

The Courage to Stay: How to Heal from an Affair and Save Your Marriage

Kathy Nickerson

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The Courage to Stay is an affirming self-help book that walks couples through achieving a new sense of normalcy after the discovery of an affair.

Drawing upon twenty-plus years of clinical experience with struggling partners, Kathy Nickerson's empathetic self-help book *The Courage to Stay* is a useful guide for couples looking to remain together after an affair.

All that couples need to heal from an affair, Nickerson claims, is the mutual desire to make that happen. Her guidebook is designed for both the partner who was harmed and the person who strayed. It includes advice for all stages of repairing the damage caused by an affair, from the early days of confronting a partner's infidelity to working to build trust and addressing roadblocks along the way.

Supported most by Nickerson's clinical experience, but also by some light outside sourcing, the book's advice for discussing an affair and confronting the offending party stresses that recovering requires communication: it has to be made clear how the affair impacted both people. Lists of questions are present to translate such advice into action—and to help partners articulate why they want to heal their relationship and express what they know now that they wish they'd known then.

Encouraging open sharing for the sake of finding comfort in one another, the book works to translate fleeting moments of connection into the building blocks needed to rebuild trust in a relationship. It treats affairs like addictions: "Once you stop taking your drug, you will experience some withdrawals." It encourages seeing that withdrawal process as chemical, not as the result of emotional attachment, so as not to cast blame on one side or the other. This evenhanded approach allows both parties to benefit from the assuring advice.

The book gives both partners work to accomplish as part of recovering from the affair but is more often focused on the harmed party. It asks the person who had an affair to write a "break-up letter" and includes a sample letter that allows for a clear break. And its seven chapters are subdivided into sections that focus on specific tasks, like exploring why the affair happened and developing a healing mindset. Internally, its short sections help to focus that relationship-building work into well-defined goals in consideration of the complicated trauma that an affair brings. This workbook-style approach is further supported by a brief closing resources section that draws out the book's key themes to foster healing and positivity.

Nickerson is candid about the fact that healing requires feeling difficult and painful emotions—and that this hard work is not limited to dealing with just one problem in a couple's life. *The Courage to Stay's* positive message and care with fostering relationship skills makes it an affirming self-help book that walks couples through achieving a new sense of normalcy after the discovery of an affair.

JEREMIAH ROOD (December 19, 2022)

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