is to get closer to what you want and not to alienate your partner in a way that causes you even more stress.

5. Focus On Effective Communication

It's important to use language and communication styles that will empower you and not send you into a pissing contest with your defensive spouse. The goal is NOT to shame and blame your partner but to help them learn to express empathy for what you are going through. That is how you will begin to create an atmosphere where moving forward and healing can happen. Empathy allows true change and growth to happen. Without empathy the path won't work and shaming, blaming, yelling, etc. just pours more fuel on an already growing flame.

When talking to your partner, concentrate on what it is that you FEEL and what it is that you NEED. Use "I feel" language, not "You did" language — we want to encourage communication and understanding of your hurt in all of this (empathy). When we continue to communicate in a blaming way, the other person is much more likely to become defensive and shut down. This won't help you get what you want. If your partner has embraced the path of healing and recovery than it is important for us to communicate in a way where we begin working together as a team.

It is also important to be very clear in what you NEED. If you don't know what you need just say that you are confused. We often get into trouble when we make assumptions that our partner should know what to say and how to act. They need to learn, because frankly they have no idea (and they need to learn MANY things) and that is a great place for us to start as well — learning to be clear in what we need.

Another effective technique is to actively redefine what it means to win the discussion or the argument. "Winning" the argument is actually getting what you want, it isn't screaming the loudest or putting the other person "in their place." In the moment that may seem like you won but it makes that wall between you two even higher. The reality is, we want the other person to understand our perspective and effective communication helps you get closer to

that. This is a crucial step in getting closer too. Once you can see that winning the argument is really getting what you want, not making your point over and over at an increasing volume or putting down your spouse, you can approach discussions so much differently.

Embracing healthy communication will help you get closer to what you want and also help empower you throughout your life.

Here are a few basic communication tips that help create discussions, rather than arguments:

- Use “I feel” language instead of “You do” language
- Refrain from shaming and blaming
- Avoid using the words “always” or “never” when describing what you are feeling.
- Try to be a good listener when you are having a discussion. Again, you want to help him learn empathy and you do this by communicating, not yelling.

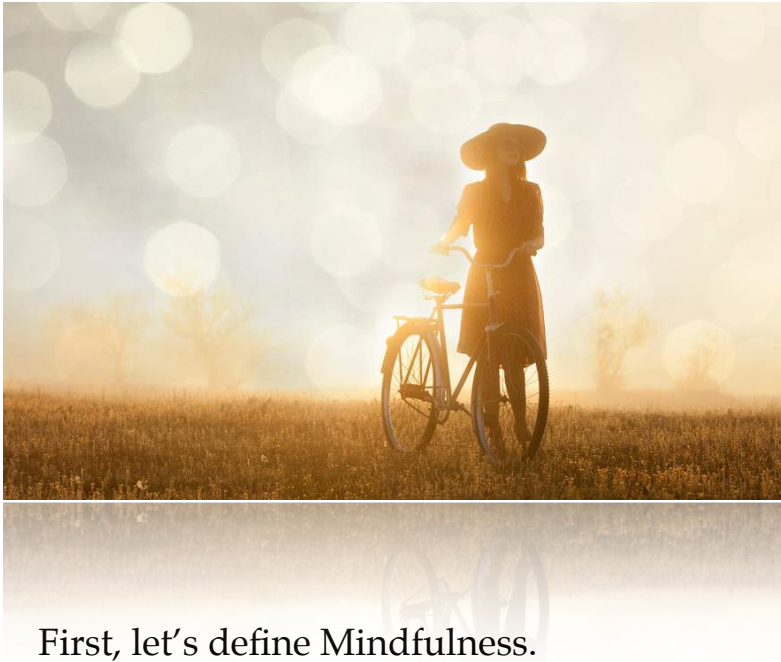
When you engage in a discussion, ask yourself these questions:

- What do you REALLY want to accomplish from this discussion?
- Is your current approach getting you closer to what you want?
- How could you approach this discussion differently to get what you want?

Try this technique to help you begin to communicate in an open way:

- I feel _____ when you _____ because it makes me feel _____.
- I need _____ from you right now to help me feel _____.

6. Mindfulness



A technique that more and more mental health professionals are using in their work is called *mindfulness*. I talked about mindfulness in the Taking Care of Yourself section. This is so important that it truly needs its own explanation. At its core, mindfulness is a way to be present and in the moment without judgement.

First, let's define Mindfulness.

- **Mindfulness** = being present, not living in the past, not automatically reacting to external stimuli, for example, reacting from a place of anger toward your partner. It's being HERE and being NOW.

To do this, you focus on the exact thing you are doing to the exclusion of all else - instead of thoughts in your mind constantly bouncing around your head. When you walk - walk, when you talk - talk, when you eat - eat, focus on what you are doing now!

