

Online Affairs

**Including the results of TWO surveys:
847 people who had an online affair themselves
1,047 people whose spouses had an online affair**

Peggy Vaughan

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Introduction

I have great concerns about the drawbacks of using the Internet to establish personal relationships—even if both people are "single." Unfortunately, the movie "You've Got Mail" was NOT realistic, presenting a very false image of the course of a romance begun on the Internet. The reality is a very different picture.

I see the dark side of Internet-based romances through the many messages I receive about the pain they create. In fact, I see the Internet as having a huge impact on extramarital affairs—much bigger than the impact on affairs when women joined the workforce in larger numbers.

The Internet is becoming the newest, strongest "pick-up" place around these days. And it's so easy to get caught up in it that many people don't know what hit them until it's too late.

Most people are not SEEKING sex when they go online and go into a chat room. However, this is a big part of the problem—that people don't INTEND to get involved sexually—but that's often the eventual result.

People *intend* to be monogamous—but anyone is vulnerable

I urge people to check their assumptions. Most of us fully intend to be monogamous. But we assume too much. We assume we know why affairs happen. We assume only bad people have affairs. We assume our partners will always be faithful. And we assume we would NEVER have an affair ourselves. However, no one is immune. There is no absolute protection from affairs. You have to fight for your marriage. You have to fight for honesty. And it's not an easy path.

The underlying feature of all affairs for all parties involved is dishonesty. Couples need to set up a habit of honesty early in a marriage. Physical attractions are normal. But we go about it backwards and address all of those feelings and issues after the crises. Start talking now. Start from day one of the marriage. And the open communication must be ongoing.

The person involved in online interactions may have no intention of letting it become inappropriate—and may deny (even to themselves) that it is becoming inappropriate, even as it is getting out of hand. Regardless of what is believed (or even intended) regarding online relationships, they have a way of taking on a life of their own that takes on more and more importance in the overall scheme of things. Unfortunately, seemingly innocent online relationships are damaging (or outright killing) many, many marriages.

Many people try to rationalize that online affairs are not really affairs—since they don't involve sex (at least not in the beginning). However, any kind of behavior with sexual overtones that is kept secret from the spouse feels like an affair to the spouse if/when they find out about it. And even if the spouse doesn't know about it, keeping this kind of secret usually creates distance between the couple and interferes with the degree of closeness in the relationship.

The safest way to see that online interactions don't damage the primary relationship is to make sure that no online interactions are secret. This means not saying anything to someone online that you aren't willing for your spouse to read. Whenever someone invokes privacy rights, it's probably because they have something to hide. (Hiding online relationships is not privacy; it's secrecy.) And

even if there's nothing "serious" happening at the moment, continuing to keep these interactions "secret" just increases the chances that they will eventually escalate as described in my "online affairs scenario."

Infatuations with online relationships can become addictive; and the longer it goes on, the stronger the habit is likely to become. So even though it may be difficult to confront this issue, the situation is likely to get even worse and become even more difficult to address after more time has passed. I see Online Affairs as the next HUGE crisis involving affairs, and there's a great deal that everyone needs to know about this issue.

What everyone needs to know about “Online Affairs”

"Online Affairs" is a significant issue that is sure to get much bigger as more and more people come onto the Internet. So EVERYONE (whether or not you have yet been touched by this issue) would be well-advised to be better informed about this newest dimension to extramarital affairs.

So...here are the answers to some of the basic questions about Online Affairs:

1. Is an Online Affair actually an Affair?

The classic definition of an "extramarital affair" is when a married person has sex with someone other than their spouse. However (as is clear from the above questions), that definition is far too narrow to cover the experience of today's couples.

Under the broader definition, a person is likely to feel that an "extramarital affair" has taken place whenever they are in a committed relationship—whether or not they are married—and when their partner:

- secretly engages in a relationship with another person that involves any kind of sexual activity.
- secretly becomes involved in a sexually-charged relationship with another person, without actual sexual activity.
- secretly develops a deeply meaningful emotional connection that is "platonic."
- secretly engages in any variation or combination of the above.

