

Applying Developmental Model Principles to an Infidelity Case



with Dr. Ellyn Bader
Case presented by Nancy St. John
*Founder of The Couples Institute &
The Developmental Model of Couples Therapy
Author of In Quest of the Mythical Mate*



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**Why am I doing
this webinar?**

Infidelity Cases Stress Therapists

- X They usually have an intense crisis phase
- X The commitment of each partner is tested
- X Values and morals called into question



The Challenge for You

Can you...



- Stay calm and manage a lot of tension?
- Be a strong leader?
- Be aware of the struggle that lies ahead?
- Know where you are going and why?

Nancy's Case Description

Couple was seen about 3 years ago
but little progress was made

Their marriage was almost without
sex and they had a lot of work stress



Helen was an angry,
withdrawn conflict avoider

Chris was a friendly, but at times
insensitive, conflict avoider

The vagueness and stagnancy between them was palpable.

Husband's Affair

- | Chris had a 6 month affair with a friend
- | Sex was good and he wanted it to continue
- | They had 2 pregnancies and 2 abortions
- | They had sex once in his house

Summary Continued

- Returned to therapy 2 months ago after husband's affair was revealed

- Did a 5-day "de-tox" coming clean on their secrets

“ The thing is I'm not struggling with her affairs but she is with mine and I don't know why she's struggling. We could both acknowledge they happened and move on. I am able to trust her. I know and feel she loves me. I trust she's not going to find someone else or betray me but if she does I won't regret trusting her. It would hurt but it would be on her

Husband's Rationale

He explained that he had been “a little depressed” because his marriage felt good except there was **no sex**.

“ I didn't want to be a cheater. I had to rationalize and told myself I was a good husband outside of sex. I felt unwanted and unappreciated. I worked hard to give Helen the best life. When I brought it up, she said she didn't want or need sex.

I decided I'm taking care of myself on the side. Prior to sex I had anger and resentment. Then I found myself loving Helen more but I was too much of a coward to say it to her.

What Stands Out to Me from Nancy's Case

- Good Progress is Being Made
- These clients are not yet aware of what lies ahead
- They are both going to be tested in significant ways
- Therapist will also be tested
- Let's go to Nancy's Transcript and see how all 3 are being tested

Repairing After Infidelity



Has the partner who lied developed enough not to hide in the future



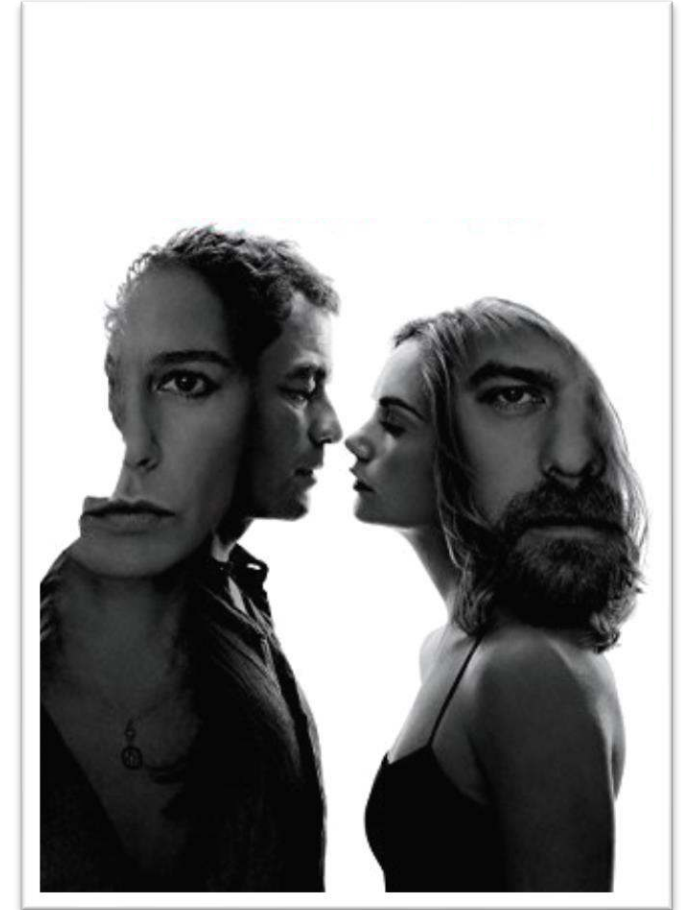
Is the spouse who was lied to able to support honest communication or are they a “lie invitee”