It is so crucial to embrace this concept in order to open pathways to move forward. And when I say moving forward, I mean whether you stay in your relationship or not. Mindfulness is a cornerstone of healing either way.

Mindfulness techniques are VERY effective in helping calm our brains, centering our energy, bringing us back to a state of reality. The goal of mindfulness is to bring our mind to the present moment. Take in the moment and all that is around you without judgement and without having your mind be attacked by the onslaught of emotions.

Learn to relax your mind and focus on the present. When you can do that you can learn to stay away from the intense emotions and find comfort in grounding yourself and providing peace to yourself.

Simple Mindfulness Exercise

This exercise focuses on simple breathing and awareness. It will help you get started with the concept of mindfulness:

- Start By Getting In A Comfortable Position - Either laying down or sitting up, it doesn't matter as long as you are comfortable.
- Take a few deep breaths, and then breathe normally. When you are breathing normally, notice the different sensations that you feel in your chest and abdomen when you inhale and when you exhale.
- Notice how the other parts of your body feel including your shoulders, neck, arms, legs, etc. To do that, bring your attention to each part of your body and note any tension. It is important to be aware of how your body feels right here in the present moment. Do this slowly.
- Next, focus your awareness on your other senses.
 - What do you hear around you?
 - What do you smell?
 - Take note of any tastes in your mouth.
 - What do you see in this moment around you?
 - What sensations do you feel within you?

The idea of the exercise is to focus on the “here and now” or “this moment” and what is being experienced through your five senses. Your mind will wander to other things, other thoughts, things you have to do, maybe past or future

worries — basically, it moves away from the present. Lovingly, guide your mind back to the present.

This is also a good exercise to do while you are eating, taking a walk or even stuck in traffic. And it's super important when you lay down to go to sleep at night because if you are anything like me that's when the thoughts come barreling into your brain. The second your body settles in for rest the thoughts come crashing down, then the anxiety comes, then the anger, then the tears need I go on? Well, this is the perfect place for mindfulness — to calm the brain!

I can't stress this enough: mindfulness is such an important habit to create in your life. Here are some helpful resources to help you learn mindfulness and begin incorporating it into your daily life.

[Get Some Headspace](#)

[UCLA Free Mindfulness Downloads](#)

[Mindfulness in Plain English - PDF](#)



7. Create HEALTHY Boundaries

Learning to create healthy boundaries that empower YOU but don't alienate your spouse is one of the best ways to gain back that feeling that you have lost



control. It's very scary to feel like we have NO control over what happens next. You don't have control over your partner's behavior but the reality is that you DO have control of your own life and where you want to go. Creating healthy boundaries can also help your partner begin to understand the impact that their behavior has had on you. It's a crucial step.

Step 1.

The first step is to establish those behaviors that are “absolutes” (as I like to call them) for you. This list shows your partner the things that NEED to be honored or the relationship will most likely not be able to continue. They aren't negotiable and don't leave much room for mistakes, because that is where you must draw your line. You decide what an absolute is to you.

Here are a few examples that might be on this list:

- Being active in a strong recovery program
- No verbal or physical abuse
- No strippers, escorts or outside affairs
- STD testing before you will have sex

Step 2.

The next step with creating boundaries is to look at it through the lens of safety. When I say safety, I mean emotional safety. I like to focus the larger part of our “boundaries” on bringing awareness to our emotional safety. Safety is the foundation upon which trust, vulnerability and intimacy rest.

We need to create a new level of emotional safety because if we don’t feel emotionally safe we cannot move forward. And we cannot move forward without trust. In order to re-build trust we must first establish groundwork for safety. Again, when I say safety I am referring to emotional safety.

Emotional safety is crucial and without it you will have an extremely hard time healing.

I believe many of our boundaries come from our emotional safety. By defining this concept clearly, you create a way for your partner to understand what makes you feel unsafe and why, and as a result you will become more effective at setting boundaries.

Exercise

Create a list using the following sentences. This helps define what you NEED. It leaves room for us to make mistakes and gives us a framework for language that we can all understand.

Fill in the blanks:

- I feel safe when you _____ because it makes me feel _____.
- I feel unsafe when you _____ because it makes me feel _____.
I would like you to do _____ instead.

Try to incorporate this language into your communications with each other, not from a place of blame but from a place of support and understanding.

Now, this doesn't mean that your partner is going to be perfect and do everything right. In fact, mistakes are inevitable. So, when he does something that makes you feel uncomfortable and "unsafe" use that language to teach your partner about your needs and boundaries. Then it gives you both a framework to work from and learn from.

So, to build on the exercise above, when you are letting your partner know how something makes you feel unsafe, give them an example of something they could do instead that would have made you feel safe. This can be an empowering way of communicating and setting boundaries. The reality is that much of this growth and healing gets stuck in the gray zone (not in the "absolute" category) so working with each other allows you to move forward together in a new way.

