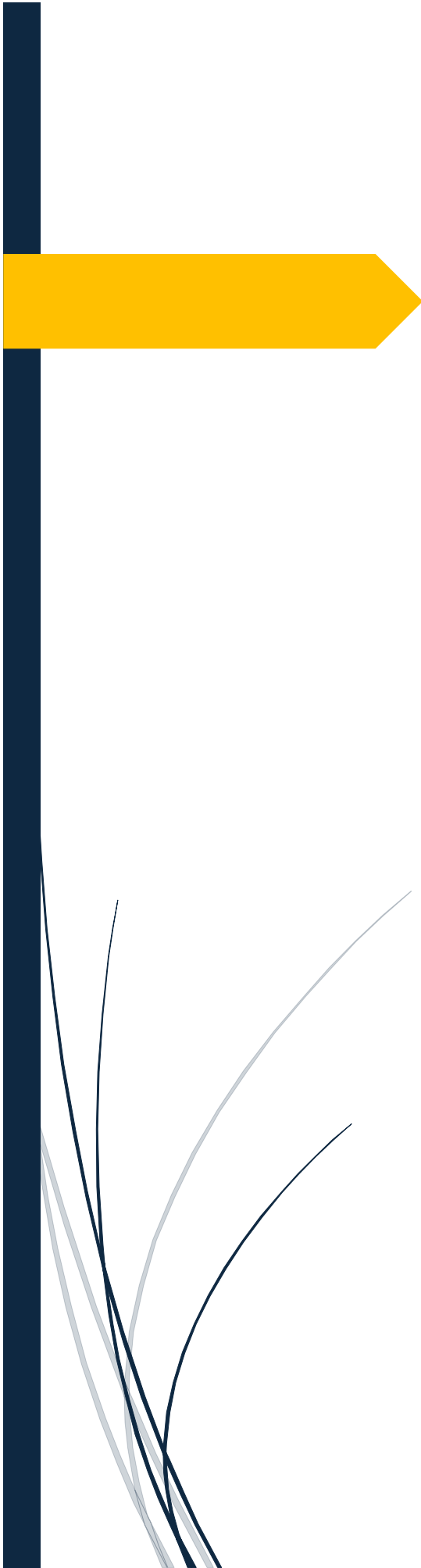




Stepping Outside the Relationship

Resources for Understanding

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The circumstances that have taken place can be challenging to navigate. Often, the actions and behaviors were not intended to go as far as they did.

Although, when one partner does step outside of the relationship - the actions initiate a series of challenges to overcome to re-establish a solid foundation within the relationship.

Questions that are often asked include - "how did it happen so fast", "why did I do it...", "how did I get so focused on them..." or "how did I lose focus of..." or "Why couldn't I stop..." I've included a podcast, I.e., tunnel vision, to offer as something to listen to and begin to build an understanding around yourself.

Link: [Tunnel Vision \(Hidden Brain\)](#)

While the bulk of the content in the podcast is around basic needs, I would nudge you to think more broadly about how it "could" apply to your situation and what the "scarcity" was in your life. I.e., loneliness, affection, connection, being seen, being heard, being loved....

Why vs. What For...

While this resource isn't intended to be the answer to "why?" It may help you with understanding "what for?" Once we get in the "tunnel" it's actually quite normal to lose track of other important facets of our life and continue down the path.

Which could mean you got yourself caught in the tunnel for an extended period of time vs. showing up for yourself, partner, family, and staying focused on what truly matters.

I've shared several resources to consider that include listening, reading, and watching. Along with those resources I've also included a few reflection prompts to help discover the "what for" about my actions and behavior.

By exploring the "what for" you can build an awareness that enables you to be actionable going forward.

Listen:

Link: [Attunement \(Think Act Be\)](#)

Link: [What Makes Relationships Thrive? \(Hidden Brain\)](#)

Link: [Being Kind to Yourself \(Hidden Brain\)](#)

Read:

Link: [After the affair](#)

Link: [The State of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity](#)

Link: [Mating In Captivity](#)

Link: [I love you but I don't trust you](#)

Link: [Daring to trust](#)

Link: [The Seven Principles](#)

Link: [Hold me tight](#)

Link: [Getting relationships right](#)

Watch:

Link: [Rethinking Infidelity \(Esther Perel\)](#)

Link: [The Secret to Desire \(Esther Perel\)](#)

Link: [Infidelity: Stay or Go \(Lucy Beresford\)](#)

Link: [Confidence & Joy \(Emily Nagoski\)](#)

Reflect:

Review the Game Tape: How Did I Get Here...

- What was happening within me in the months leading up to the circumstances?
- What feelings did I avoid, suppress, or struggle to manage or pay attention to?
- What unmet emotional or physical needs influenced my choices?
- What story was I telling myself about the relationship?
- What beliefs did I hold about myself or my relationship at that time?
- How did I feel justified or how was my behavior “not that bad”?
- What personal vulnerabilities (stress, loneliness, trauma history, identity struggles, life changes) may have increased my risk for making this choice?

- Were there boundaries in my life that were weak, unclear, or I ignored?
- What temptations or opportunities did I fail to handle responsibly, and why?
- Did I engage in any patterns leading up to stepping outside the relationship that I ignored (flirting, secrecy, pornography, rationalization, comparing partners, dating websites, or emotional withdrawal)?
- What happened in the relationship that I found difficult, overwhelming, or painful?
- What needs did I experience or ignore and fail to communicate effectively?
- Where did I choose avoidance over honesty?
- What fears or assumptions kept me from bringing problems to my partner directly?
- What moment did I cross the line—and why that moment?
- What choices did I make along the way that led to stepping outside the relationship?
- Where did I consciously ignore my own values?
- What would my authentic self have done instead?
- If I imagine my partner witnessing my actions in real time, what do I feel?
- What story or narrative did I tell myself to make the behavior seem acceptable?
- Did I use reasons such as denial, minimization, justification, or entitlement to excuse my actions?
- What emotions or thoughts did I try to escape by stepping outside the relationship?
- How did I compartmentalize or override the potential impact on my partner?
- What past experiences (family dynamics, attachment wounds, previous betrayals) may have influenced my coping or decision-making?
- Do I notice patterns of seeking validation, attention, or escape? If so, when did those patterns begin?
- What parts of me felt threatened (Not Safe), unseen (Scarcity), or disconnected—and how did I respond to that internally?
- What is the hardest truth I've had to admit to myself about why I chose this?
- What does this experience reveal about areas I need to grow (emotional skills, conflict handling, boundaries, self-worth)?

- What impact does my behavior have on my partner, our relationship, and myself?
- How has this experience changed the way I view trust and commitment?
- What do I now understand about the gravity of betrayal that I didn't before?

Looking Ahead: Understanding How to - Do Different...

- What values do I want to realign with?
- What changes do I need to make to ensure I don't repeat this behavior?
- What do I need to take responsibility for without defensiveness?
- What am I willing to repair, relearn, or rebuild?
- What specific steps can I take to rebuild trust?
- How do I plan to maintain integrity and transparency in the future?

The process of repairing will take time. Therefore, focus on Being...

- Be accountable. Be present. Be patient. Be transparent. Be consistent. Be predictable.