As you can see, the word "secret" is critical to the definition in that the primary factor as to whether a person defines a situation as an "extramarital affair" usually depends on whether secrecy and deception are involved. Deception is an integral part of the definition of an "extramarital affair"—regardless of the particular form it takes. (As stated above, people often recover from the fact that their partner has had sex with someone else before they recover from the fact that they have been deceived.)

Here's an excerpt from the chapter on Online Affairs in my book titled *Dear Peggy* that provides a little more detail about the similarities between online affairs and any other kind of affair.

“Even though they may not involve physical contact, online affairs still involve the same kinds of thinking and emotions as other affairs. On one hand, they usually involve novelty and excitement, and on the other hand they usually involve secrecy and deception.

“Novelty and Excitement:

- *People often present the freest and freshest aspects of their personalities online.*
- *Online interactions often provide an "escape" from the realities of day-to-day living.*
- *The fantasy world online can make the real world seem dull and boring.*
- *The sheer numbers of people create unlimited potential for "newness."*

“Secrecy and Deception:

- *The secrecy involved in online affairs is part of their appeal—and part of their danger.*
- *The secretiveness increases the intensity of the feelings generated by this contact.*
- *By deceiving a primary partner, online affairs become high-risk, no matter what.*
- *Recovering from being deceived can be extremely difficult, even if no sex is involved”*

So what constitutes an affair?

First of all, no one who is being hurt by a partner's questionable involvement with someone outside the marriage needs to be concerned with whether to "label" it as "an affair" or "not an affair"—because the label doesn't change the feelings about the behavior. This debate about the label is just a distraction and delay in dealing with what is obviously a disturbing situation that needs/deserves to be discussed, clarified, and dealt with.

There are a couple of reasons that I can imagine people might have for wanting this kind of definition. One is if they're trying to find a loophole in their own behavior—to prove to themselves that what they're doing "isn't really an affair." Another reason is that they're trying to find a way to prove to their partner that something the partner is doing "constitutes an affair." In either case, one person is trying to justify/defend/rationalize their behavior. So the debate is really just a waste of time.

It's much preferable to move from debating the definition of an affair to focusing on the **IMPACT** of the behavior. I offer a lot of information on this site that can help in dealing with these kinds of issues, but making use of it depends on getting past this useless debate and on to the business of dealing with the consequences of the actions—regardless of how they might be defined.

DECEPTION is the key to an affair – not whether or not there's SEX per se

Anything where there is a deception, that has sexual chemistry to it, but is kept secret and is ongoing, feels like an affair to the spouse.

When an affair happens, it's a life-altering event, regardless of any of the "particulars" of the situation—and the ramifications can last a lifetime, regardless of whether or not the marriage survives.

One reason that focusing on the various "types" of affairs misses the point—is that the key factor is the **DECEPTION** involved. Most people recover from the fact that their partner had sex with someone else—before they recover from the fact that they were "deceived." An affair, in the final analysis, is more about "breaking trust" than about "having sex."

Question: If your partner has had an affair...what was the most difficult to overcome?**Women's responses:**

27%—That they had sex with someone else

72%—That they deceived me

Men's responses:

28%—That they had sex with someone else

67%—That they deceived me

Note: While an online affair begins without any physical contact, far more online activity moves over to the "real" world than people anticipate. For instance, note the responses to the following question in my survey of people who had an online affair, indicating that almost half of those that began "online" eventually became physical sexual relationships:

Question: Did you ever have a physical sexual relationship?

49%—Yes

51%—No

However, even if it stays "online," it still poses the same kind of threat to the marriage as any kind of affair. This is because the damage from affairs is far more than just the "sex." While any sexual contact may be the *first* focus of the spouse, I've found during the past 20 years of working with this issue that people recover from the fact that their spouse had *sex* with someone else before they recover from the fact that they were *deceived*. And the deception involved in an online affair is just as devastating to the spouse as any kind of deception. So—regardless of the effort by most people to "rationalize" their activity as NOT being an affair, it *feels* like an affair to the spouse—and the damage can be the same.

2. Are online affairs a threat to marriages?

Despite the common protestations that it is "harmless"—it is NOT. Even though most people begin quite innocently (often out of curiosity), it quickly escalates, often taking on a greater significance in people's lives. As their involvement in this online activity increases, their connection with their spouse decreases. But the most dangerous part of this activity lies in the fact that it is kept SECRET from the spouse. And anytime one partner keeps this kind of secret from their spouse, it creates an emotional distance. The spouse inevitably picks up on the distance and becomes very anxious and concerned.