8. Focus on the Present & Move Forward

Now, this is something that is **HARD** to do at the beginning. It's **VERY HARD!** Give yourself some time to get to this part **AFTER** you have processed the shock of what has happened and you have spent some time grieving the relationship that you thought you had. Now it's time to move forward in your life. Staying stuck in the past will not help you create your own happiness.

Acceptance simply means that you acknowledge the past as an unchangeable reality and that you **CHOOSE** to move in the forward direction with your life. You have a **CHOICE** between staying stuck in the past or understanding that you have **CHOSEN** to stay for now and try to work this out. Now, this doesn't mean that you can't leave the relationship at any time if you make a decision that this isn't right for you, but it does help you open your mind to the opportunity of healing within yourself and your relationship. You can't do this if you stay stuck in the past.

So, also choose to see that change can happen and people can change! Start your new life today. Don't forget the past (that is impossible to do) but use it as a place to learn about yourself, your partner, what you want, what you don't want, and what you can do differently. This also helps you create your boundaries.

Remember, sometimes when the crap hits the fan and the pieces of our life are thrown all about it gives us an opportunity to look at life differently, through a new lens and that helps us create what we **DO** want. That may be with your



partner and it may not be, but you can't heal if you stay stuck in the crap of what happened.

Moving forward is not forgetting the past — the past is the past — but choosing to MOVE FORWARD and accept what has happened and that there is nothing you can do to change it. What you can change is the here and now. If you don't like his current behavior, discuss how that makes you feel NOW. GO back to the communication tips that I gave you to communicate how his behavior NOW makes you feel. Maybe it is triggering for you? Maybe you are scared? You have a hard time trusting him, but focus on the NOW because in the end that is what we currently have.

Now, this DOES NOT mean that you now should move forward and trust him because you have moved on from the past. Trust is re-built over time and does not get restored easily. But it does mean you recognize WHY you don't have trust (obviously this is not hard to figure out) and focus on what you NEED from him now to feel trust and if it's even possible.

Acceptance is a practical strategy that allows you to move forward with your relationship without wrestling with all of the difficult connotations of forgiveness. You may never forgive him for what happened, or you may, but the important thing to focus on is that you can't change the past, but you can change how you react right NOW.

9. Do Something Special - Hobbies

Making time for the things that YOU like to do is important right now. That is part of taking care of yourself. Participating in our hobbies feeds our soul, so prioritize them. You know what these things are, so make it a point to do them. Even if that means not cooking dinner tonight or leaving the washed laundry unfolded in a pile or not cleaning the house for a few days. Make time for healthy things that you like to do and that can help you step off your emotional roller coaster for a while!

Think about things you do now that bring you peace or comfort. Think about things you used to do that you haven't prioritized in a while. Think about things that you have always wanted to try. Maybe it's joining a club, trying a new activity, getting outside more or carving out some quiet time to read (one of my personal favorites).

It may help to engage in an activity that gets you out of the house, meet new people (or connect with friends) or just help you not isolate yourself because you feel so alone. Doing something that gets your mind off the anxiety you have right now is often what's needed.

It may be hard to try new things right now, emotionally you are just trying to survive, but it is *so* important to remember that our happiness and peace comes from focusing on the things that we WANT and not on things we DON'T WANT. If things are too stressful at home then at least you are in control of YOUR own life.

Change your perspective and begin focusing on what you DO want. Find it for yourself and get involved in hobbies or activities that you do want. I promise you it will make a difference in your healing. This strategy will also help you realize that you are in control of YOUR OWN HAPPINESS.

Exercise

So, figure out what hobbies or activities may bring you joy, happiness, exercise, etc. Create a list and then make the effort to do it. Change only happens with action and this is an important step in coping with stress. Write out your answers to these questions.

- **What are the activities that you LOVE to do?**
- **What hobbies or activities bring you a sense of peace?**
- **What have you always wanted to do but felt that you didn't have the time for?**
- **What is something you want to do but are too scared to try?**
- **Is there an organization or club that would be fun to join that would help you meet new people?**

Now, this doesn't mean you all of a sudden have to jump out of an airplane (because you always wanted to do that) and frankly you may not have the emotional energy to do anything too crazy. But the truth is that once you start actively DECIDING what it is that you WANT to do, you can start taking small action steps toward doing things that make YOU feel good.

When you feel good, you can approach this from a much stronger place!

10. Bring Awareness To The Positive: The Opportunities



This is going to sound crazy. I want you to make a list of how this madness could actually improve your relationship. This will help you focus on the entire picture and not just fixate on being a victim. Although, this is an awful thing to go through, often times (if healing and recovery is embraced) it can be the catalyst for much needed change in a

relationship that's been on a downward decline for years. This discovery can give our men the push they need to make MUCH needed change in their lives and in your relationship.

