

A GUIDE TO

# Navigating Relationship Crisis



Kristin Snowden, MA, LMFT, CDWF

- ✉ [KristinSnowdenMFT@gmail.com](mailto:KristinSnowdenMFT@gmail.com)
- 📷 [Courage\\_2\\_Connect](#)
- ▶ [Kristin Snowden](#)



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## INTRODUCTION

# Turning Crisis into Clarity

Experiencing relationship crises, whether triggered by hidden addictions, infidelity, or emotional abuse can be the scariest, most painful, and paralyzing experiences in one's life. I specialize in guiding individuals and couples through these tumultuous times. I provide the tools and support needed to move from crisis to clarity through therapy, couples counseling, small group work, and online courses. Your journey to safety and stability starts here.



This is a short guide to set you down a path toward healing. It's a small collection of education, important first steps, and resources to get you through the initial crisis period. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [KristinSnowdenMFT@gmail.com](mailto:KristinSnowdenMFT@gmail.com) or engage my website membership forums. You're not alone.

*Kristin Snowden, LMFT*

# Addiction, Infidelity, & Emotional Abuse

**You've been betrayed by a trusted loved-one or you simply can't shake the feeling something is dreadfully wrong. Where do you go from here?**

Experiencing betrayal and lies from a trusted loved one can be the most debilitating experience in your life. The reason for this is explained with the theory of betrayal trauma. "Betrayal trauma" refers to the mental, physical, and emotional damage that is done whenever you feel like a close, trusted loved one acts outside his/her character, behaves in an unfamiliar/unpredictable way, and engages in any kind of emotional/physical abuse, lying, manipulation, deeply confusing or disorienting behavior.

Being betrayed by a trusted loved one not only sends you into relationship crisis, it destroys the trust, safety, and security of the bond one has with their partner and bleeds into every other relationship. Therefore, understanding betrayal trauma and its complexities is paramount to effective treatment and recovery. Narcissism, infidelity, half-truths, emotional manipulation, or engaging in secret behaviors outside the relationship (i.e. addiction and infidelity) are examples of betrayal as they often occur with severe acts of dishonesty, "gaslighting", rationalizing, and minimization. Gaslighting is a highly manipulative act of trying to convince another that his/her reality is inaccurate and push him/her to believe

another version of reality in order to maintain power/control (For example, "I'm not having an affair. I've been distant because you've been nagging me so much.").

The trauma experienced puts betrayed partners in a deeply confusing quandary where the person they love and trusted the most is also the person who's harmed them the most. It creates a torturous emotional roller coaster of wanting to reconcile and repair then feeling fear, disgust, and rage toward themselves and their partner. The destroyed trust, safety, and security contribute to victims losing confidence in their basic decision-making abilities and questioning their identities, values, and intuition.

Repairing one's intuition is an imperative part of recovery and treatment as it helps one feel safe and prevent future victimization. Betrayal trauma results in loss of one's identity and reality, self-doubt, and isolation/disconnection from all relationships. The symptoms manifest as deep shame, confusion, self-blame, emotional instability, increased depression and anxiety, and difficulty executing basic functions. Further trauma can occur if an untrained therapist does not properly understand and respect the multi-layered, complexities present with betrayal trauma.

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An untrained clinician who doesn't know the right questions to ask or doesn't properly assess the presenting symptoms through the lens of betrayal trauma might view betrayed partners symptoms as "unstable", Borderline-esque, or emotionally volatile. Betrayed partners often become the "identified patient" who's the "cause" of the marital problems when, in reality, the betraying partner's lying, manipulating, cheating, or addiction is the most significant crisis that should be addressed. Similar to other victims of trauma, betrayed partners are often unable to verbalize or rationalize their emotional state nor provide evidence of why they're struggling or unhappy. Months or years of being lied to, emotionally abused, and gaslighted creates intangible but insidious damage which often looks like emotional floundering, pushing their partners away, to desperate attempts to keep their partner's sober and honest. The betrayed partner is often far more reactive and dysregulated compared to the lying spouse who is often disconnected from his/her feelings and also tends to minimize their part in the crisis or behavior choices. Untrained clinicians trying to conduct couples/individual therapy with betrayed partners trying to heal after uncovering an affair or addiction can often lead to blaming betrayed partners for the marital crisis or negatively judge the betrayed partners potential for "explosive" emotions as a symptoms of the relationship programs RATHER THAN a symptom of someone living in a highly traumatizing environment. A betrayed partner will most likely not heal and a clinician may further harm the client without knowledge of of your trauma.



