

By Dr Joy Barredo

# After the Affair

CAN YOU AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP SURVIVE AN AFFAIR? IT'S POSSIBLE. READ ON.

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**Q** My life was perfect until I found out my husband was having an affair. My world fell apart. It has been six months since. I still have not moved on. What do I do? I don't think I can ever trust him again.

– Alana, Makati City

**A** Infidelity is one of the hardest things a woman can experience in a marriage. The one thing you should not do is question whether you could have done anything to prevent your husband from straying. He had complete control of what he was doing. If he had issues regarding your marriage, he should have talked to you. So don't second guess yourself, or worse blame yourself.

You ask what you can do. My question to you is: what do you want to do? What does your husband want to do? You both need to decide whether you want to rebuild the relationship or not. If the answer is yes, then you have to focus on this. Once you have decided that you are staying, then you need to let go of the past.

It should be clear to you why you want to stay – is it because you love him, are you being pressured by your family, or are you embarrassed to admit that the marriage failed? Whatever the reason, be certain that it benefits you and the marriage.

Have you told your husband exactly how you felt about the affair? Did he ask for your forgiveness? What questions do you have that remain unanswered? Are you both committed to giving your relationship another chance? It's a marriage – it takes two to make it work. Once you have expressed yourself fully to your husband, ask him

to do the same.

Next, discuss what you both would do differently. What do you need from your husband in order to trust him again? Are you able to keep the past where it belongs? Are you quite prone to harping about the past – which doesn't help. It only perpetuates anger, hurt and blame. It prevents everyone involved from moving on. Keeping tabs on your husband's whereabouts is only going to drive you nuts. It's not healthy and the exact opposite of trust – neither is going through his things: phone, wallet, email or diary.

Instead of making giant leaps, grand gestures, promises easily broken, take baby steps to bridge the gap between you and your husband. Do things to bring you closer to each other: rent a romance dvd, cook dinner together or watch the sunset. What did you enjoy doing together before all this happened? What would you enjoy doing together now?

One powerful thing you can do to help you move on is to accept that it happened, don't deny it. Learn from the experience.

To rekindle the love and trust you once shared, make a list of all the things you love about each other to remind you of the reasons you got married in the first place. Keep the list where you can see it everyday – like the fridge door. Who knows? You may fall in love with each other all over again.

On the other hand, if you decide to leave him, be strong. It will be a rocky ride – you might be tempted to see him again. What benefits do you gain by leaving him? Think about the life you want to have six months from now. What do you need to do to create that life? Does it feel like you have moved on? This may be difficult to visualize at the moment considering the space you are in.

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The only question you need to ask yourself is this: What do I want? That's a good starting point. You need to be specific about this to get from point A to point B. Saying you want to be happy is not enough. It's better if you say: I want to be smiling everyday having put the past behind me by January next year.

You are a woman, therefore you have strength and resilience you may not even be aware of. Trust yourself to know what's best for you. Look to your inner compass and follow it where it leads you. 