3. What About an Online "Friendship?"

An online "friendship" is usually just the first step in an interaction that almost inevitably leads to "more." There is a fairly predictable pattern to online relationships. Most people kid themselves that it won't get out of hand and that it's harmless. After it DOES get out of hand and develops beyond what was originally intended, it's often too late.

A spouse is often hesitant to make a big deal out of their partner's seemingly innocent activities. But understanding the progressive nature of online relationships provides an opportunity to avoid greater difficulties later.

The safest way to see that online interactions don't damage the primary relationship is to make sure that no online interactions are "secret." This means getting your partner to agree that neither of you will say anything to someone online that you aren't willing for the other one to read. And if they resist and invoke "privacy" rights, it's probably because they already have something to hide. Then it's reasonable to be concerned—and to openly discuss those concerns in an effort to avoid escalation of the situation.

Even if there's nothing "serious" to hide at the moment, continuing to keep these interactions "secret" just increases the chances that they will eventually reach the point where "hiding" become essential. So even though it's difficult to confront this issue (and the reaction may be quite negative), the situation is likely to get even worse and become even more difficult to address after more time has passed.

Infatuations with online relationships can become addictive; and the longer it goes on, the stronger the habit is likely to become. There's a certain fantasy about online relationships that needs to be acknowledged and filtered through the reality of the potential consequences in the real world.

The fantasy of online affairs makes it easy to get carried away with a relationship that develops online. While it may be a fantastic experience, much of the intensity of the feeling is inherent in the newness and novelty of an online relationship. Any new connection is going to be exciting, and it may not be the particular person who makes the difference. It has more to do with the excitement generated by this fantasy kind of relationship than to any specific feelings about a real person. In any new relationship (whether or not it begins online), people present the best sides of themselves. It's not indicative of the whole person functioning in the real world.

4. Why do some people become obsessed with online affairs?

As with any "new" activity, unless it is stopped quickly, people normally get more and more deeply involved and take more and more risks. It takes on a life of its own, albeit a "fantasy" life. In fact, the fantasy nature of it (as well as the seemingly "anonymous" nature of it) leads people to adopt attitudes and behaviors quite different from their normal way of being in the real world. They can pretend to be anything they want—and they can reveal previously hidden aspects of their personalities that they have not exposed. The "safety" they feel is a *false* safety, but it is seductive—and it is exciting, instant gratification without strings attached. And seemingly, with no consequences—but this too is a false idea.

5. What about people addicted to online affairs who want to quit?

The operative word is "WANT" to quit. If they honestly want to quit, they need to take *actions* toward quitting. This involves *telling* someone in their real world all about the previously-hidden activity. Simply acknowledging it to their spouse or to a "responsible" friend or professional can be the first step. The fantasy part of the behavior is rooted in the secrecy; so exposing the secret helps to defuse the power of this secret life.

6. What about spouses of those addicted to online affairs?

When the spouse learns of this activity, they are likely to try to make it stop. But the person addicted to online affairs is likely to try to "defend" their activities as being "none of their spouse's business"—and attack them for interfering. (They consider this kind of "offense" to be a good "defense.") However, it should not deter the spouse from making it clear that this is NOT acceptable—and that it IS their business—because it affects the relationship. If the person involved in the cyber sex resists changing—even after their spouse knows about it—then the spouse knows that the problem is bigger than *just* the online affair (as if that's not enough). It also indicates a lack of caring about their spouse's feelings and the pain this is causing the spouse. Any effort to get through to them will be more effective if it is done in a straightforward factual (rational) way—rather than a "nagging/begging" (emotional) way. Ignoring it will NOT make it go away. It requires clarity of thought, words, and actions to effectively deal with this issue.

A Typical Scenario of the Progression of Online Affairs

1. You spend more and more time Online.

Online interactions provide an "escape" from the realities of day-to-day living. The fantasy world online can make the real world seem dull and boring. The sheer numbers of people create unlimited potential for "newness."