## Trauma Work

Relationship crisis and betrayal trauma can have significant, long term effects on your physical, mental, and emotional well-being. There are a lot of involuntary neurological/physiological reactions that you're exposed to when dealing with stress and crisis. Part of your healing and recovery is often incorporating trauma therapy that helps you "heal" your "trauma/survival" brain. Types of treatment that might help include Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Somatic Experiencing (SE), neurofeedback, meditation, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Internal Family Systems (IFS), and more.


Many facets of the body's response to trauma is involuntary. It can cause those in crisis to feel "out of control" of their body and emotions. However, there are many trauma treatments that focus on slowing down and down-regulating the physiological reactions the clients experience due to post-trauma symptoms (such as nightmares, intrusive thoughts and memories, upsetting memories being triggered by songs or locations, etc.) Trauma treatment includes various exercises and tactics used to discharge the stimulus, down regulate the threat response, and process the traumatic event so that clients can once again feel reconnected with and in-control-of their bodies, minds and emotions.


*The next page offers a sample of healthy coping skills one can try to down-regulate trauma responses, calm their nervous system, and better manage stress. Kristin provides live groups and online courses walking clients through these tools and techniques.*


# KRISTIN SNOWDEN

the journey from crisis to clarity



 KristinSnowdenMFT@gmail.com

 KristinSnowden.com

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## EXPLORING HEALTHY COPING SKILLS TO MANAGE STRESS, CRISIS, AND TRAUMA

Experiencing betrayal can cause extreme emotional flooding; making self-regulation difficult. When the mind and body are in a state of panic or "survival mode", it is almost impossible to think clearly and rationally. It is important to have safe outlets in the recovery process along with defined "rules of engagement" with your partner

### MENU OF DOWN/UP-REGULATING OPTIONS

***Try to incorporate these practices and behaviors into your daily life to heal/rewire your trauma response and help improve your sense of safety when engaging in vulnerable, intimate connections with others***

Grounding techniques	Eat right
Mindfulness meditation	Avoid substance use/abuse
Visualizations	Tapping Arms or Legs rhythmically
Body Scan/Progressive Relaxation	Journaling
Breath work	Gratitude List
Dance/movement/Stand on One Foot	Talk to a trusted person
Tai chi/qigong	Go out in nature
Yoga	Serve others/community service
Engage in a spiritual/religious practice	Neurofeedback
Pets/animal therapy	Social Engagement
Sleep	Healthy/Safe touch (hugs, massage, etc.)
Exercise	Big Sighs
Sing Songs	Scream into a pillow
Play Instrument	Get a punching bag
Play a sport, ride a bike	Attend a support group/share your story with people who are safe
Talk therapy	



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# The Do's and Don'ts in a Relationship Crisis

## DO

- DO seek community support/groups/peers who are struggling in a similar way (such as 12 Step Meetings or support groups)
- DO reach out to a professional who specializes in addiction recovery, betrayal trauma, emotional abuse, and couples crisis issues
- DO set up boundaries for your betraying partner around communication, living situations, co-parenting, finances, further acting out, consequences of breaking promises/sobriety, etc.
- DO express your expectations for your betraying partner to get individual help and recovery
- DO get STD testing done
- DO be careful who you share your story with and the details. Many people will struggle to support you or not judge the situation.
- DO consult with other professionals such as attorneys or financial advisors, if that makes you feel safer
- DO engage in self-care by sleeping enough, eating well, getting physical activity, taking breaks, etc.
- DO start listing the things you'll need from your partner to feel safe again

## DON'T

- DON'T immediately begin couples work trying to repair the marriage if your partner is still acting out, lying, or struggling with empathy/awareness/willingness
- DON'T continue to physically engage your partner if you do not feel safe doing so
- DON'T harm yourself, or others, or remain in a situation where you feel like you're a threat to yourself or others (or if you're in danger)
- DON'T isolate, keep secrets, or stop engaging others
- DON'T abuse substances
- DON'T blame yourself for your partner's betrayal, lies, poor choices, and unhealthy coping skills
- DON'T continue to engage your betraying partner if he/she continues to rationalize, minimize, and justify any lying, sneaking around, manipulation, or breaking of promises/commitments
- DON'T attempt to navigate this crisis on your own. Seek out as many books, podcasts, communities, and professionals to help you on your path to recovery.

