**Sexual Betrayal Recovery Kit**

|  |
| --- |
| **Early Recovery Plan** |
| **Coping with the crisis of betrayal**  | * Understand your reaction through the lens of trauma
* Complete action plan for triggers (below)
* Begin *Facing Heartbreak* workbook by Stephanie Carnes et al.
* Complete IPAST (online assessment)
 |
| **Developing self-care**  | * Complete boundary list exercise
* Start 90-day sexual abstinence plan (minimum)
* Obtain an STI test (through your physician or by visiting the STI clinic)
* Focus on your own interests and healing
* Address sleeping + mental health
 |
| **Developing a support team**  | * Access 12-step programs like [S-Anon](https://www.sanon.org/meetings/meetingscanadaab.html) or [COSA](http://www.cosa-recovery.org/states/Canada.html) (for partners)
* Tell at least one trusted friend or family member about your situation (if they support your relationship)
* Watch videos about [sex addiction for partners](http://www.christinabell.net/videos/) (if applicable)
 |

**Action Plan for Triggers (For Betrayed Partners)**

**Trigger =** a reminder of sexual betrayal often accompanied by intense emotion and traumatic reaction (e.g., intrusive thoughts)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Specific Triggers**  | **How does this apply to your situation?**  | **Action plan**  |
| Seeing attractive people (with or without partner) | *
*
*
 | * Hold your partner’s hand if in public
*
*
 |
| Sexual images (e.g., Ads, Victoria’s Secret catalogue) | *
 | *
*

  |
| Sex scenes in movies + TV | *
*
 | * Change the channel
* Research programs before watching
*
 |
| Inconsistency/unreliability of partner (e.g., being late) | *
*
 | * Express concerns to partner
*
*
 |
| Times of day Days of the week (e.g., weekends, late nights) | *
*
 | * Plan ahead to do something relaxing
*
*
 |
| Other:  | *
 |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **General Triggers / Beh** | **How does this apply to your situation?**  | **Action Plan**  |
| Partner’s travel (or being away)  | *
*
 | * Schedule times to communicate
* Engage in healthy distraction and self-care while they are away
*
 |
| Lack of contact with partner (e.g., partner is not answering phone) | *
*
 | * Agree to a plan for contact
*
 |
| Lack of self-care  | *
*
 | * Daily exercise 30 min.
* See physician if not sleeping well for over 3 weeks
*
 |
| Sleep troubles  | *
*
 | * Go to bed at the same time daily
* Avoid electronics 1-2 hours before bed
*
 |
| Excessive internet searching  | *
*
 | * Journal about feelings
* Keep phone/computer away from bed
* Prayer
 |
| Excessive checking up/monitoring  | *
 | * Engage in healthy distraction
 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Emotional Triggers**  | **How does this apply to your situation?**  | **Action Plan**  |
| Loneliness / isolation  | *
*
 | * Reach out to one person per day
* Schedule one social outing per week
 |
| Anxiety or rumination (e.g., “I wonder when things he’s going to relapse?”) | *
*
 | * Healthy distraction
* Practice meditation or yoga
 |
| Rejection or disappointment  | *
*
 | * Journal
* Talk to a trusted friend
*
 |
| Confusion (e.g., “is he really a sex addict? Can I trust him again?”) | *

  | * Debrief with a trusted friend (who supports your relationship)
* Understand sex addiction recovery
 |
| Anger | *
*
 | * [Emotional regulation video](http://www.christinabell.net/store/)
* Deep breathing
*
 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Thought Triggers**  | **How does this apply to your situation?**  | **Action Plan**  |
| Comparison (e.g., “those women are better looking than me”) | *
*
 | * Remind yourself that your partner’s behaviour is due to an addictive process, not your attractiveness
*
 |
| Fortune telling (e.g., “my partner is never going to change”) | *
*
*
 | * Focus on realistic expectations of partner and self (Sex Addiction: The Partner’s Perspective by Paula Hall, p. 140)
* Look for positive movement while maintaining boundaries
 |
| All or nothing thinking (e.g., “our whole marriage was a sham”) | *
*
 | * Validate your reactions and engage in self-care
*
 |
| Jumping to conclusions (e.g., “he’s been looking at his phone, so he must be viewing pornography) | *
*
 | * Check-in with partner
*
 |
| Entitlement (e.g., “he deserves to suffer like I have”) | *
*
 | * Learn about the drama triangle and your potential role
*
 |

**Common Symptoms of Betrayal Trauma[[1]](#footnote-1)**

|  |
| --- |
| *1. Hypervigilence:* The sense of impending doom that results from ongoing fears of being betrayed again. Often results in safety seeking behaviours like checking and questioning. |
| *2. Re-experiencing/flashbacks:* Reliving the experience (e.g., dreams, replaying discovery over and over again, body sensations). |
| *3. Avoidance*: Avoiding the places of discovery; avoiding places that remind you of the betrayal (e.g., beaches, restaurants). |
| *4. Negative self-beliefs:* (e.g., “If I were more attractive, he wouldn’t have acted out”). |
| *5. Emotional Dysregulation:* Increased emotional activation (e.g., quick to anger, mood swings, racing thoughts, anxiety) |

**What Helps**

* Obtaining information about betrayal trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (see my [trust recovery kit](http://www.christinabell.net/downloads/) for resources)
* Developing a culture of support (therapy, groups, supportive friends)
* Engaging in effective self-care (yoga, healthy eating)
* Establishing boundaries and requests (see my [boundary starter kit](http://www.christinabell.net/downloads/) for ideas)
* Developing emotional regulation skills (see my [emotional regulation starter-kit](http://www.christinabell.net/downloads/))
* Receiving treatment for the trauma triggers (I have been finding [EMDR](http://www.emdr.com) to be helpful in my work)
* Addressing negative self-beliefs and self-blame ([cognitive therapy](https://www.amazon.ca/You-Are-Not-Your-Brain-ebook/dp/B004XFYRMA/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1511635732&sr=8-1&keywords=you+are+not+your+brain) and [self-compassion exercises](http://self-compassion.org) can be helpful)