Even if this discovery was a complete surprise and your relationship was never on a decline we ALL could work on our connection, intimacy and communication with our partners.

And it can also be a time where you are able to look at the energy that you bring to your life and look at YOU differently as well. We may not always be able to control the things that happen to us but we CAN control how we let them affect us. We can choose to grow from the crap that life sometimes gives us or we can choose to swirl in the pain of it all. When we experience difficult challenges we are forced to make change, and that change is often a GOOD THING!!!!

And then there's this - at it's core, this is an injury to love, intimacy, and connectedness. The only way the relationship is going to survive this is with more love, intimacy and connectedness - if our men can embrace this, it's possible to create a great relationship going forward.

This perspective is crucial with healing. It's important to stop fearing the unknown. I always say "Stop Fearing The Fear." We are so fearful of what *might* happen in the future: What if they cheat again? What if we support them and they leave us? What if we waste more of our life with this jerk? What if ... what if ... what if ... what if????????? ...

The truth is we never have any guarantees in life anyway. *What if's* are all over the place and we really have no control over them. We think we have control of our future but the reality is we don't. We can have a plan but we have to learn to embrace the fact that we never truly know what will happen. When we can stop *Fearing our Fear*, we can start moving forward fully and wholly and realizing that WE WILL BE OK NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IN LIFE.

You, my friend, are a SURVIVOR — if you CHOOSE to be. So, if it doesn't work out you will move on, survive and create a great new life for yourself!!!!

So, answer these questions

- **What if** this experience helps you and your partner get closer together and create a happier relationship with communication, love and respect?
 - What would your life look like?
- **What if** embracing a recovery program helps your partner begin to be more connected in his life again?
 - What would that look like?
- **What if** you use this experience to grow as an individual and find YOUR power?
 - What would that look like?

Sometimes, changing the question with a different perspective can change your outlook on your life as well.

I have seen many relationships, mine included, that have suffered this kind of pain and betrayal end up incredible BECAUSE of what happened. Now, no one wants to go through this to get there but it does happen. It's just fact. And if growth, change and healing is embraced, well, then you learn new ways to communicate, to own your crap, take action to create a better life and basically you LEARN how to create the life you want.

And that is the change and action that most people aren't forced to make, so many people don't do growth work in their life that is needed whether you are going through a crisis or not.

So, right here and right now you have the opportunity to do work that most people don't do, and that can be an AMAZING thing!!! This is true with whichever direction this path takes you.

Now, think about the following exercise:

Answer the following questions and list as many things as you can for each question. Be as descriptive as possible:

- 1. HOW Can Your Relationship Be Better From This Experience?**
- 2. What Goals Do You Have For Your Relationship?**
- 3. What Things Do YOU Want To Work On For Yourself?**
- 4. How Can Learning All Of These Things Benefit YOU For The Future?**

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to say that I am sorry I'm sorry that you are going through this, I'm sorry that you are hurting, I'm sorry you are suffering and I'm sorry that you feel so confused right now. I truly am sorry, I remember what it was like to go through what you are going through and I wouldn't want to go through it again!

And there is hope. I promise you that! I have been there myself and I must say, I used this experience to also learn a lot about myself. Craig and I both decided that we wanted and needed change so we both did the work. We grew as individuals and then together as a couple. My point is not to tell you everything is going to be ok — I don't know that — it's different for everyone. But, I want to give you HOPE and assure you that you will survive no matter what!

Does everyone heal and grow from this? NO. BUT, the people who want to change, learn to embrace life and start creating the life they want. You can use this experience to live a better and more fulfilled life. It's about choice.

If your partner can choose to embrace a new way of living and healing you CAN move forward from this and end up truly happy in the end. You don't know how your story is going to end and it's OK to see which path your partner will choose.

Even if you don't end up with your partner, it is sad and unfair and awful ... but since you can't change what happened - you can change your perspective of the experience. Use this time as a time of healing and growth. For me, if I didn't go through what I went through I would not have had to opportunity to grow, learn and take action in much needed ways in my own life. I wouldn't be the person that I am today without it. I wouldn't be empowering women to heal & grow in their own lives. I wouldn't have learned how to be a better person for ME and for my kids. I wouldn't have learned so much about myself and all of

my relationships. I wouldn't be where I am today without it. And where is that? I'm happy, fulfilled and present in my life.

So, I will just leave you with these words. Do not let this crisis cripple you, you don't have to let the energy of this suck the life out of you and you DO have the power to create a great life for yourself. We can't avoid pain, that's for sure ... but we can choose how we move forward and learn from it.



We wish you much love and success on your journey!