

A FREE GUIDE FROM AFTER THE BETRAYAL

The First 72 Hours

After discovering infidelity

If you found out in the last few days, you are not thinking clearly right now, and that is not a flaw. It is what a shocked nervous system does. This short guide will not fix anything. It will just help you get through the next three days without making things harder on yourself.

You are not going crazy

The racing thoughts, the shaking, the nausea, the inability to eat or sleep, the images you cannot stop seeing: this is what an acute stress response looks like. Discovering betrayal hits the nervous system the way a physical threat does. Your body has flooded itself with stress hormones, and the thinking part of your brain has partly gone offline. That is not weakness. It is biology doing exactly what it is built to do.

Because of this, your judgment is genuinely, temporarily impaired right now. This matters more than it sounds like it should.

RIGHT NOW, YOUR ONLY JOBS ARE

Breathe. Slowly, on purpose, a few times an hour if you need to.

Drink water. Shock dehydrates you faster than you'd expect.

Eat something small, even if you don't want to. Toast counts.

Tell one safe person what happened. You should not be carrying this completely alone.

The one rule that protects you most

Do not make any big, irreversible decisions in the next 72 hours. Not about the relationship, not about moving out, not about a big confrontation, not about telling everyone. A decision this size made by a shocked brain is not a decision you can trust yet. You are allowed to say, out loud, “I am not deciding anything right now.” That is not weakness. That is the wisest thing you can do today.

What actually helps in these first days

Let yourself feel it. Crying, shaking, rage, numbness, all of it is a normal response to an abnormal event. None of it needs to be managed away.

Protect your basic functioning. Sleep when you can, even in short stretches. Eat small amounts often. Avoid alcohol, it worsens sleep and judgment at exactly the moment you need both.

Tell the truth to one or two safe people. Isolation makes this harder. You don't need an audience, you need one or two people who will simply be there.

Avoid interrogation marathons. You may feel a pull to get every detail immediately. It's okay to ask questions in smaller doses over time, instead of one exhausting confrontation.

Keep your body moving, gently. A short walk can discharge some of the physical stress load. It won't fix anything, but it helps the body come down slightly.

What to avoid in these first 72 hours

Deciding whether to stay or leave. That question deserves a clear mind, not a shocked one.

Telling every single person in your life. You can't take disclosure back once it's made.

Confronting the affair partner. This rarely goes the way people imagine, and it can wait.

Making major financial moves out of anger. Protect yourself, but slow down first.

Numbing the pain with substances. It postpones the feeling and adds a second problem.

One last thing

You will not always feel like you feel right now. That is not a promise that this doesn't hurt, or that it will be easy. It is simply true: acute shock does not last forever, and the fog does lift enough to think clearly again. For now, your only task is to get through today, and then tomorrow. That is enough.

This guide is drawn from *After the Betrayal*, a research-informed guide for healing after infidelity (10 chapters). If it helped, the full book goes deeper into every part of this, from the science of what betrayal does to your body, to deciding whether to stay or go, to rebuilding trust or rebuilding yourself.

This is a self-help resource, not therapy or medical advice. If you are in crisis, having thoughts of harming yourself, or unable to function, please reach out to a qualified professional or a local crisis line.