

## Show remorse and apologize

We haven't really talked about the "affair fog," but at some point you were in this misguided state of mind where you believed that you deserved your affair. You managed to rewrite the history of your marriage and were under the impression that your wife has been mean and rotten and an all around terrible person.

You were pretty high on justifying the reasons for the affair, so for a period of time you may have found it very difficult to show remorse and to apologize.

For one, you were/are in denial. You probably said things like, "Nothing happened. We were just friends. We just talked on the phone." You really need to look deep and understand exactly what you did to your marriage and the pain that you caused. Write it down and then you need to apologize for each and everything you did.

We spoke with author Dave Carder (*Torn Asunder*) who asks his cheating clients to make a list of everything that happened during the affair and directly apologize to their wife saying something like, "I am sorry that I told the other woman that I loved her. I'm sorry that I spent Mother's Day on the phone with her rather than you." Go down the list and apologize for each transgression. You may be lucky enough that your wife will forgive you, but don't be upset if she isn't ready to just yet.

You need to show your wife that you feel terrible about what you did and you need to apologize for it. Apologize on a regular basis as well. "I'm sorry I took our marriage for granted." "I'm sorry I did this to you." However, be sure not to throw a "but" in your apologies. Don't say something like, "I'm sorry that I cheated *but* you were mean as a snake at that time." Do not ever add a "but" to your apology. To do so would imply that you are not taking responsibility for your actions!

### **What about guilt?**

Remorse goes hand in hand with guilt. I'm talking about feeling guilty for your affair.

Wikipedia defines guilt in this context as “*an emotion that occurs when a person believes that they have violated a moral standard.*”

To some, these emotions nag at their brains and at their conscious periodically and may be triggered by certain events such as when their wives experience painful emotions and feelings as a result of the affair.

In my opinion, this is natural and is all part of the affair recovery process. This type of guilt may last for a very long time – possibly forever – but the effects of the emotions should lessen over a period of time. This is especially true if the betrayed has seen fit to offer forgiveness for their spouse’s betrayal and the cheater has come to terms internally with the betrayal and has been able to forgive himself.

To others however, the feelings of guilt can become overwhelming at times – and quite possibly dangerous.

Strong, lasting feelings of guilt can lead to such conditions as frustration, melancholia, persistent agony, mental instability, uncontrolled anger, inferiority complex, self-condemnation and depression. These conditions could manifest themselves via destructive activities such as excessive drinking, smoking or drug use, for example.

For these types of situations I can only recommend that a person seek some treatment from a qualified therapist or counselor.

Also, be sure to keep an open line of communication with your wife and/or other family members and friends should you sense that your extreme feelings of guilt are getting the best of you.

If you’re not feeling this type of *excessive guilt* but are still *feeling guilty* after the affair, that is completely natural and can actually be a healthy thing.

You should be feeling guilty and it's your burden to bear, but you should also get over it at some point.

I read somewhere that we should think of guilt as a “seat-belt for your soul.” It's your brain's way of telling you not to cheat again. It's reminding you that the perceived enjoyment of being unfaithful is not worth the pain

and hurt of deceiving someone.

It is *vital* that you be honest with yourself. You must be 110% sure that: (a) what you did was a mistake and you will learn from it and make efforts to avoid repeating it and, (b) you are willing to make the significant effort to get the marriage back on very strong foundation.

A preacher friend of mine says that the best way to deal with guilt, discovered long ago by various priests, is to drown it with positive actions. Don't dwell on your guilt--instead take that anxiety and nervous energy and pour it into deeds that reaffirm your mental state instead of sapping it. The greater the guilt, the greater the action.

I'm not sure I agree with that philosophy 100% but it may be a beneficial way for you to attack your guilt.

That's actually how I dealt with my guilt at first. I busted my butt trying to atone for my betrayal and ease my guilt by basically being ultra loving and helpful to Linda. I was at her beckon call.

This was all well and good, but I was leaving some very important things out – mainly the part about looking within and learning from what I had done. Introspection and personal change were pivotal aspects for gaining Linda's forgiveness and resulted in lessening my own feelings of guilt.

***Linda:*** *Often times when the betrayed spouse brings up the affair due to triggers or insecurities, the cheater will combat their feelings of guilt with anger or by deflecting the questions or situation. I learned to be in tune to Doug's anger and deflections by realizing that his anger is a direct result of the guilt he feels.*

*In the beginning I thought that Doug acted this way because he was hiding something, or didn't want to relive the wonderful feelings or times he had with the other woman. I learned to understand that talking about the deceitful and selfish things he did during the affair produced a large amount of guilt for him and his reactions were to avoid it at all costs by going back to his old coping mechanism of fight or flight.*

*Both you and your wife need to understand that you are most likely feeling tremendous guilt for your actions and you have yet to learn how to cope with those feelings.*

I still feel guilty to this day for what I did and I'm sure I will for a long, long time, but knowing that I'm forgiven is a positive thing.

Guilt and shame are useful short-term emotions, up to a point and for learning purposes only. Learn some valuable life lessons from this experience, and try to understand your own soul. Then, try to let go of the guilt.

### **Action Steps:**

- Make a list of all the transgressions against your marriage and your wife as a result of your affair.
- Understand how those transgressions affected her.
- Apologize to your wife for each transgression. Ask for her forgiveness. *"I am sorry for \_\_\_\_\_. I realize that this made you feel \_\_\_\_\_. I hope that you can and will forgive me."*
- Make it a habit to show remorse and apologize on a regular basis.
- Remember, if you are having troubles dealing with guilt or are feeling excessively guilty for your affair and can't seem to make any progress, a good therapist can guide you through things. If you don't want to talk to a therapist, talk to your religious person, social worker, or someone else who is used to hearing people's problems and being supportive of them.
- Try to understand and learn from your feelings of guilt and use that knowledge in a positive manner.