

For the Partner Who Was Hurt

Emergency stabilisation: the first 48 hours

Your only job for the next 48 hours is to get through them. Not deciding whether to stay, leave, divorce or reconcile.

1 Your body is running the show

Your nervous system is in fight-or-flight shock. Nausea, shaking, breathlessness and numbness are standard shock reactions.

- " **Hydrate:** sip water in small amounts all day.
- " **Nourish:** eat simple foods you can keep down, such as toast, soup or a smoothie.
- " **Warmth:** chills are common. Use a heavy blanket or take a hot shower to settle your body.
- " **Safety:** avoid driving long distances or operating equipment if you feel detached or shaky.

2 Press pause on big decisions

Park every major decision for 48 to 72 hours: solicitors, telling the kids, packing bags. The urge to take drastic action is huge because *doing* feels better than *sitting in pain*. Resist the impulse to create added chaos you will have to clear up for months.

3 Immediate boundaries

- " **Sleeping:** set up short-term practicalities such as the spare room, the sofa, or a night with a trusted friend.
- " **Intimacy:** hold off on physical contact. It muddies an already volatile situation.
- " **Talking:** stick strictly to logistics (kids, pets, work). Save deep questions for when you feel steadier.

4 Protecting your circle

- " Pick **one or two "safe harbour" people** who can listen without rushing to give unsolicited advice.
- " Remember that once it is out, you cannot take it back. Loved ones may hold anger at your partner long after you have healed.
- " Keep details off social media and out of large group chats.

5 Asking questions

Stick to the immediate basics: *Is it over? Has contact ended? Is there any risk to my physical health?* Save detailed timelines and probing for a structured setting like therapy.

In crisis? If you feel unsafe or are having thoughts of self-harm, call **999** or contact Samaritans on **116 123** immediately.

AFTER THE FIRST 48 HOURS



The Clarity Programme

A structured four-week programme for couples recovering from an affair, with weekly sessions and check-in calls.

peter-holder.com/clarity-programme



Affair and betrayal counselling

See how counselling helps each partner steady themselves and start to rebuild.

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For the Partner Who Was Unfaithful

Immediate steps and containment: the first 48 hours

What you quietly carried is now in the open. Your partner is shattered or silent, and you are facing panic, guilt and embarrassment. Here is how to navigate the immediate aftermath without making it worse.

1 Contact ends today

Whether an emotional affair, physical relationship, app or paid platform, access stops today.

- " **Cut access:** block numbers, delete accounts and change settings.
- " **No "closure" texts:** do not send a goodbye message. You cannot build trust while clinging to connections that damaged it.
- " **Workplace or unavoidable contact:** keep interactions strictly practical, in writing where possible, with zero private chat.

2 Tell the truth the first time

Avoid "drip-feeding" facts to soften the blow. Every time a new detail is discovered later, it drags your partner back to day zero, re-opens the wound and proves you are still lying.

- " **Basics first:** confirm whether it is over, how long it went on, and any health risks.
- " **Health safety:** get an STI test immediately and share the results without waiting to be asked.

3 Avoid the four defensive lines

Do not reach for these excuses:

"We weren't happy anyway."

"You've been distant for months."

"It didn't mean anything."

"Can we please stop talking about this now?"

Turning this into their fault, or telling them to calm down, shows you do not grasp how much this hurts.

4 Offer unprompted transparency

Expect requests for devices and passwords. Every time your phone pings, your partner's nervous system spikes. Offering more transparency than feels comfortable helps build safety and lowers vigilance over time.

5 Manage your own shame

Do not rely on your partner to process your guilt or confusion. Use individual therapy or a dedicated space to work out how you got here, so you can show up accountably.

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