



iQuestions Faculty, Dr. Gary Smalley

Question:

My husband had an affair. What can I do? I love him, but...

Answer:

Have you ever experienced this kind of pain in your life? No, probably not. It's almost like divorce—and in fact, you may have already kicked him out of the house. It's a terrible time in your life, and so painful. And your kids are affected by it, and friends, and your parents, if they're still alive, they're all involved, and people at your church are all involved. And it spreads like wildfire in a massive wind. And now everyone knows, and you're embarrassed, and he's been kicked out, probably, maybe he hasn't, but what a mess.

I can feel with you and know that this is very painful. And I can just say that if you want him back, you may want to restore your marriage, you may be finished with him—and that's a whole another question—but if you want him back, one of the things you need to ask yourself, and him, incidentally, is several questions.

Number one, "How safe did he feel around you?" Did he feel like he was going to get criticized by you, condemned, judged, blamed? Have you often said, "My life would be so much better off if you just make some major changes in my life, because you're such a jerk and a loser, and you don't make enough money?" Think back on the history of your marriage, and see how safe he felt, because men who don't feel safe tend to disconnect.

If he's at work, or somewhere in town, or somewhere on a trip, and he's with some woman, who makes him feel really safe—see, when we

feel safe with someone, we naturally automatically bond with them. We open our heart, and a deep friendship just happens automatically. And so, if he didn't feel safe with you, it could be that he was searching for somebody he could be connected and bonded to.

You know, there's a certain part of our brain that's the key part of the brain—it's called limbic—and that part of the brain is genetically engineered to seek and hunger for connection to human beings. We all have it, and he's looking for it, just like you are, but when we are in an unsafe environment or at home, we tend to disconnect, which leaves us in a vacuum until we meet someone that we can connect to. That happens so often in homes today.

So, just ask that question, and you find out and remember that didn't make him feel safe, that's the time when he will talk to you, and you're close enough where you can do that. Maybe he's already come to you and said, "I'm so sorry, this is like a one-night thing. I never meant it to be anything, and I don't want to leave you. I'm sick about this. And the kids! I want to repair this if I can," that would be great, and that can happen.

But wherever it is, if you were to ask him, zero to ten, golden questions, "What happened? What was our relationship before this happened to you, zero to ten?" Zero, terrible. Ten, the best.

And then ask him, "Where is it today, zero to ten?"

It's probably a zero now with you and him, but a couple of months before he did this, or a year before he did this, where was it then, zero to ten?

Where is your relationship, and where would you like it to be? Where would he like it to be?



And then the golden of golden questions is, "What would it take to move our relationship from minus," probably today, "up to six or seven in a year?" What would it take?

If you asked him what you could do, and how you could participate in moving your relationship up the scale, and of course if he's smart, and he wants to come back, he's going to say to you, "What could I do to move our relationship from zero," or less than a zero, "up closer to ten?"

And so, those three questions being asked—it's amazing how you both participate in the formation of a relationship that you could have had and should have had before the affair.

I want you to know that a lot of guys are attracted to some girl at work, but they don't really want to stay with them the rest of their life. And unfortunately, we don't realize—and in our culture today, it's running rampant—is we have too many guys, and I certainly understand this belief, that too many guys have the belief in their heart of hedonism, which is pleasure-seeking. If he had that belief, he's going to have a difficult time. He's going to be tempted wherever he goes.

So that's another thing he can work on, but these are some very specific things you can do. I know you're hurting. It may take you a while to get to these ideas, but I know they work, because we've seen them work in thousands of lives.