

Straying Husbands

Based on the cases you've handled, how often do marriages break down as a result of husbands who stray?

Straying husbands are only one factor why marriages break down.

While there was an increased in straying husbands over the recent years, the demographic has shifted. We heard that 55-60s men who, upon getting their lump sum of money from CPF, will seek for 2nd youth. However, although these cases hardly end up in divorce, the relationship may become bitter. Furthermore, they hardly seek for counselling.

There also has been an increase in women straying over the recent years.

Here at The Therapy Room, we want to be able to help. Our principal psychologist, Geraldine Tan, has ample experience in the area of marital issues. Please feel free to click [here](#) to contact us and find out more.

Is infidelity a symptom of other problems in the marriage or is it a trigger that sets forth other problems?

Marriage in Singapore may be viewed as fulfilling a certain need such as:

- To have a family
- Family pressure/cultural need
- Following the trend—my friends are all getting married it's time I do too
- In search of love
- To escape from a predicament

Infidelity may indicate

- An unfulfilled need
- Lack of communication
- An avenue to ventilate/relax
- Lust (prostitutes/multiple partners)
- Addiction (to kinky sex, etc)
- The “escape” did not meet up to expectations
- That he has reached a certain status (thus able to afford a mistress)

When the unfaithful partner is found out, it may bring forth a set of grievances from both parties. Often, it gets the gear for the relationship starting because sometimes couples are simply just waiting in anticipation of being found out or for “something to happen”.

What does this indicate about marriages and society in Singapore?

Most marriages in Singapore are “love marriages”. That is to mean that these couples are in love and choose to make that life commitment. Most of these couples are also more well-educated and informed. However, due to the job climate in Singapore, more financial liberation for the men (and women) may create the illusion that he/she has more than he/she can spend. Furthermore, with globalisation where more traveling is required in a job, he/she has more opportunities to have a one-night stand or even an affair.

The bright side is that with the more educated and informed couple, they also learn to communicate their needs more. This is essential so that they are able to understand the opinions of each other and compromise, rather than waiting for something to happen and then launching at each other.

What can a wife do about her husband's infidelity? What other advice would you give her?

It is normal for the wife to feel angry and betrayed with the husband. Most women would feel angry and stupid, after all, they were the ones that made the judgment to trust the man they are married to. Many would go through a period of self-blame, believing that they pushed their man into doing so. A million questions would fly through the wife's mind. Is it a one-night stand? Is it an affair? How long has he engaged in the affair or acts? Does he love her? Most would want answers for his actions but they may not get any, and even if they do, the answers may not be satisfactory. As a result, these usually leave the wives hanging and creating doubts in their mind, and becoming an obstacle to trust men.

The key to any marriage is open communication. If something pleases you or make you happy, let your partner knows. If there is something that you do not like, do let the other person knows too. Just like having sex, after a while both take things for granted and end up in the similar position over and over again; there will be fewer expressions and less appreciation. Keeping the marriage going does require effort on both sides.

Best course of action may be to consider the following once you have found out that something is going on:

1. Are you open to hearing his side of the story?
2. Are you willing to accept his answer?
3. Are you ready to hear if he says he wants out or wants to remain in the marriage?
4. How willing are you to try and work through the issues?
5. Are you ready to face the rumours and well-meaning advice of friends and family round you?
6. Where do you want the relationship to go?

Although sitting down and talking may be difficult in the beginning where intense emotions are running high, it is essential because only then you would be able to determine for yourself what you want to do or where the whole relationship is going.

It is important to note that during the initial part, the husband may take a defensive stance after being found out and even try and deny and think of a way out. This may accentuate the wife's anger and even enhance the feeling of mistrust. That is a normal reaction and both parties need time to process the matter individually and as a couple.

Under what circumstances can such a marriage be saved? When should a wife contemplate leaving her husband then?

A marriage takes two, therefore, both parties must be willing to "try again". Usually, the marriage can be saved when the commitment towards the family must be present.

A breakup is inevitable if:

- Either party is unwilling to give in. Accusations and negative emotions would inadvertently lead to a further breakdown in the relationship.
- There is no more feelings on either side. The husband has either found someone new or the wife has no more trust in the husband.
- The husband has been doing the same thing over and over again. Infidelity is a pattern and there is so much a wife can take. It would become an emotional torture for the wife as she would be just thinking about when she would catch him again.
- There is violence. For instance, the husband or the wife turn to violent to settle the issue.

Marriage is a decision made by the couple and to continue it takes two. Therefore, if the wife wants to carry on by her husband's side, she needs to be prepared for the words that may come her way through from her friends and family members. Therapy is highly recommended for both parties to work through their individual feelings and emotions and to work as a couple again.

Here at The Therapy Room, Geraldine, the principle psychologist, does therapy intervention for marital issues. In addition, The Therapy Room also conducts a weekly process group facilitated by the principle psychologist and senior psychologist, Geraldine Tan and Lawrence Tan. Studies have found that process groups enhance the abilities to connect meaningfully with other, have more satisfactory interpersonal relationships and improved ability to self-reflect. Please feel free to click [here](#) to contact us and find out more.