# The Three Heavy-Hitters of Relationship Crisis & Betrayal: Trauma, Shame, & Grief

Betrayal and addiction can shatter the reality of our lives and relationships. Beyond the surface pain of cheating or substance abuse exists a complex web of trauma, shame, and grief that demands exploration and healing. There are biological and neurological consequences to relationship crises. Drawing upon fifteen years of experience in addiction and infidelity recovery, this article unveils the three heavy hitters that emerge when confronting the devastating experience of uncovering a loved one's secret life. All three heavy hitters (Trauma, Shame, and Grief) must be addressed (in therapy, groups, couples work, and support meetings) so the betrayed partner, the betrayer, and the relationship can move forward, healthily.

## Betrayal Trauma

Betrayal trauma transcends mere emotional wounds; it rewires our brains and bodies. Our bodies—to change and adapt to new stimuli—rewire around scary or overwhelming events, creating Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms. When our bodies experience powerlessness and uncertainty, it causes us to increase our hypervigilance, doubt our instincts, distrust others, and struggle to regulate our emotions.

## How Infidelity, Addiction, and Emotional Abuse Lead to Trauma Rewiring

Most acts of infidelity and addiction include the following elements within the intimate partner dyad (to varied degrees):

- *Chronic patterns of lying*—directly, by omission, or “trickle disclosures”
- *Gaslighting*—psychologically manipulative behavior where the addict denies their partner's reality
- *Patterns of denial and avoiding responsibility* of the addict/betrayers behaviors and how they impact their loved ones
- *Patterns of blaming* the betrayed partner or making it a “relationship issue” rather than the betrayer's own choices and problem
- *Patterns of defensiveness*—stonewalling, partial disclosures, using threats or intimidation to shut down their partner (continued on next page)



- *Patterns of betrayed partners being chronically diminished, made to feel like they're the crazy or unhealthy one, or experiencing sexual rejection and emotional abandonment*
- Patterns of going back on commitments and promises
- Betrayed partners having "gut feelings" that something is "off" only to be told they're "crazy" by the lying partner
- Financial betrayal where money was spent on acting out behaviors
- Physical trauma where a betrayed partner contracts an STD from their cheating partner
- Betrayed partners feel like they've uncovered an entire world of "bad actor" friends, affair partners, and conspirators that have been working against their betrayed partner.

All of these elements and traumatizing events must be explored and reconciled by the betrayed partner, the acting out partner, and in couples work in order to move through the relationship crisis and into healing.

## **Shame**

Shame, often misunderstood, emerges as a silent companion in the aftermath of betrayal and addiction. Shame is the unconscious fear of not being "enough" or worthy of being loved, accepted, and connected with others. As long as we are wired to want to be loved and connect with others, we will always have an equal opposing force in us fearfully asking, "What if I'm not enough for it?" Shame drives the addiction cycle and is at the core of acts of infidelity, depression, and anxiety. However, betrayed partners will also have to deal with their own "shame voices" during a relationship crisis. I often tell clients that shame is one of the most complicated subjects I teach. However, Dr. Brené Brown's *Daring Greatly* and *Rising Strong* curriculums are helpful. So I would encourage you to check out one of the workshops on those topics (see "Live Workshops" on [KristinSnowden.com](http://KristinSnowden.com))

Shame, like trauma, will continue to surface and haunt us if we don't do the work to become aware of the shame stories we're telling ourselves (deep in our subconscious). It is also important to learn the shame resilience practice of sharing our stories with trusted others who have shown that they have the empathy and compassion to hear and validate our stories.