2. You meet someone interesting Online.

You share confidences: hopes, fears, fantasies. The intense sharing brings you closer and closer together. You fantasize about being more than online friends. You become infatuated with your "friend" and want more and more interaction. You feel like you're "in love."

3. Your primary partner suspects/knows about your online friend.

You deny or rationalize about your online activity. Your partner becomes more and more suspicious and threatened. You ignore or deny the impact this is having on your partner. Your partner learns more and is devastated by the situation. You tell yourself that since there's no actual sex involved, it shouldn't matter. You grow closer to your online friend and more distant from your partner.

4. You want to meet your online friend in person.

You feel like "soul-mates" or that you were "meant for each other." You consider "risking it all" to see your online friend. You either meet and engage in sex or you don't and feel like "star-crossed lovers."

5. Your life has been changed in ways you never intended.

Your online relationship ends—and your "real" one may end as well.

Reflections on this scenario:

The above scenario is so common as to allow for some general observations. First, any new connection is going to be exciting, but it may not be the particular person who makes the difference. The excitement has more to do with the "kind" of relationship than to the specific feelings about a "real" person. In any new relationship (whether or not it begins online), people present the best sides of themselves; it's not reflective of the whole person functioning in the real world.

Whatever loss you feel when the "Online Affair" ends is the loss of a "fantasy," not the real thing. All too often we think of "love" only as the initial "heady feelings of love." Falling in love (or "new love") produces some of the most intense feelings you will ever experience, but it doesn't last.

While it may be a fantastic experience, much of the intensity of the feeling is inherent in its newness and novelty. Once a "fantasy" love takes on all the real-life responsibilities of a long-term relationship, the feelings either make the transition into the next, deeper stage of love, or they wither. So comparing the feelings in a new relationship with the feelings of a long-term marriage is like comparing apples and oranges.

As for the impact on the primary relationship, it's common to rationalize an online affair as being OK because it's "not really an affair." But it often has the potential for being as devastating to the partner as a sexual affair. (In fact, most people whose partners have a sexual affair find that they recover from the fact that their partner had sex with someone else before they recover from the fact that they were deceived.)

We like to think that deception is only involved when there's outright lying involved. But a more accurate definition of a lack of honesty in a relationship is "withholding relevant information." Anything that is deliberately hidden from a partner (whether it's the fact of being involved in an online affair or the specifics of the online interactions) creates an emotional distance that presents a serious problem that is difficult to overcome.

So while people may disagree about the "definition" of an affair, there's no mistaking the impact of "Online Affairs" on the partner who is feeling hurt and threatened. When these hurt feelings are ignored or dismissed as unreasonable, it shows a "lack of caring" that is far more of a threat to the relationship than the "affairs" themselves.

Online Affairs often lead to the diminishing or destruction of primary relationships—although this was not the original intention. And in hindsight, many people who wind up having affairs recognize that they could have/should have known what they were getting into, but they simply blocked it out. A common lament is, "I didn't intend to have an affair."

When it comes to Online Affairs, it's not just a question of whether it's "wrong," but whether it's "smart." In looking for something "better in life" or a way to "get more out of life," people often wind up with less. It's important to find some other avenue for igniting the positive "alive" feelings that are a big part of the enticement of Online Affairs. Their appeal can serve as a signal to rethink all aspects of our life and determine what can be done to feel more "alive" that is rooted in reality (instead of fantasy)--and that does not come with such a high price.

Comments from readers about this scenario

I thought I was alone in the issue of online affairs and the feelings that was describing me to a T in your article. Thank you, it has helped so much!!

Your comments about online affairs all too true.

I just thought you might like to know that you have PREVENTED an online affair rather than helping heal wounds after the fact. I copy/pasted your letters and articles on online affairs to a married man who approached me for an IM chat. He just Emailed me that this may have changed his life.

Your letter on online affairs was a blessing for me, but not for hubby.

I just found Online Affairs, it was very informative. It helped me see that I am having an online affair!

Thank you for helping to restore my sense of equilibrium after going through an affair with a boyfriend who was having online affairs. His lack of honest and caring about my feelings was devastating. Plus, his comments reflected a lack of respect for my feelings. I am now out of that relationship.

