

# **The Betrayed Partner's Guide to Intimacy Disorders**





Welcome to *The Betrayed Partner's Guide to Intimacy Disorders*. We're sorry to have to meet you under these circumstances. We know it's likely a challenging and worrisome time for you and your family. Begin Again Institute is here to provide you with the information and support you need to make the best decisions for you. Let's get started.

## **RECOGNIZING INTIMACY DISORDERS IN YOUR SPOUSE**

If you're reading this guide, chances are you've experienced a betrayal or may suspect something isn't quite right in your relationship. Your feelings are valid. If you think something's wrong, then this guide is here to help you gain an understanding of your circumstances.

The question we're here to help you answer is whether your spouse has an intimacy disorder. These disorders are more common than you might think, especially in men, and they can be extremely disruptive to a person's life and relationships.

Let's unpack the concept.



## **What is an intimacy disorder?**

An intimacy disorder is when a person has difficulty developing and expressing intimacy with other people.

People with intimacy disorders often unintentionally push others away when they feel like they're getting too close. They may distort reality, manipulate others, lie compulsively, or gaslight people.

Sometimes, intimacy disorders manifest themselves as addictions, including sex, pornography, or masturbation addictions. Men use these compulsive sexual behaviors to cope with unpleasant feelings, despite the negative consequences to themselves or others. Sexual behaviors then become an attempt to fill the need for intimacy without the risk of being rejected or needing to know how to truly connect.

## **Where does it originate?**

Intimacy disorders typically result from adverse early life experiences. Likely, the person wasn't able to rely on the person or people they needed to care for them, causing them emotional trauma.

Trauma can come in many forms but is often characterized as "too much" or "not enough." Too much can be abuse, such as physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, or spiritual abuse. Not enough can be cold, emotionally vacant environments or homes with little or no verbal or physical affection.

As a result, they learned the world was unsafe, and people were unreliable. As adults, they try to protect themselves by not relying on or getting too close to others.



## What are the signs of an intimacy disorder?

Below are the common signs of intimacy disorders. Check the box beside the ones that you think apply to your partner.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being distrustful of others                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting to spend increasingly more time alone or with electronic devices             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lying  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sabotaging relationships   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of interest in sex with their committed partner | <input type="checkbox"/> Insatiable sexual appetite   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty keeping promises                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Heightened concern about appearance  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to express emotions other than anger or rage  | <input type="checkbox"/> Spending excessive amounts of money or keeping spending/financial resources from you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression   | <input type="checkbox"/> Picking fights or, conversely, avoiding conflict at all costs                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Short temper   | <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping others at a distance, few close relationships                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Isolation  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pornography use  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping secrets                                      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gaslighting  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Defensiveness  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minimizing your relationship concerns                |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infidelity   |   |



## HELPING GUIDE HIM TO TREATMENT

Now that you have a better understanding of intimacy disorders, what do you do if you think your partner is experiencing these concerns?

Remember that you can't force your partner to get help for what you perceive to be an intimacy disorder. What you can do is use your newfound knowledge to explain to your partner what you think might be going on.

You can say something like this...

“ John, I am worried about emotional intimacy in our marriage. I am going to get some counseling around this, and I would like you to join me, but it's your choice.”

If your partner is willing to speak with a professional, help guide him to the next step.

Either way, you should be clear about what you are and aren't willing to do, based on the current state of your relationship. This conversation could look something like this on your side:

“ John, I'm proud that you're willing to talk to someone. I think this is an amazing step forward for you. If you decide to move forward with getting the help you need, I will continue supporting you, and I will work to get the help I need. I think we need to take this next step as soon as possible. When do you plan to call? In the meantime, I want to be clear about where I am with our relationship and what I need...”



The rest of this conversation will be unique to you and your individual situation. Answer the questions below to help you determine what you need at this time.

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Do you have access to financial support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/>		
	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Are you physically safe in the relationship?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/>		
	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Are you emotionally safe in the relationship?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” you should address the situation immediately, perhaps without having the conversation above. Your safety is your priority and of the utmost importance. Resolutions may include getting access to all bank accounts, staying with a family member or friend temporarily, or your partner moving into the guest room for the time being.

### **CONTACT ONE OF THESE RESOURCES FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE:**

#### For Episodes of Panic or Rage:

- National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE)
- Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741 in the US)

#### Other Resources:

- Association of Partners of Sex Addicts Trauma Specialists (APSATS) website, [www.apsats.org](http://www.apsats.org)



Once these safety and stability items are resolved, answer these questions:

Regardless of my spouse's actions, I am willing to...

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Regardless of my spouse's actions, I'm not willing to...

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Remember not to present your responses to these questions as ultimatums. These are boundaries you're setting for yourself. You can't force your partner to do anything, but you can clearly articulate what you need and what you are or aren't willing to do.