## **Grief and Loss**

Grief becomes an unavoidable companion in the wake of betrayal and addiction, signaling the loss of what was known, loved, and trusted. After a relationship crisis, one must explore the deep sense of loss, the gaping holes left by shattered expectations, and the need for mourning. (continued on next page)

### Examples of Loss From a Relationship Crisis:

- Loss of safety, security, instincts, and intimacy.
- Loss of memories (now that you know what your partner was doing)
- Loss of what you thought your relationship was, what love was, what family is, what marriage is
- Loss of confidence in making basic choices, knowing who to trust, feeling comfortable in your body and sexually
- Loss of what is “normal”—a “normal” relationship, life
- Loss of hopes and dreams for the future
- The longing for what once was, our naivety, our peace

David Kessler said, “Each person’s grief is as unique as their fingerprint. But what everyone has in common is that no matter how they grieve, they share a need for their grief to be witnessed. That doesn’t mean needing someone to try to lessen it or reframe it for them. The need is for someone to fully present to the magnitude of their loss without trying to point out the silver lining.” Grief must be acknowledged, felt, shared, and heard. It is an extremely important part of the healing process.

My live workshops and online courses are built to help betrayed partners work through the three heavy hitters of relationship crisis and more.

[Live Workshop Info](#)

[Online Courses](#)



The following pages are exercises to help work through grief and loss along with developing an understanding of your “shame voices” and “shame triggers”.



## THE BETRAYAL TRAUMA GRIEF/LOSS JOURNAL PROMPT

**Special Note:** If you find this work to be too overwhelming, please take a break and/or seek help from your therapist or support group. The idea behind this exercise is that once we name and understand the depth of our grief, we can begin to sit with it, get used to it, and--eventually--absorb it into our beings. In other words, we never get over our losses and grief, it just becomes part of our identity and story. Not ALL of our identity or story. Just a piece of it. Our losses and grief shape us and change the way we view ourselves, the world, and others. We must fully process and mourn our losses before we move to forgiveness.

As you explore your relationship with your primary partner, the addiction you've uncovered, the betrayal trauma you've experienced, and the path toward healing and recovery, **please journal on the following topics:**

- What's been taken from me due to this betrayal?
- How have I and my loved ones been harmed?
- How have I been manipulated or abused?
- What hopes/dreams have been altered or shattered? What do I fear now that I didn't even think about before?
- What have I realized are my partner's limitations? What are my limitations?

If/when I'm preparing to move to the "Acceptance" phase of grief (many of you may not be there yet and that's ok), if you were to move through the grief what would you have to "let die" or "let go of"? A dream? An idea? A former reality or framework that no longer works or exists? An expectation that I should be perceived by others in a certain way (or my partner or marriage should be perceived by others in a certain way)? Or let go of what I thought my life or relationship would be? Or an idea of the role I thought my partner would play in my life?

### Defining Forgiveness

What would it look like if I "forgave"? What is my experience with forgiveness? Are there things I need to forgive of myself? Are there things I need to forgive of others? Who? Why? What?

What are my stuck points with grief and moving toward forgiveness? What just hasn't been sitting well with me as I process my losses and pain?

WHILE HOLDING SPACE FOR MY GRIEF AND LOSS AM I ABLE TO CREATE A LIST OF THINGS I'M CURRENTLY GRATEFUL FOR? How does it feel to hold space for deep sadness and loss while also acknowledging some gratitude?

**My Grief/Loss YT Video**

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KristinSnowden.com



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## Identifying Shame Triggers & Destructive Core Beliefs

In each category ask yourself: 1) How do I want to be perceived 2) How do I NOT want to be perceived 3) Where did I get those ideas and messages from? Be as specific as possible. What would it look like? How would I know I achieved what I was going for?

Aspects of Life & Personality	Ideal/Desired Identities & Characteristics	Unwanted Identities & Characteristics	Origin of that perspective (Where did it come from?)
Appearance & Body Image			
Being in a Relationship			
Sex/Sexuality			
Money/Spending			
Work/Success			
Experiencing & Expressing Emotion			
Your Family			
Getting Older/Dying			
Religion/Spirituality			
SubstanceUse/Addiction			
Parenting/Ideas Around Children			
How to Handle Adversity/Surviving Trauma			

I want to be perceived as:

I do NOT want to be perceived as:

# READ THIS Before Starting Couples Therapy in Crisis

Uncovering hidden problems like addiction or infidelity can catapult a relationship into crisis. Many couples turn to counseling to work through the challenges, but it's important to think carefully about how to make therapy effective and safe during this difficult time. Infidelity and addiction are not just couples issues. This article looks into the many aspects of dealing with addiction, lies, betrayal, and the journey to healing as a couple, emphasizing the need for careful and specialized approaches.