Your article on online affairs was very illuminating, wish I had seen it before I got involved in one. any suggestions for surviving the souring of one? I had one that went on for 4 months, we met in real and for the most part it was very nice, then he got.

Thank you very much for such well written and well categorized web site on "affairs". Especially for the information on "Online Affairs".

I am dealing with my husband's online affairs-since it is such a new thing it is so hard to find help. Your comments brought new perspective, also, I hope that they will help my husband deal with his remorse.

I REALLY appreciate finding all the comments addressing online affairs etc. I was feeling very much alone in my pain...that I wasn't sure could even be called an affair...since it's all words. Anyway you lightened a still heavy load.

Online affairs is a new experience for so many including myself. Still sorting through it's emotional affects and it's effects on my marriage.

A Letter that Illustrates the Typical Scenario (and my Response)

Dear Peggy,

My husband is talking online for hours each day to another woman. He has told me they want to meet. I am very threatened and concerned with his behavior, but I have been unable to convince him this is wrong and stop. I have heard that this is only a fantasy and he probably won't ever met her, but I'm afraid he is dead serious.

I really don't want to divorce. Do you think there is any hope?

My Response:

This is a very big issue for many people—and one that is growing daily. While use of the Internet is "here to stay," we need a lot more focus on using it to enrich our lives—rather than destroy them.

The above letter is one of the many I receive that illustrates the typical issues involved with "connecting" with others online. So I'll use it as the basis for addressing some of these issues:

1. A "husband talking online for hours each day to another woman" is a problem on many levels. First, of course, is simply the TIME spent communicating with the woman online, diminishing the time available for communicating with the spouse. Second is that the satisfaction of sharing with

someone else diminishes the inclination to share with the spouse. Third, the closeness that develops due to the intense communication online diminishes the closeness with the spouse. So this negatively impacts the marriage, no matter what the intention or eventual direction it takes.

2. "They want to meet..." is the usual escalation of relationships that begin online. More often than not people at least "want" to meet, and eventually far more do meet than would be expected.

3. Being "very threatened and concerned with his behavior" is a legitimate concern. This can not reasonably be dismissed as unwarranted jealousy or possessiveness.

4. Being "unable to convince him this is wrong and stop" is common when the other person has rationalized that it's OK—or at least wants the spouse to THINK it's harmless. While it's understandable to focus on the "wrong" aspect, even when that is rejected, there's still the question of whether this behavior is "smart." And the answer to that is most certainly No. These kinds of situations get out of hand and go beyond what anyone might intend or expect.

5. "I have heard that this is only a fantasy and he probably won't ever meet her." Being ONLY a fantasy is not a positive thing—in that fantasies take on all the more power BECAUSE they're fantasies and not based in reality. And if they never meet, this can simply strengthen the fantasy appeal (feeling like star-crossed lovers), doing even more damage to the marriage.

6. Being "afraid he is dead serious" is a reasonable fear. Since many people don't admit they want to meet someone else, when someone DOES admit it, it's even more likely to be true.

7. Re: "divorce" and whether or not there's "any hope"—AT THIS POINT there's still a great deal of hope. If, however, it continues, then hope diminishes and divorce does become a more reasonable consideration. But it's usually better to focus on NOW and doing something to change the course of the current situation—rather than waiting until it has progressed to the point that divorce becomes a serious consideration.

It's good that someone in the position of this letter-writer recognizes the seriousness of the situation at this point—before it goes any further. All too often, people are a little too reticent or a little too easily intimidated into "not making a big deal" out of a spouse's Internet contact. Now is the time to make a committed effort to address and deal with a situation like this—because the subject of this letter reflects the almost inevitable direction in which this situation leads—toward a full-fledged "Internet affair."

The fallacy of thinking you've found your "soul-mate"

I also receive many letters from people about finding their "soul-mate"—which is especially common among people who get caught up in an online affair.

Below are some of the messages I received about "soul-mates" – **and my responses:**

I feel that everyone in the world has a soul-mate out there; however, I don't think my husband is the one for me. I feel like if I stay with him I will never find the right person for me, and I will keep

living an unhappy life. I am grateful for the good things he has done for us, but when there is no love, friendship, understanding and trust in a relationship, there is nothing else.

