

UNDERSTANDING CHEATING

(A Relationship Series)

THE **HOPE** LINE



TheHopeLine.com

Healthy relationships are built on a solid foundation of **trust** and **respect**. When someone in a relationship cheats, it destroys that foundation, which can be hard to rebuild.

WHAT IS "CHEATING" |

While it may seem obvious, cheating (or infidelity) happens when someone breaks a relationship bond or promise.

There are many different forms of "cheating." Cheating can be clear and obvious, like having sex with another person, or it can be more subtle, like secret texting or meeting up behind your partner's back.

There are two types of infidelity: **emotional** and **physical**.

Emotional infidelity is when your partner becomes intimate with another person on an emotional level, not necessarily a physical level. This could look like constant texting, frequently spending

time together, or even sharing intimate information or secrets. Emotional infidelity can be subtle and hard to pinpoint. In many cases. Ultimately, forming an intimate bond with someone when you've promise a partner that you're their one and only can be just as devastating as physical infidelity.

Physical infidelity is when your partner has become physically intimate with another person. This covers everything from kissing to sex and may or may not include an emotional attachment.



A young woman with long dark hair, wearing an orange sweater, looking down with a sad expression. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

**How can I
tell if my
partner is
cheating?**

Cheating can often be difficult to spot. Cell phones and a million social media platforms, each with their own DM function, bring a whole slew of ways a partner could secretly contact someone without their partner ever suspecting. Some people are, unfortunately, very good at covering up their tracks, leaving no clues whatsoever. Still, here are a few indicators that your partner *could* be cheating:

Gets texts and messages at all hours, including late at night.

Is overprotective or possessive of their phone.

When you try to talk to them about their secretive behavior, they become defensive and even try to accuse you of something.

Isn't able to keep their story straight about where they were, what they were doing, etc.

A change in behavior towards you or others, such as unexplained distance or sudden gifts.

If you think your partner may be cheating, try talking with them about specific instances or patterns you've noticed. Don't accuse, yell, or get angry. There may be a legitimate reason why their patterns or behavior seems off. If they refuse to talk about it, or things just don't add up, they may be lying. If they can't talk about it, or continue to lie, it might be time to exit the relationship.

Accept this isn't your fault. Your partner made the choice to cheat, not you. No matter what the circumstances, the decision to cheat was ultimately theirs.

Don't react immediately. The first few moments or days after you find proof you're being cheated on can be full of confusing emotions. If you're angry or heartbroken, you may think getting revenge by cheating yourself or tearing up every picture you have of the two of you together will make you feel better. It's always better to wait and decide how you're going to respond when you're more calm. You could regret acting rashly in the end.

Talk to them about it. It is important to remain calm while you present them with the proof of their infidelity. Give yourself some time to think and compose your thoughts, then be prepared to stay calm if they get defensive.

Decide if it's time to move on. If you don't feel you can trust them anymore or if lying and cheating is a pattern of behavior, it's time to move on. *Sometimes* relationships can be salvaged and trust rebuilt. Ultimately, you have to make the best decision for yourself.

Get perspective. Talk with someone you trust, like a parent, teacher, counselor or trusted friend. They may be able to offer a new point of view on the situation. If you need someone to talk to, our [HopeCoaches](#) are ready.

E PROOF THAT MY PARTNER

IF YOU DECIDE TO BREAK UP

Breaking up, even when cheating is involved, can be difficult and awkward. After you've made your decision to move on, take the next step and end the relationship as soon as you are able. Do it in a respectful way, even if you're still hurt and angry. Do it in a way that will make "future you" proud.

me

you

Keep it simple. Don't rehash every event in your relationship or point out all their faults. Simply let them know you feel it's time to move on and stand your ground.

Be prepared. Think about what you want to say in advance. Stand firm in your decision, even if they become angry or upset. Remain calm, no matter what.

Avoid breaking up via text or email. When you are ending a relationship, it's best to do it face to face. This helps eliminate any miscommunication and shows that you're capable of respect.

Set a time and place. Decide on a specific time to talk with your partner and stick to it. While you may dread it, ending the relationship will be a relief.

Move on. Once you've ended the relationship, don't linger or dwell on it. Make it a clean break, at least for now, to give yourself the time and space you need to heal from both the betrayal of the cheating and the breakup. This might mean deleting their number from your phone, getting rid of photos, unfollowing their social media accounts, etc. If your ex continues to contact you against your wishes, stand your ground. You have the option to block them, but if you feel stalked or unsafe, tell an authority figure.



