

# Recovery

FOR MEN

AFFECTED BY THEIR  
PARTNER'S SEXUAL SIN

BY JOSHUA CAMPBELL



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# The Discovery

It's biblical. No one can completely know what you're feeling right now. The complexities of your situation, your history, your temperament, your emotions, your faith, your significant other... They are all too much for any other person to understand.

## ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS

When you experience betrayal—whether through an affair, pornography use, or some other form of sexual separation—it can bring a flood of painful emotions: sadness, grief, anger, numbness, confusion. These feelings are valid, even if they're unpleasant. Often, the instinct is to escape—by ignoring the pain, throwing yourself into work, or turning to substances or distractions. But avoiding these emotions only makes recovery harder.

Name your feelings. Acknowledge them. Talk to someone in your support system—a trusted friend, pastor, or therapist. Owning your emotions is a vital step in healing.

## ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPACT

Betrayal brings real loss. According to psychologist Janis A. Spring (2020), betrayal can feel like a loss of identity, trust, specialness, control, purpose—ultimately, a loss of self. You may feel hopeless or question everything:

- *“My world feels shattered.”*
- *“I feel hopeless.”*
- *“What now?”*

These are natural responses. You are not alone in feeling this way.

# Your Response

## TAKE STOCK OF YOUR EMOTIONS

For many men, the first impulse after betrayal is to end the relationship and look for a new one. Others feel intense anger—toward their partner, or even themselves. It's common to blame yourself or feel inadequate. But before making any decisions, it's crucial to process and understand your emotions.

## TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Once you've acknowledged your feelings, take a step back. You won't be able to think clearly if you're overwhelmed. Give yourself space to breathe and reflect. This is what therapists call “self-care.” That might mean spending time with friends or family, exercising, going outside, listening to music, or doing something creative.

There's no set timeline for healing—it might take weeks, months, or even years. If you're struggling to process what's happening, don't hesitate to seek professional help.

### REFLECT AND EVALUATE

During this time, you'll likely face deep questions:

- What are my beliefs about love, sex, and pornography?
- What are my expectations in a relationship?
- What boundaries do I need?

For example, ask yourself:

- How do I feel about pornography or other sexual behavior outside of the relationship?
- Is this behavior something I can accept?
- What part of the betrayal hurt the most?

Be honest. What you learn about yourself will help guide your next steps.

### CLARIFY YOUR THOUGHTS

After you've had time to reflect, begin preparing for a conversation with your partner. You'll want to make sense of what you've experienced and find the words to express it.

Write your thoughts down. Journaling can help organize your feelings. Talk to a trusted person or a therapist. You might even role-play the conversation to gain confidence and clarity.

## The Conversation

The conversation itself may feel overwhelming—but it's a key step in your recovery for both you and your partner.

### USE "I" STATEMENTS

When speaking with your partner, it's natural to feel hurt and angry. But blaming language can escalate conflict. Instead of making statements start with "you" which can sound very accusatory and cause a defensive response, use "I" statements that focus on your experience:

- *"I feel hurt when I think about what happened."*

This disarms defensiveness and makes it more likely your partner will truly hear you.

### LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

Your partner needs to share their perspective too. Resist the urge to immediately respond. Focus on listening. Scripture encourages this approach:

***“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”***

*James 1:19–20*

Try to summarize what you hear:

- “What I hear you saying is...”

This kind of mutual understanding is essential for healing.

### **KNOW YOUR LIMITS**

Conversations like this are emotionally intense. If you become overwhelmed, it’s okay to pause. Say something like:

- “I need a break so I can think clearly.”

Being self-aware enough to hit pause is not a weakness—it’s wisdom.

### **KEEP THE GOAL IN MIND**

Before the conversation, ask yourself:

- What do I want this conversation to accomplish?
- What do I want our relationship to look like going forward?

This clarity will help you stay focused, even when emotions run high.

## **After the Conversation**

This may have been your first real conversation about the betrayal—but it likely won’t be the last. Finding mutual understanding and perhaps rebuilding trust takes a long time.

### **CONSIDER COUNSELING**

If communication remains difficult—if you’re talking past each other, disagreeing on expectations, or unable to move forward—a therapist can help. A good counselor creates space for both of you to speak, helps clarify your values and boundaries, and assists in making a plan, whether to rebuild the relationship or move on.

### **REFLECT ON THE CONVERSATION**

Take time afterward to ask yourself:

- How do I feel about how the conversation went?
- Did I feel heard?
- What do I need now—from myself or from my partner?

Your answers will help shape your next steps.

### **PRAY**

Finally, remember that God is with you. Pray for direction, for clarity, and for healing in your relationship. He is the one who ultimately establishes your steps.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joshua Campbell is a limited licensed psychologist in Michigan, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Counseling Psychology at Andrews University. His focus for clinical, academic and personal work is on helping individuals and couples address problematic sexual issues.

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