The idea that "...everyone in the world has a soul-mate out there" or that any particular relationship was "meant to be" are just romantic illusions—not rooted in reality. There is no one *right* person above all others, and it's useless to spend time thinking/hoping that's the case. And, in any case, finding a person who may be a good fit for a long-term relationship is almost certainly not going to be found online.

I met a man online over a year ago, and right away we felt comfortable with each other. I had never met a man so understanding and compassionate and I told him things I had never told anyone. He helped me through some very terrible times in my life—with a difficult marriage and other things that bothered me and made me very confused and unhappy. We shared so much and I was convinced I had met my soul-mate.

In other words, this person became my life.

This is a significant letter for many reasons—not the least of which is the lesson to be learned about the risk of assuming that people really are whoever they say they are on the Internet. Many, many people think they've met their soul-mate on the Internet, only to find (sometimes much later) that it was all an illusion.

I have been involved with a man who I feel could very well possibly be my soul-mate. The only problem is that he is married and is currently going through a divorce in which the relationship has ended approximately 2 years ago.

The first point I want to address is the reference in the above letter to the fact that this man "could very well possibly be my soul-mate" One aspect of feeling someone is a soul-mate is that it clouds *all* perception of that person.

I met my soul-mate. The problem, of course, is that he is married.

My husband and I don't have any of that. I feel the only thing we have in common is our children. I am not happy with my husband. I don't want to leave him but I can't stop loving this other man. He is my soul-mate.

It feels glorious when someone feels they've found their soul-mate, but in reality there's no such thing as one special person who is meant for any certain person.

He says I am his soul-mate and that I make him feel the way nobody ever has before and wants to spend the rest of his life with me... We are perfect for each other...we know it, and his wife doesn't even have a problem with it! She just says whatever makes him happy.

And if he and his wife decide to start living in the same home again, it will all be totally over on my part. Also I fully intend to keep dating other single and available men so that I can find my true soul-mate, to whom I will be true. I used to think that these sort of things happened only on the soaps, but I now know that they can happen to anyone at all, even me.

There is no one soul-mate; this is fantasy-thinking.

Overview of Report of TWO Surveys

One Survey of People who had an Online Affair Themselves Another Survey of People whose SPOUSES had an Online Affair

I conducted these two separate surveys through my Website (www.dearpeggy.com) in which I first sought information from married people who had an Online Affair, then sought similar information from SPOUSES of people who had an Online Affair (not necessarily the spouses of those who responded to first survey).

Here's the offer I extended when I posted the FIRST questionnaire on the Website:

Please respond ONLY **if you are MARRIED and had an Online Affair.**

*Note that for the purposes of this survey, the DEFINITION of "Online Affair" is:
"Online interactions that include "intimate sharing" and/or "sex talk"
(regardless of whether or not there was physical contact).*

Here's the offer I extended when I posted the SECOND questionnaire on the Website:

Please respond ONLY **if your SPOUSE had an Online Affair.**

*Note that for the purposes of this survey, the DEFINITION of "Online Affair" is:
"Online interactions that include "intimate sharing" and/or "sex talk"
(regardless of whether or not there was physical contact).*

Each participant answered 20 multiple-choice questions about various aspects of their experience.

The size of the sample for the FIRST questionnaire was 847.

The size of the sample for the SECOND questionnaire was 1,047.

The next sections will include all the responses (and the comments) from BOTH surveys.

Responses of those who had an Online Affair themselves

Questions **%**

1. Gender:

- a. Male 30
- b. Female 70

2. How did you make the initial contact?

- a. In a chat room 56
- b. Other 44

3. Were you actively seeking an online affair?

- a. Yes 21
- b. No 79

4. Were you completely honest about yourself (marital status, age, job)?

- a. Yes 83
- b. No 17

5. How long did it take to move to one-on-one contact (IM, email, private chat)?

- a. Less than a week 56
- b. One week to one month 24
- c. More than one month 19

6. How long did it take to begin “intimate sharing” and/or “sex talk?”

- a. Quickly after beginning one-on-one contact 52
- b. After weeks of one-on-one contact 32
- c. After months of one-on-one contact 16