**Without these two factors the relationship
is a train wreck waiting to happen**

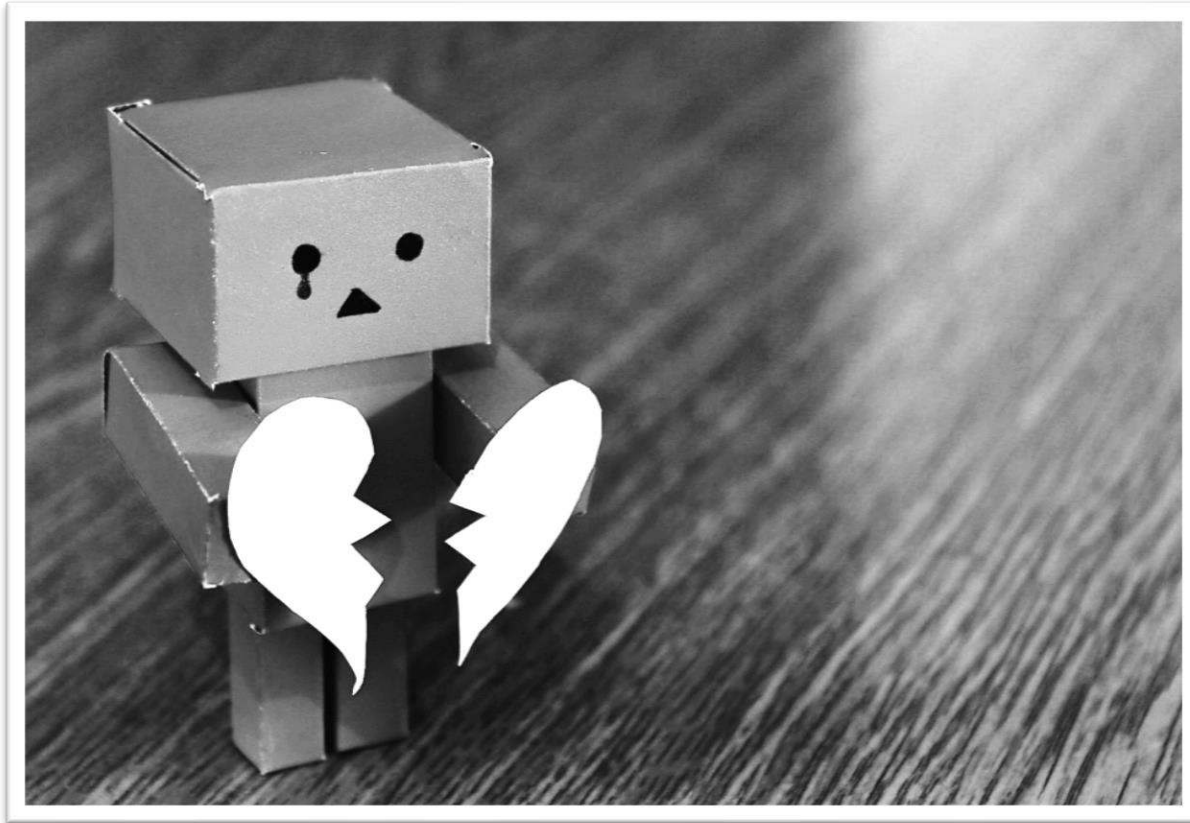
Infidelity is not mainly about sex

In our culture, marriage carries an assumption of sexual exclusivity unless otherwise defined by the partners

- In a monogamous relationship an affair where the spouse does not know first means inevitable dishonesty and deception
- Usually they also involve self deception and disrupting a long-term symbiosis
- Willingness to betray a promise/commitment:
■ Breaking a good faith agreement while appearing to be loyal



Defining Infidelity



What is Infidelity?