## Special Challenges of Dealing with Infidelity and Addiction Recovery

When you discover a betrayal, things get messy. Emotions are all over the place, decisions change, and both partners are operating out of trauma, fear, hurt, and defensiveness. Seeking help is important, but not every couples therapist is equipped to handle these unique challenges. Specialized therapists, who understand addiction recovery, betrayal trauma, and intimacy disorders, tend to navigate the complex emotions with a greater compassion and understanding for the nuances underneath the raging emotions. It's important to find a therapist who knows the specific steps needed to prevent further harm and ensure safety.

### Therapists should be assessing the crisis by asking:

- When did the discovery occur? What's been happening in the household since the discovery? How is the mental health and stability of both partners since discovery?
- Do both partners want to work toward healing? Do they have similar goals in that respect? What are they willing to do to heal?
- Is there honesty and accountability for what has happened or is there continued minimization and justification for what's happened?
- Is the home environment safe/stable or is there emotional explosiveness?
- Is the betraying partner still acting out? Is the affair partner still in the picture?
- What does their support systems look like?
- Is a higher level of care necessary for one or both partners?
- Are there additional concerns such as young children in the home? Financial or health issues?

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## Why Not Dive Right into Couples Therapy?

Addiction or infidelity are first and foremost personal issues that also impact the relationship. The betrayed partner deserves appropriate treatment to heal. However, starting couples therapy too soon might make things worse if the betraying partner lacks the empathy or understanding of the harm caused by his or her betrayal. Its also imperative that the betraying partner stops all acting out behaviors and sets up accountability before earnestly engaging in reparative couples therapy.

## Steps to Take Before Couples Work

Before tackling couples issues, there are specific steps to follow, like the betraying partner stopping harmful behaviors, setting up accountability, and joining group work or recovery communities. Both partners should feel like the immediate crisis has stabilized before jumping into couples/marital work. Setting up a support system for betrayed partners beforehand is important to their healing and continued support which is **why I strongly encourage betrayed partner to join my workshops or other communities of betrayed partners before beginning reparative work.**

## First Steps After Crisis Should be Boundary-Setting

Once a crisis hits, a well-trained professional can help clients understand “next steps.” They can help couples in crisis explore their “rules for engagement”. Will they remain in the same home? How will they co-parent? What does addiction recovery look like? What’s a full therapeutic disclosure and how does that process work? These psychoeducational and mediation sessions are much different than couples sessions focusing on the marital issues from the past, painful childhood histories, or traumas. First steps should be focused on safety, boundary-setting, consequences structures, and returning some semblance of stability. They should not be, for example, a space where the betraying partner airs his/her marital resentments or the therapist asks the betrayed partner what childhood traumas led him/her to marry an addict. Eventually, once the betrayer and betrayed partner have some resources and support, they can engage in repairing the relationship.

In conclusion, the nuances involved in uncovering addiction or infidelity require a careful and specialized approach. By thinking about factors like finding the right therapist, assessing the situation, timing for couples therapy, and taking necessary steps before diving in, couples can increase the chances of healing and building a stronger relationship.



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KristinSnowdenMFT@gmail.com



KristinSnowden.com



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## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Boundaries Chart

Healthy Boundaries in a Relationship	Unhealthy Boundaries
You can say no or yes and you are okay when others say no to you	You can't say no, because you are afraid of rejection or abandonment
You have a strong sense of identity. You respect yourself	Your identity consists of what you think others want you to be. You are a chameleon
You expect reciprocity in a relationship—you share responsibility and power	You have no balance of power or responsibility in your relationships. You tend to be either overly responsible and controlling or passive and dependent
You know when the problem is yours and when it belongs to someone else	You take on other's problems as your own. You try to fix other's problems.
You share personal information gradually in a mutually sharing/trusting relationship	You share personal information too soon....before establishing mutual trust/sharing
You do not tolerate any form of abuse or disrespect	You have a high tolerance for abuse and being treated with disrespect.
You know your own wants, needs, and feelings. You communicate them clearly.	Your wants, needs, and feelings are secondary to others and are sometimes determined by others.
You are committed to and responsible for exploring nurturing your full potential	You ignore your inner voice (instinct) and allow others' expectations to define your potential.
You are responsible for your own happiness and fulfillment. You allow others to be responsible for their own happiness and fulfillment.	You feel responsible for others' happiness and fulfillment and sometimes rely on your relationships to create that for you.
You value your opinions, instincts, and feelings as much as (or more than) other people's opinions and feelings	You tend to absorb the feelings of others. You rely on others' opinions, feelings, and ideas more than you do your own.
You know and respect your limits (emotionally & physically). You allow others to define their own limits.	You allow others to define your limits in order to please them or you try to define limits for others.
You are able to ask for help when you need it	You feel that asking for help is a sign of weakness and you avoid it.
You don't compromise your values or integrity to avoid rejection or adversity	You compromise your values and beliefs in order to please others or avoid conflict.

