

## Self-Test: Early Signs of an Inappropriate Relationship

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Ever since Clinton's famous, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman....," I have noticed numerous articles and books debating on what actually constitutes an affair. Is it only classified an affair if a spouse has intercourse with a person outside of the marriage? Does oral sex "count"? How about fondling? Or, kissing? Holding hands? What about emotional affairs? Is there really such a thing? Do one-night stands "count" as affairs or is it only an affair when the heart is involved? When does an opposite sex friendship cross the line?

What about online pornography? Is online pornography an impersonal addiction like alcohol abuse or is it classified as infidelity? Who gets to determine what gets the "affair" label? Is it an affair if your spouse feels it is? What about spouses who are overly suspicious and jealous? Is it fair to have to give up a relationship just because it makes your spouse feel insecure?

Rather than answer all of the above questions about fair ways to define affairs, I have compiled a list of questions that tempted or involved persons can ask themselves. The purpose of these questions is to evaluate the degree to which one has wandered through the murky waters of an opposite sex friendship or collegial relationship and reached the other side into affair territory.

These questions are early "red flag" indicators that one is either close to crossing or has already crossed the line into an inappropriate relationship. The more "checks" the more inappropriate the relationship. Do your best to be truthful with yourself as you read and check this list against your own behaviors and feelings.

### DO YOU...

- Act evasive when questioned about the relationship?
- Have secret contacts with the other person that your spouse does not know about?
- Go out of your way to be alone with person of interest? Are you lingering after work or arriving early to get some exclusive time together?
- Talk to others about the person of interest in glowing terms?
- Confide in each other regarding struggles in your respective marriages?
- Feel sorry for the other person because he/she is in a hurtful or neglectful marriage/relationship?
- Engage in secretive behaviors? [i.e. hiding when accepting phone calls, staying up late or getting up early so you can text or email this person, keeping secret e-mail accounts, making excuses to do errands so you can call or be with the other person, quickly exit the screen if spouse walks into room while you are emailing or instant messaging the other person]
- Fail to pass the "well-lit-room" test? Ask yourself: How would you feel if your spouse or children listened in on your conversations? Or, had a secret camera to see what you are doing or talking about with the other person? How would you feel if your spouse unexpectedly "caught" you alone with your person of interest? [If the answer is "guilty" "nervous" "defensive" or "self-conscious," you do not pass the test].
- Find yourself putting up walls with your closest friends and family?
- Subscribe to the belief that the nature of the relationship is no one else's business, including your spouse?

- Suspect others are getting that “Uh, oh” feeling that something wrong is going on, even if they can’t put their finger on it?
- Find yourself overly concerned about your appearance: exercising more, losing weight, wearing more provocative clothing, trying to look younger?
- Force others to ask questions very specifically about the relationship before giving them anything that resembles a straight answer?
- Act sheepish when caught accepting phone calls from the other person?
- Show high anticipation about next contact with the other person?
- Find yourself preoccupied with the other person? Constantly analyze the meaning of past conversations?
- Dig your heels in when confronted about the nature of the relationship?
- Refuse to listen to others’ cautions or objections, about the relationship? Especially from your spouse?
- Come across slippery, evasive? Try to invalidate others’ concerns?
- Insist others show how much they know first before you admit anything?
- Delude yourself into thinking you won’t get caught?
- Find yourself developing paranoid habits like checking up on who is checking up on you?
- Find yourself enjoying the company of the other person more than your spouse?
- Find yourself feeling more and more disdainful toward your spouse and thinking more and more positively toward the other person?
- Use the “divide and conquer” technique of trying to make sure none of the questioning parties (spouse, friends, relatives, coworkers) have all of the information so they remain in the dark, unable to piece incriminating pieces of the puzzle together?
- Spy on others to find out what they know or are saying to others about you and your new relationship (spyware on computer, phone records, etc.)?
- Parse words and terms to deflect from the true nature of what has been going on? (Think: Clinton – swore he did not have “sexual relations” because he narrowly defined this to mean intercourse. Technically, he had not “done the big deed” so, according to his own private definition, he had not done “it”- yet he had engaged in many sexually inappropriate activities.) Guilty people tend to hide behind technical use of words to evade the true nature of an improper relationship.
- Have you “only” hugged, touched or held hands, kissed other person on the cheek?

**Score:**

1 - 3 checks = the relationship is already inappropriate

4 - 6 checks = you are in over your head

7 or more checks = high likelihood you are in a full-blown affair or on the precipice of one