Betrayal of trust or loyalty
when there is reason to expect
some kind of loyalty or trust

What type of therapy is desired?

1

Is the couple here to work, re-unite and repair the bond?

2

Are they here to make a decision?

3

Are they here for help with separation?
(Divorce or Separation Therapy)

Important to make this distinction
Are they both there for the same reason

Assessing Infidelity



Timing of affair



Type of affair



Length of affair



Number of affairs



Type of betrayal



Type of deceit

Assessing Types of Lies

Lies of Omission or Commission

Loving Lies

Conflict Avoiding Lies



Frequency of Lies

Felony Lies

Feelings about the deceit

Passive Aggressive Lies

Treatment Issues

STAGE 1



- Slow process down and outline the individual dilemma for each partner
- Confront the need to make impulsive premature decisions
- Clarify immediate threats
 - What is going to happen now?
 - Stop affair?
 - Live together or apart?
- Work to define individual issues of each partner that contributed to the affair and outline the work ahead. Are they in for the work?

Treatment Issues

STAGE 1



- Do not get caught in the blame cycle
- Strongly and actively control communication and do not allow it to escalate
- Clarify the relationship between infidelity and dishonesty
Unfaithful vs. betrayal of commitment
- Explain safety needed for therapy to progress

Treatment Issues

STAGE 2



- Individuals focus on their own issues and own decisions
- Partners develop an increasing capacity for tolerating ambiguity and anxiety
- Unanswered questions are addressed
- Partners learn to manage their own differentiation and their own emotional reactivity

Treatment Issues

STAGE 2




Accountability

Why did I decide to deceive you?

- Is this in or out of character? Will the partner who lied face what this means about them?
- There are relationship consequences. Will they face those consequences?
- Partner works through anger and betrayal and acknowledges their own contributions as well
- Initiation of discussion and repair attempts from both partners

Ineffective Repair Attempts

- ✗ Avoidance-not talking about what happened
 - ✗ Giving lots of excuses
 - ✗ Discounting the importance of the lie
 - ✗ Telling partner to hurry up and get over it
 - ✗ Expecting quick forgiveness
- 
- ✗ Intolerant of legitimate grief
 - ✗ Blaming the partner ("we never had any sex")
 - ✗ Refusing to give info or being evasive about certain relevant topics
 - ✗ Actual denial of events

Effective Repair Attempts

- ✓ Saying I am sorry
- ✓ Proclaiming love
- ✓ Providing truthful information
- ✓ Self-reflection
- ✓ Owning up to weakness
- ✓ Expressing guilt, repentance
- ✓ Friend witnesses the goodbye



- ✓ Proactive about triggers
- ✓ Symbolic gifts
- ✓ Talking explicitly about what happened and why it matters
- ✓ Giving free access to phone and email records
- ✓ Significant self confrontation

Typical Issues that Surface



Gifts that were
purchased



Timeline of
events



Proven
closure



Were kids
introduced



Who else knew
about the affair



Were friends involved in
the deception



What did affair partner
know about me



How was
the sex



Special places
shared

Treatment Issues

STAGE 3



A decision is made about whether to stay together or separate

- If staying together-A boundary is re-established around the “two of us” as a couple”
- Agreements are re-established
 - Honesty and/or monogamy
 - How to return to therapy if needed

Summary Learnings from Nancy's Case

This couple is still in the crisis stage

Are they each going to work on themselves

- He presents as Yes....(Maybe)
- She is uncertain if she can forgive herself for risking and opening up

She is
angry

He has been
conflict
avoidant.

Now he feels good about
coming clean and
revealing truths.

However, will he feel as good in Stage 2
if he examines more deeply the part of
him that lied and was also conflict
avoidant with the affair partner

What Results From Her Personalizing

- | She sidesteps legitimate confrontation

- | Her requests are indirect

- | Her self-esteem stays low

- | She keeps asking about his feelings now. That is needed to move past the crisis stage, but it does not address the issue of will his conflict-avoidant pattern really change?