REBUILDING TRUST AFTER CHEATING

A close-up photograph of a couple's hands clasped together, set against a warm, golden sunset background. The person on the left is wearing a dark dress with white polka dots, and the person on the right is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. The man's hand has a silver chain bracelet and a ring on his ring finger. The woman's hand has yellow nail polish. The background is a soft-focus view of a body of water and a distant shoreline under a bright, hazy sky.

If you decide to stay with your partner, it is crucial to have a plan in place. Rebuilding a relationship requires being proactive and honest. It also takes an equal commitment from both of you.

Honesty and communication are key to any healthy relationship. If something is bothering you, talk about it face-to-face in a honest, mature manner without attacking your partner.

Forgive* the person who cheated. Forgiveness DOES NOT mean that what they did was okay or excuse their behavior, but it does allow you to let go of the bitterness. It is an active process in which you make a conscious decision to let go of negative feelings whether the person deserves it or not. It also clears the path for new trust to be built, now that the past betrayal has been acknowledged and processed.

For more on how to forgive, check out our Guide: **Understanding Forgiveness.*

Don't hold the past over their head. If you choose to continue with the relationship, it's essential that you forgive and move past the cheating. Don't bring it up during fights or make comments about it when you're angry. You don't have to pretend it never happened, but don't use it as ammunition against your partner.

Fight fair. Disagreements are part of every relationship, but be mindful and thoughtful of what you are saying, even in the middle of an argument. Instead of attacking them, use language such as "I feel like..." and avoiding "You always..." or "You never..." statements.

Create boundaries. Although your partner cheated, that does not mean you can be abusive, controlling, or take away their privacy. If you feel the need to constantly check their phone/email/social messages, that may indicate you don't really trust them.

Keep an eye out for behavioral patterns. If cheating, lying, or being secretive becomes a pattern of behavior with no change, it may be time to seriously evaluate the relationship and your future with this person who doesn't seem capable of being someone you can trust.

A person with long, vibrant red hair is partially visible on the right side of the frame. They are wearing a light blue ribbon or hair tie. The background is a vast field of bright yellow flowers, possibly rapeseed, under a warm, golden sunset sky. The word "healing" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

healing

It's ok to be sad or angry.

Give yourself time to grieve the relationship.

Cry, scream into your pillow, head to the gym and hit the punching bag as hard as you can while listening to angry breakup playlists on repeat. *Feel the feelings.* Let them out so that they don't take up permanent residence in your body.

After some time has passed, if you feel you may be slipping into depression, be sure to talk to a trusted adult, parent or counselor about it. Sometimes strong feelings are difficult to process alone.

Resist the urge to overanalyze your relationship.

It's tempting to think about "what could've been" or what you could have done differently or better, but there's nothing you could have done to stop your partner from deciding to cheat. Learn what you can from the relationship and move on.

Surround yourself with a healthy support group.

When a breakup happens, it's important to spend time with supportive friends and family. Resist the urge to sit around and talk about the relationship 24/7. Instead, plan fun activities or volunteer together!

Stay positive.

The emotions you are feeling now won't last forever. Every ending is a new beginning! Remind yourself of the good things you have in your life outside of your ex.

Find creative outlets.

The emotional recovery process can bring up a lot of emotions you may not have known you have. Creative outlets, like journaling or artwork, can be a great tool to help you recover from a breakup. Find something that is fun for you, and use that to express what you're going through.



IF YOU CHEATED, BUT YOU WANT TO RESTORE YOUR RELATIONSHIP,

HERE'S SOME ADVICE:

Don't assume the relationship is over. If you are willing to do the hard work and take responsibility for what happened, your relationship could very well survive. Don't assume you have to run. Running away from your mistakes would further hurt your partner, causing them more trauma on top of the betrayal of cheating.

Acknowledge you messed up and seek forgiveness. You have broken trust and caused another person to feel unloved or not good enough. Sure, there may be deeper problems between you and your partner, but the fact remains your infidelity was a betrayal of your commitment. Own up to that.

End all communication with the person you cheated with. If you want any chance of restoring your relationship, you need to cut ALL ties with the person you cheated with. If that seems unreasonable to you, consider whether or not you truly want to recommit to your partner.

Give your partner time to heal. Realize that you have wounded them deeply and it will take time for them to forgive you and learn to trust you again. Even if they choose to stay with you, they will feel hurt for a while.

Answer their questions honestly. As you work to gain their trust back it is important to be absolutely transparent and willing to talk about what happened.

If your partner decides to break up with you, respect their decision. Learn what you can from this mistake and do better in the future.

Chris Fraga from Shadow of Whales talks with HeartSupport about relationships, cheating, and how, over time, he learned to forgive himself for cheating.





