

## Why Selfishness and Neglect Can Destroy Your Marriage

Written by U.S Immigration News

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Due to our readers' overwhelming response to one of our previous issue "Emotional Infidelity: The Silent Destroyer" we have decided to explore this topic further. It is clear that many readers of this column find infidelity to be the main culprit in the destruction of marriages. Some of you expressed your long-time feelings of concern for your partner's apparent "non-sexual emotional attachment" to someone else and how this was directly impacting your marriage. Last month's column un-validated your partner's complaints that you were crazy and/or jealous and instead validated your suspicions that your partner's emotional attachment to another person was not healthy.

To set the topic into context let's review what infidelity means. Infidelity can be defined as consistently investing in and thus creating emotional and/or sexual attachments with someone other than your spouse. As a result, for an illicit relationship to take place the offending spouse must develop a pattern of practicing three behaviors that can destroy any marriage: (1) lies, (2) secrets, and (3) independent behavior. Infidelity is no respecter of relationships. Like cancer it can seep into any relationship where two people initially vowed love and loyalty to each other, until death. Unless couples make conscientious efforts to safeguard their relationships infidelity can occur in the best of marriages. But why does infidelity occur? The two main reasons for infidelity, sexual or non-sexual, are: *selfishness* and *neglect*.

We need to remember that marriages and partnerships are first made up of individuals each of which has his/her own separate baggage and issues. They had these before they came into the relationship so of course they will bring them into the relationship. If the relationship is not healthy each individual will further accumulate other baggage and issues because of the relationship. We all have a tad bit of selfishness within us; it is part of human nature. The problem begins when our selfishness goes unchecked and it overpowers our commitment to your spouse. Selfishness causes many to purchase and spend hours fantasizing with pornography. Selfishness is the constant search and drive to fulfill our personal needs in exclusion of our spouse's and by whatever means possible. Therefore, selfishness will drive us to seek comfort and fulfillment in an illicit relationship that we know fully well is wrong but it makes us feel good; as opposed to taking the more difficult route of trying to repair or seek help to fix our marriages.

On the other hand, neglect can also be a reason for infidelity. Neglect in a marriage occurs more frequently than we care to admit and it can be manifested in many forms. Neglect can be

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the refusal to engage with a partner sexually; neglect can also be the incapacity to understand and fill our partner's emotional needs, but neglect can also occur when other areas are placed as a priority above the marriage. Children, careers, extra-curricular activities, friends, finances, family etc., are other areas of life that while important if not placed in their proper perspective can inject neglect into a marriage. Neglect always creates an emotional void and can be devastating to a relationship because it can quickly transform itself into emotional rejection. A spouse or partner that feels emotionally rejected may find him or herself looking to another person to fill that void.

Yet, we must point out that there is no justified reason for a spouse to be unfaithful. There needs to be a mutual understanding as to why the infidelity occurred, but for the relationship to heal and function properly infidelity cannot be seen as normal or acceptable; it should never be used as a justification and it definitely should not be tolerated. Therefore, infidelity, sexual and non-sexual, needs to be terminated. While infidelity has the potential to destroy a relationship, a couple can also make the choice to grow and become stronger from this heartbreaking event.

Infidelity needs secrecy to survive and thrive. Secrecy breathes lies and is encouraged by independent behavior that is essentially selfish behavior that can consequently lead to neglect. According to Harley and Chalmers in their best-selling book *Surviving an Affair*, "For an affair to continue, it must be kept secret from the unsuspecting spouse. So a secret second life must be created to nurture an affair. When married couples tend to lead independent lives and do not pay much attention to each other, that secret second life is easy to create" (39). Couples who want to secure their marriage from potential infidelity or who are on their way to recovery need to establish rules within their relationship in which secrets and independent behavior will be eradicated. Thus, they need to come to an agreement as to how they will become more open and honest with each other. This means that everything from feelings, personal bills, passwords, cell phones, daily routines, etc., should be made easily accessible and of open knowledge to our spouse -- at all times. In conclusion, for a marriage to be secured against infidelity it must exclude other persons or activities that may encourage selfish behaviors and allow a spouse to feel neglected.

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