Husband Says

I have left that person in the past

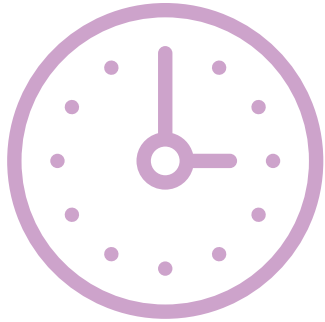
The person I was being was difficult for you to be with and I apologize for that.

At 43C, he eloquently describes his conflict avoidance but will he challenge himself after the crisis fades

What Nancy Did Well

- Identified her internal conflict
- Made many developmental assists
- Strengthens wife's decision making

Why Training May Be Valuable For You



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Working with Couples
more effectively with
satisfying sessions that
flow



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nonverbally that you know
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difficult challenges



You can hold steady and
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accountable



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People wonder

“Will I really get personal attention?”



“The way this course is structured offers the opportunity for growth that isn't likely available in many training courses, on-line or otherwise. I haven't had this kind of experience since my Gestalt Training many years ago when I started out as a baby therapist, and in that training the group met in person for 3 and 4 days at a clip, living and training together in a big house. My gratitude to Ellyn for creating this course as she has.

Ann Veilleux, MSW, LCSW, Madison, Wisconsin

What One Colleague Said...



“ *I want to thank you for all that you have taught me and for my new found confidence to work with couples.*

This program has not only influenced my work with couples but fundamentally changed how I view my own relationship with my husband and even my kids.

Marine Green

Cost Comparison

<i>What you receive in The Developmental Model Training Program</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Total Value</i>
12 Live 90 Minute Training Sessions with Dr. Ellyn Bader	\$500	\$6000
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Being part of a Supportive Therapist Community	<i>Priceless</i>	
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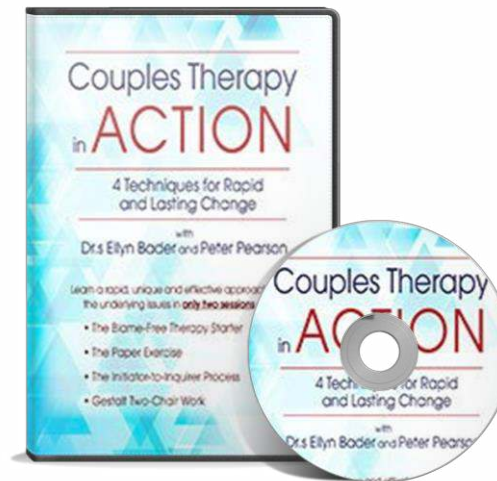
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A unique DVD “*Couples Therapy in Action*” showcasing 4 interventions from the Developmental Model.

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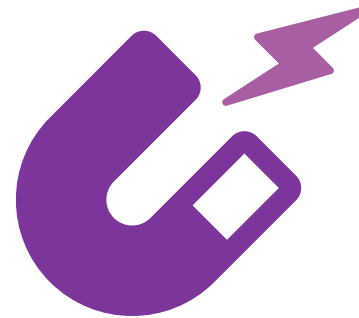
25 Initiator-Inquirer
cards for use with
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3 Special Bonuses