# Is it Infidelity or Sex/Porn/Love Addiction?

When faced with infidelity and betrayal, it's important to engage a professional who can fully assess whether your partner's acting out behaviors are attributed to a specific, dark season of their life or if his/her infidelity, porn use, and other hurtful behaviors are more of a long-term, chronic pattern of lying, sneaking around, and acting out that is more consistent with addiction. Please note, all forms of betrayal and infidelity are destructive and devastating. However, both scenarios should be treated differently and with trained professionals.

Chronic forms of betrayal can be symptoms of an addictive pattern, such as sex/love/porn addiction. Sex Addiction is a legitimate addiction with which many men and women struggle. Such a diagnosis can be mocked or minimized as an excuse to sexually misbehave without taking responsibility and accountability. However, that does not dismiss the thousands of people who struggle with these issues and need appropriate social, medical, and mental health support to make it through to the other side of recovery.

## How Can Sex/Love/Porn Become An Addiction?

Sex addiction is often categorized under impulse control disorders, intimacy disorders, and/or process addictions. A **process addiction** is a blanket term used to describe any **obsessive and compulsive behavior**, such as gambling, shopping, or sexual activity, **that a person continues to engage in despite a desire to stop and negative consequences**. The behavior and its accompanying "rituals" alter one's mental, emotional, and physical state. Whereas, a chemical addiction occurs when addicts ingest a chemical in order to change their state. Every addictive behavior has to be acknowledged and tackled, individually, in order for full, lasting recovery to take place. It is also common for addicts to experience co-occurring disorders with multiple addictions and/or mental health diagnoses.

When a client is struggling with a process addiction such as sex addiction, disordered eating, gambling, or over-spending it is never as simple as "just stop" or use "discipline" to overcome the behavior. There are real chemical and biological changes that occur in the brain of someone who has a process addiction (i.e. chemicals and hormones such as testosterone, norepinephrine, acetylcholine, oxytocin, and dopamine). A person's reward center in their brain is stimulated causing a release of chemicals into the body and brain which drive addictive behaviors.

Put simply, this chemical charge feels so good that the addict continues to obsess and chase the "high" regardless of its negative consequences. As mentioned in my previous blog on addiction, this disease is complex and is influenced by the individual's mental and emotional health, genetics, stress tolerance, and history of trauma.

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### What Sex Addiction IS and IS NOT

Sex Addiction can manifest in a number of ways. Every individual acts out differently just as those addicted to drugs use different drugs in different environments and experience varied levels/frequency of drug use.

**Addiction** requires the majority of these symptoms to be present for diagnosis per the DSM-5:

- **NEEDING MORE**—taking the substance or doing the behavior in larger amounts/frequency
- **TRIED TO STOP**—wanting to cut down or stop but was unable to, or made promises to stop but broke promises
- **SOCIAL PROBLEMS**—Continuing to use/engage in behaviors even when it causes problems in your relationships or choosing the substance/behavior over social, occupational, recreational activities
- **RISKY USE**—use or engage in behavior despite physical, legal, or emotional consequences
- **LOST TIME**—spending a lot of time getting, using or recovering from use
- There are signs of dependency, increased tolerance, and withdrawals

**Some Examples of Sex/Love/Porn Addiction:**

- Multiple affairs (extra-marital affairs) with paid or unpaid participants
- Obsessive dating through personal ads, social media, dating apps, online websites
- Multiple or anonymous sexual partners, online or work affairs, and/or one-night stands
- Obsessive or compulsive use of pornography, internet sites
- Continuous unsafe, dangerous, or illegal sexual encounters
- Exhibitionism, voyeurism, or stalking
- Compulsive masturbation, despite harm from it or desire to cut down
- Sexual harassment, inappropriate/boundary-violating flirting, or sexual advances toward others in vulnerable positions
- History of chronic highly toxic, dangerous, or abusive relationships