WHETHER OR NOT THE RELATIONSHIP SURVIVES, WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

Figure out why you did it. Is there something missing within yourself or was something missing in the relationship? How did you wind up in a position to cheat? Could you have broken up with your partner when you realized you were unhappy, or could you have stopped exchanging messages with someone before it became inappropriate? What can you do differently next time?

It is important to figure out what is at the root of your behavior so you can keep it from happening again.

Don't let this mistake define you. It's commonly said, "Once a cheater, always a cheater." However, this doesn't have to be true. If you decide you want to change, you can, especially if you seek God's help.

Accept you can't go back in time. To obsess over wanting a "do-over", isn't going to change anything. At some point you need to accept what's done is done, learn from it and move forward. Wallowing in regret keeps you from investing in the lives of others because you are too focused on yourself.

Forgive yourself. It is good to realize how much you hurt another person, and feel deeply sorry about it, but at some point you need to forgive yourself. When you forgive yourself you are saying, "I know what I did was wrong, but I will stop punishing myself for it."

Accept God's forgiveness. Confess your sin to God and then accept his forgiveness. Did you mess up? Yes. Was it bad, and did it hurt others? Also yes. Does that mean God can't or won't forgive you? Absolutely not. God is longing to forgive you. Dwelling on your sin and believing it's too much for God to forgive underestimates God's capacity for unconditional love. It's like you are saying to God, "I know the Bible says that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for ALL sinners, but MY sin is special. It's too big for your forgiveness to handle." Nope! God is big enough to cover your mistakes too! Believe that! Rest assured that he has removed your sins from you as far as the east is from the west. He sees you as a precious child, not a cheater or a disappointment.

"If you think you've blown God's plan for your life, rest in this. You, my friend, are not that powerful."

A Spiritual Perspective

Relationships are an important part of life. We view the world through our relationships, and when trust gets broken, that can warp how you see things, even yourself. When someone cheats on you, it can be hard to recover trust in others and your own self-worth. If you cheated on someone, it can also be difficult to recover your self-esteem or accept forgiveness.

At TheHopeLine, we truly care about you and want to help you get on a path toward healing from this cheating experience.

Cheating is, ultimately, a betrayal, and Jesus understands betrayal all too well. One of His best friends in the world helped have Him

unjustly arrested, just for 50 silver coins. After that, He was executed by the very people He spent His life trying to help. Do you know what He did? He spent His final breath asking God to forgive them all. If He can see hope in a situation like that, where can you see hope for your future? Whatever your situation, there is a loving solution to be found in Jesus' story.

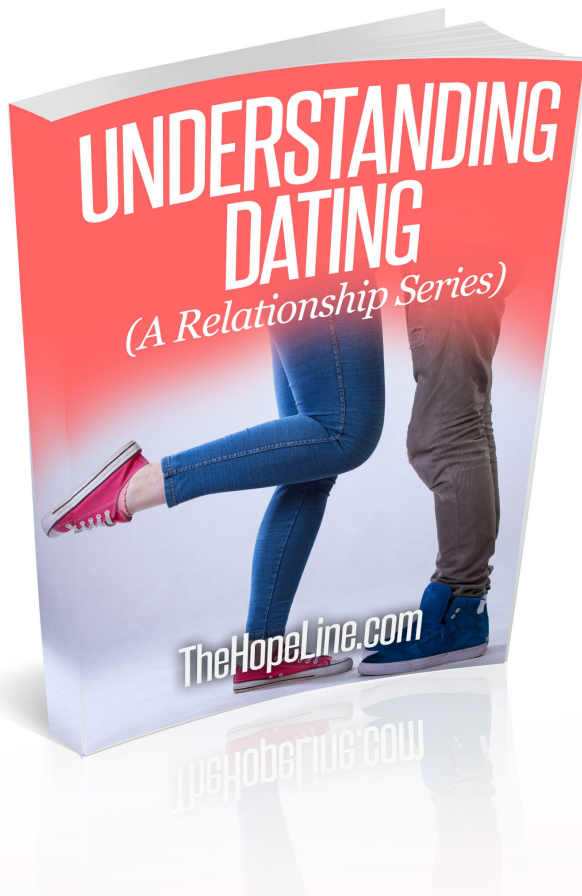
>> THE SOLUTION

You are loved and accepted, regardless of what has happened in your past or what is going on during your current struggles. God wants you to discover your true self-worth and identity in Him, so that you can live an abundant life.

Verses of Hope for Love and Cheating



If you want to know more about having a relationship with God or have questions about cheating or self-worth, **chat online with a HopeCoach.**



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