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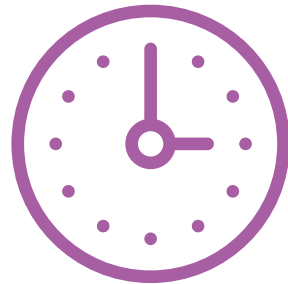
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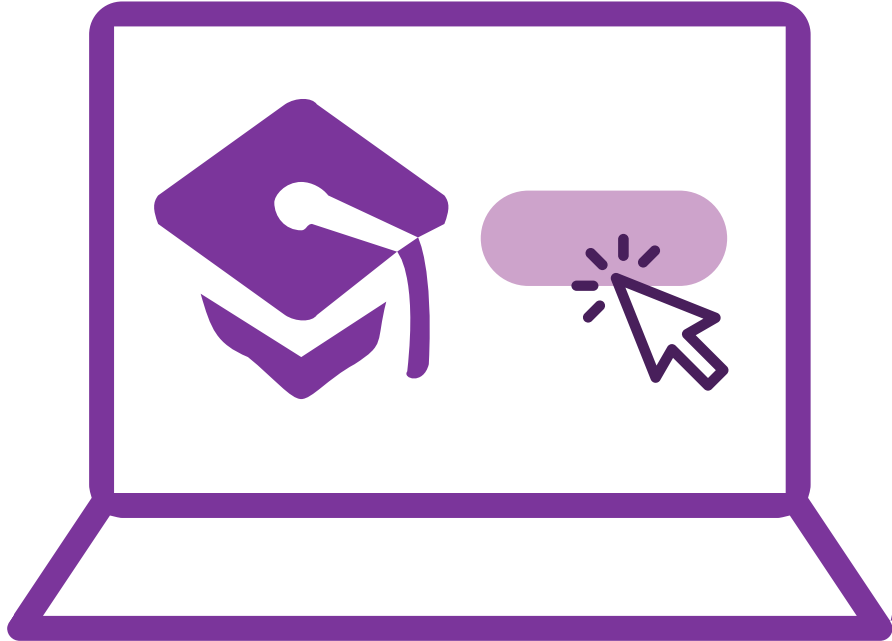
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- 25 Client Handouts to Support Your In-Session Work
- Supportive Therapist Community
- Submit Cases for Review

\$127/month

Special Bonuses



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25 Initiator-Inquirer cards for use with your clients.

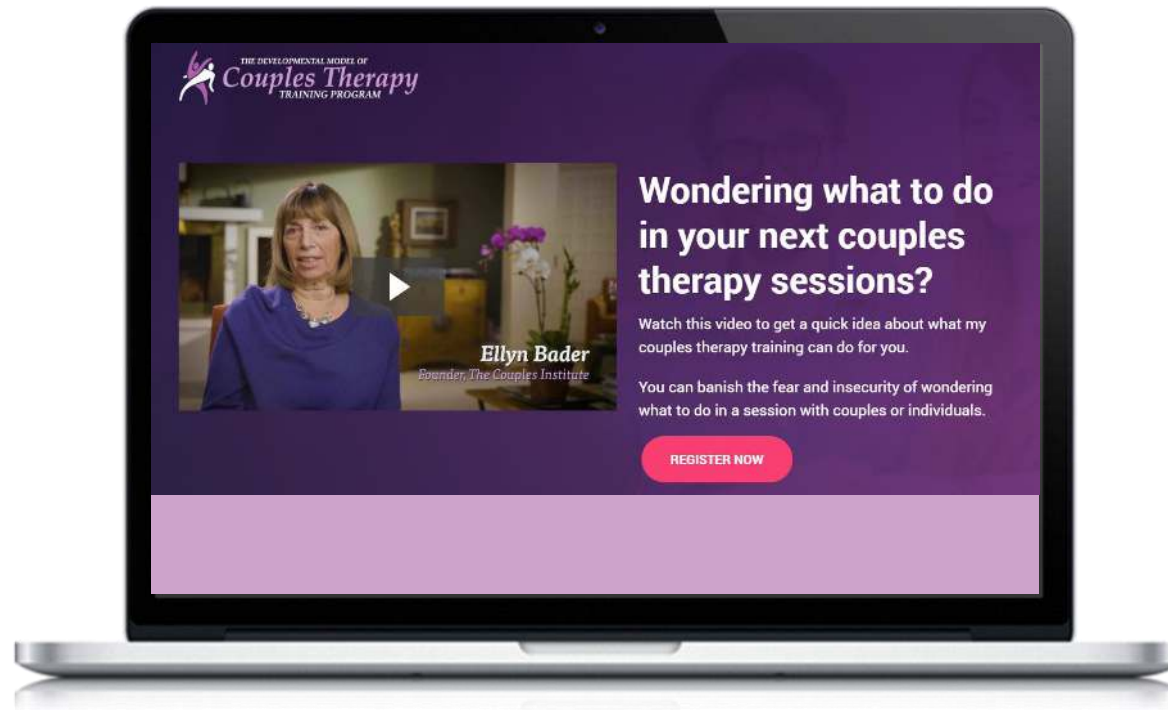


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- Can I do it with a colleague?
- What are your questions?



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