## WHAT TO SAY TO OTHERS ABOUT YOUR PARTNER'S TREATMENT

You don't owe anyone an explanation about your partner's treatment. Actions the two of you take for the health of your relationship are between the two of you. However, keeping others out of the loop is easier said than done. So, it's probably best if the two of you decide together how you will address seeking treatment with others.

You may want to simply say that your partner is taking some time off or away to work on their mental health and overall wellness. No one could fault someone for that.

Otherwise, think through what you will and won't say about the treatment below

What will we say to our family members about treatment?

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What do we want to avoid telling our family members about treatment?

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What will we say to our friends about treatment?

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What do we want to avoid telling our friends about treatment?

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How will we address treatment with our children?

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What do we want to protect our children from knowing about treatment?

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## **RECOGNIZING BETRAYAL TRAUMA AND HEALING FROM IT**

If your partner has an intimacy disorder of any type, it affects you. Of course, you understand that his actions impact you, but you may not fully grasp the extent of the toll relationship concerns can take on your emotional and physical health.

### **What is betrayal trauma?**

Betrayal trauma is the emotional pain a person experiences after someone they trust betrays them. The result is that the person may question their judgment and feel like they can't trust anyone again.

### **How does betrayal trauma happen?**

You don't cause betrayal trauma. It happens to you without permission and at no fault of your own.

Betrayal trauma happens when a person you rely on to provide safety, security, and support violates that deep bond of trust. The violation shatters your sense of safety, causing emotional trauma.



Considering the symptoms is a good way to know if you may be experiencing betrayal trauma. Put a check next to any of the symptoms below that you're having.

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of helplessness                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Panic attacks  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia or problems sleeping                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Developing phobias or extreme fears                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reliving or frequently thinking about the betrayal       | <input type="checkbox"/> Denial   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being on edge or excessively alert                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Being highly reactive in ways that do not align with past patterns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety  | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Experiencing intrusive thoughts or memories              | <input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness and confusion   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nightmares about betrayal                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling unlike yourself  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal and isolation from others                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Dissociation or pretending like nothing bad happened               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance of romantic or moderately sexual media content | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme changes in appetite  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rage   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic fatigue  | <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent headaches   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gastrointestinal issues                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent illness or autoimmune issues                              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Not feeling right or well  |

A combination of ongoing emotional and physical symptoms like the ones listed above can indicate that you're experiencing trauma. If you have some of these symptoms, it's essential to seek professional mental health assistance.



## MOURNING YOUR RELATIONSHIP

It's vital to your recovery and healing that you mourn your relationship. Note that this doesn't mean that your relationship is ending. Instead, it signifies that your relationship wasn't what you thought it was, and you need to grieve that ideal.

There is no specific timeframe for mourning the relationship you thought you had. It could take weeks or months. Regardless, the process looks like this:



Identify what you thought the relationship was



Seek professional help and support from loved ones



Understand the reality of what the relationship is



Set and honor your boundaries



Acknowledge your feelings and give yourself permission to feel them



Care for and prioritize yourself



Embrace your value as an individual



Explore negative patterns or experiences from your family of origin, if any

Mourning your relationship means being real with yourself about what you thought your relationship was and the reality of it. It also means caring for yourself and putting yourself first as you grieve, heal, recover, and move forward.



## RECONNECTING IN RECOVERY

It's ultimately up to you and your partner to determine whether you can save your relationship. Doing so requires three things:

- 1** Your partner to be willing to do the work to start and stay in recovery.
- 2** You are willing to do the work to heal.
- 3** Both of you working together to heal the relationship and establish it anew.

If you're both willing to do the work, a mental health professional can help immensely in guiding you through these requirements.

Maintaining open communication and empathy is crucial when working toward healing as a couple. Some exercises you may want to try when healing together:

- Talk openly about your relationship and your healing journey
- Schedule daily check-ins to share emotions, thoughts, and needs with each other
- Practice listening to the betrayed partner's emotions without any verbal response
- Practice listening to betrayed partner's emotions without defensiveness or explanation
- Discuss the positive aspects of your relationship
- Reassure and remind each other of your affection
- If safety is established utilize physical touch at key points throughout your day
- Express gratitude for your partner
- Plan activities you enjoy together



Transparent and open communication are key to living your values as a couple and establishing a healthy relationship.

What are some other ideas you have for exercises to help you heal your relationship?

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Remember that healing and reconnecting means continuing to set and keep boundaries.

What are some boundaries you've set that you want to keep in your new relationship?

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What are some new boundaries for your relationship?

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Rebuilding your relationship takes time and effort. But if each partner is willing to heal and shows it through their actions, you can create a better life together.

It's also essential to be realistic. No relationship is perfect or without some challenges. Remember to talk openly about issues and concerns and come to resolutions together. After betrayal, it is normal to get caught up in the past in every discussion or argument, but do your best to talk about it only if it's necessary and applicable. Always remember the boundaries you've set for yourself and your relationship.



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