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FIELD GUIDE / AFTER AN AFFAIR

The One-Page Version

Many couples describe the first weeks after an affair comes to light in strikingly similar ways: the same table, the same kitchen, and the sense that nothing means what it meant before. In that state almost any conversation feels like it could make things worse, and many couples feel pressure to decide at once whether the marriage is over. Nobody has to decide anything yet, not whether to stay and not whether to go. Dr. John Gottman and Dr. Julie Schwartz Gottman describe affair recovery in three phases, atone, attune, and attach, and the first phase is about steadying the ground. Think of a house in a storm with water coming through the ceiling. Nobody climbs into the attic to find the leak while it is still raining, so the first ninety days are the buckets and the tarp: the outside relationship ends completely, every question gets a full answer, and no decision that cannot be taken back gets made while the pain is this new. If anyone's safety is in question, that comes first, and a trained couples therapist makes the rest go better than any guide.

Three ways the conversation can begin:

- 01 | From the partner who had the affair: "I know I've answered it, and I'll answer it as many times as you need."
- 02 | From the partner who was hurt: "I need to know what happened and when, not the details that will live in my head forever."
- 03 | From both of you: "For the next ninety days, let's not make any decision we can't take back. We steady the house first, and then we decide."

This page is the short version of *The First 90 Days After an Affair*. The full Field Guide adds every script, the worksheet and a one-page cheat sheet.

couples-conversations.com/fg-first-90-days

One important note: This program is not in place of therapy or clinical treatment or diagnosis, but for education. Many relationships struggle with various issues; this is normal. However, they should always feel safe. If there are any mental health concerns, or concerns for safety, or if the relationship feels dangerous in any way, please seek professional support rather than continuing in this program. When in doubt, it is best to consult with a proper therapist.