### Sex Addiction is Not

- A Moral or Ethical Failure (i.e. “A broken, bad person”). Addicts are not “bad people” they have made bad choices while trying to treat their own shame, trauma, and issues.
- An absence of religious or spiritual aptitude
- Exploring sexual orientation or gender identity
- A sign of a broken relationship—Sex addicts can “love” their partners but sexually act out behind their partners’ back
- Acting out on fetishes, polyamory, consensual non-monogamy openly, consensually, and without shame
- (There is not always sexual abuse in a sex addict’s history)

### **What to do if You or a Loved One is Struggling with Sex/Love/Porn Addiction Issues**

Most addicts believe their struggles are unique. They keep secrets and live with deep shame and compartmentalization. Therefore, its imperative that they engage a recovery community with peers who have struggled in similar ways, share their stories, listen to others share their paths to recovery, and develop honest, vulnerable connections with people in their recovery community. Structure, commitment, and accountability are key! There can be a great deal of freedom in coming to terms with this disease while taking steps toward healing and engaging a life in recovery. (continued)

**How 12 Step Models and Other Treatment Modalities Work:**

- Assistance and accountability in defining what sobriety will look like for them
- A sense of empathy for those they've harmed through their addiction
- Accountability for their choices (past, present, and future)
- Commitments to their support system to make different choices and seek help before acting out on impulse

**Consider the following when exploring what a sobriety plan might look like:**

- Do you explore your sexuality in a safe environment, not risking your health or safety or impinging upon another's health or safety?
- Are your actions in line with your beliefs and values (not others' beliefs and values) and without shame and guilt?
- If you're in a committed, monogamous relationship with someone, do you uphold and respect that commitment that you've made?
- Do you ever have to lie, cheat, or manipulate in order to get your needs met?

Recovery from any addiction takes a supportive "village" with professionals who are educated and trained on addiction recovery and betrayal trauma. Below are resources and treatment programs that can help with recovery.

If you or someone you know is struggling with any addiction, please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, or potential referral sources.

## Specialty Treatment Options

Seeking Integrity  
SexandRelationshipHealing.com  
The Meadows  
The Recovery Ranch  
Certified Sex Addiction Therapist from  
IITAP  
Center for Healthy Sex  
Sex Addicts Anonymous  
Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous  
Sex and Porn Addicts Anonymous  
SAnon  
Alanon

## Online Assessment Tools

SAST: Sex Addiction Screening Tool  
PAST: Porn Addiction Screening Tool  
LAST: Love Addiction Screening Tool  
SDI: Sexual Dependency Index



# Further Resources & Next Steps



## **Betrayal Trauma & Relationship Crisis Therapy**

I have limited availability to see clients remotely or in person in Westlake Village, CA. I strongly encourage you see mental health professionals that are specially trained in addiction recovery, betrayal trauma, infidelity recovery, and/or emotional abuse. Trauma therapists are helpful, as well.



## **Live Workshops/Group Work**

Group work can seem scary after betrayal. However, it is the most effective tool for healing betrayal trauma, rewiring a traumatized brain, and establishing a community of support and accountability. Please go to my [Live Workshops](#) page for more information, dates, and workshops.



## **My Online Relationship Masterclass**

Looking to start your healing right away? Access my full library of education, guidance, and life-changing tools in my [Relationship Masterclass: Resiliency and Recovery](#). It's my most popular and effective material used by thousands of my clients in crisis.



## **Further Resources & Tools**

[Live Anonymous: 12 Steps to Heal and Transform Your Life](#) (great for understanding recovery and 12 Steps).

[My "Free Resources" page](#)

[SexandRelationshipHealing.com](#)

[Wetonglen—an online community for female betrayed partners of male sex addicts](#)

[Email Tami Verhelst \[tami@seekingintegrity.com\]\(mailto:tami@seekingintegrity.com\) for qualified treatment options and referrals in your area](#)

CONCLUSION

# You Are Not Alone... Options for Support Now

We are never prepared for a relationship crisis. That is why finding the right help and support is so important. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, or requests for referrals. In the meantime, enjoy these coupons to help jumpstart your healing journey.



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