**Behaviours to Avoid**

* Verbal insults
* Physical abuse
* Constant monitoring or checking (however, access to your spouse’s electronics is often part of rebuilding trust)
* Binge eating
* Searching for specific details about the sexual betrayal
* Searching for information about affair partners (e.g., Facebook)
* Making empty threats
* Trying to control you partner’s behaviour
* Inappropriate disclosures to family and friends
* Self-harming behaviour

**Other Strategies**

* Grounding exercises ([Mindfulness Meditations for Anxiety](http://www.christinabell.net/store/): Track 4)
* Practicing mindfulness – becoming a curious observer to your experience with non-judgment
* Deep breathing: Take 6 deep breaths and focus on relaxing muscle tension (especially in your jaw and shoulders)
* Thanking your anxiety: “I know you’re trying to alert me to danger right now, but things look okay. Thank-you for trying to protect me but I can take things from here.”
* Calling a friend or sponsor (if they are supportive of your relationship)
* Guided imagery
* Exercise
* Prayer
* Time out: 20-30 minute time out with healthy, soothing distraction (Moving Beyond Betrayal book, p.180)
* Journaling
* Expressing your thoughts and feelings to your (if emotionally safe)

***Remember:*** *Triggers and trauma symptoms often come in waves. If we can learn to surf the waves with compassion, we develop a greater ability to handle these emotions over time. How you are reacting is natural and nothing to be ashamed of.*

**Exercises**

* The Shield of Safety (Facing Heartbreak workbook, p. 23)
* [Partner Boundaries and Safety List](http://www.growthcounselingservices.com/store/) by Mari Lee
* Reality checking (Moving Beyond Betrayal book, p. 63 + 71)
* [Emotional Regulation video](http://www.christinabell.net/store/) by Christina Bell
* Practicing gentle start-ups (e.g., “When I saw/heard you \_\_\_\_, I felt/thought \_\_\_\_\_. In the future, I would like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”).
* Personal bill of rights (Moving Beyond Betrayal book, p. 82)
* Strengthening self-worth
* Being able to know and express your beliefs, feelings, and reality
* Focusing on what you can control
* Developing wisdom and spirituality

**Additional Resources**

**Websites and Blogs**

[Vicky Tidwell Palmer](vickitidwellpalmer.com)

Free e-book: <https://partnerhope.com>

[In the Rooms – Online Meetings for Co-dependency Anonymous](http://www.intherooms.com/member/home)

[Partners of Sex Addicts Resource Center](http://www.posarc.com)

[The Partner's Healing & Empowerment Online Community Forum](https://www.vickitidwellpalmercourses.com/store/VjMFiUHr) is a

confidential, online space for partners anywhere in the world to connect

with other partners 24/7 to share experience, get support, and exchange

ideas and information.

[Betrayal Trauma Recovery](https://www.btr.org/podcast/%29) (online podcast)

[Top infidelity podcasts article](https://blog.feedspot.com/infidelity_blogs/)

**Online Courses**

[Bloom for Women – Betrayal Trauma course](https://bloomforwomen.com/pages/betrayal-trauma.php)

[Vicky Tidwell Palmer](http://vicki-tidwell-palmer.mykajabi.com)

[Center for Healthy Sex: Facing Heartbreak online class](http://centerforhealthysex.com/partners-of-sex-addicts/facing-heartbreak-online-class/)

[Daring Ventures – Online groups for betrayal trauma](http://www.daringventures.com/services/groups/)

[Sex and Relationship Healing Webinars and Groups (Rob Weiss)](https://sexandrelationshiphealing.com)

**Meetings**

* [S-Anon](https://www.sanon.org/meetings/meetingscanadaab.html)
* [COSA](http://www.cosa-recovery.org/states/Canada.html)

**Videos**

* Visit [this page for videos](http://www.christinabell.net/videos/) on sex addiction

**Books (some are available in an ereader or audio format)**

* *Facing Heartbreak –* Stephanie Carnes, Mari A. Lee & Anthony D. Rodriguez
* *Intimate Deception –* Sherri Keffer (some Christian content)
* *Moving Beyond Betrayal – Vicki Tidwell Palmer*
* *Treating Trauma from Sexual Betrayal – Kevin B. Skinner*
* *Sex Addiction: The Partner’s Perspective* – Paula Hall (try abebooks.com)
* *Living With a Sex Addict -* Linda Hatch
* *Deceived -* Cynthia Black
* *Intimate treason* *–* Cynthia Black & Carla Tripodi
* *The Storm of Sex Addiction -* Connie A. Lofgreen
* *Facing Codpendence –* Melody, Miller, & Miller
* *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse –* Barbara Steffen & Marsha Means
* *A House Interrupted–* Maurita Corcoran
* *Letters to a sex Addict –* Wendy Conquest & Robert Weiss
* *Not “Just Friends”* – Shirley Glass
* *Mending a Shattered Heart –* Stephanie Carnes
* *Sex Addiction –* Catherine Elliott
* *Surviving Disclosure –* M Corley & Schneider
* *Living and Loving After a Betrayal –* Stephen Stosny
1. Adapted from Kevin Skinner’s [Treating Trauma From Sexual Betrayal](https://www.amazon.ca/Treating-Trauma-Sexual-Betrayal-Essential/dp/0977220869/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1511634818&sr=8-1&keywords=treating+trauma+from+sexual) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)