7. How much time was generally spent in a typical online interaction?

- a. A few minutes..... 4
- b. Less than an hour..... 23
- c. More than an hour..... 73

8. How often did you talk to the other person online?

- a. Every day 76
- b. Every week 21
- c. Not very often..... 3

9. Where did you make most of your online contacts?

- a. From home..... 82
- b. From work 16
- c. From some other location 2

10. Did you ever begin talking on the phone?

- a. Yes..... 82
- b. No..... 18

11. Did you ever swap photos?

- a. Yes 81
- b. No..... 19

12. Did you ever meet in person?

- a. Yes 59
- b. No..... 41

13. Did you ever have a physical sexual relationship?

- a. Yes..... 49
- b. No..... 51

14. Was the other person married also?

- a. Yes 64
- b. No 36

15. How did it end?

- a. I ended it 28
- b. Other person ended it..... 15
- c. NOT ended—it’s still going on 57

16. How long did it last (or has it lasted so far)?

- a. Less than one month 11
- b. Between one month and one year..... 56
- c. Over one year..... 32

17. Did your spouse suspect and/or confront your online affair?

- a. Yes 40
- b. No 60

18. Did you admit to the online affair?

- a. Yes, finally admitted it 33
- b. No, always hid it, denied it, or rationalized it..... 67

19. Did your spouse ever learn the full truth?

- a. Yes 26
- b. No 74

20. Are you still married and living with spouse?

- a. Yes 84
- b. No 16

Some observations about the above responses (from people who had an online affair)

Some of the most significant responses relate to the issues I addressed in the Introduction and my Typical Scenario of Online Affairs:

--Anyone is vulnerable.

79% of respondent said “No”—they were not actively seeking an online affair.

--Many women become involved in online affairs.

70% of the respondents were women.

(Women who might otherwise not be have the “opportunity” for an affair now may become involved.

For instance, a homemaker out in the country may become vulnerable, as reflected by the fact 82% of contacts were from a home computer).

--Escalation of contact is quick and extreme.

56% move to “one-on-one contact in less than a week and

62% quickly begin “intimate sharing” and/or “sex talk.”

82% talked on the phone.

--Contacts made online do not stay online.

59% met in person

49% had a physical sexual relationship!

Responses of those whose SPOUSES had an Online Affair

Questions	%
1. Gender:	
a. Male	40
b. Female	60
2. Do you know how your spouse made the initial contact?	
a. In a chat room	55
b. Other	32
c. Don't know	13
3. Do you know if they were actively seeking an online affair?	
a. Yes	25
b. No	29
c. Don't know	45
4. Do you know whether they were completely honest about themselves (marital status, age, job)?	
a. Yes	43
b. No	32
c. Don't know	24
5. Do you know how long it took to move to one-on-one contact (IM, email, private chat)?	
a. Less than a week	38
b. One week to one month	20
c. More than one month	9
d. Don't know	33

6. Do you know how long it took to begin “intimate sharing” and/or “sex talk?”

- a. Quickly after beginning one-on-one contact.....46
- b. After weeks of one-on-one contact..... 13
- c. After months of one-on-one contact 6
- d. Don't know 34

7. Do you know how much time was generally spent in a typical online interaction?

- a. A few minutes..... 3
- b. Less than an hour..... 15
- c. More than an hour..... 58
- d. Don't know 24

8. Do you know how often they talked to the other person online?

- a. Every day 68
- b. Every week 15
- c. Not very often 2
- d. Don't know 15

9. Do you know where they made most of their online contacts?

- a. From home..... 75
- b. From work 19
- c. From some other location 3
- d. Don't know 3

10. Do you know whether they ever began talking on the phone?

- a. Yes 73
- b. No 12
- c. Don't know 15

11. Do you know whether they ever swapped photos?

- a. Yes 67
- b. No 12
- c. Don't know 21

12. Do you know whether they ever met in person?

- a. Yes 53
- b. No 28
- c. Don't know 18

13. Do you know whether they ever had a physical sexual relationship?

- a. Yes 38
- b. No 35
- c. Don't know 27

14. Do you know whether the other person was married also?

- a. Yes 47
- b. No 34
- c. Don't know 19

15. Do you know how it ended?

- a. Spouse ended it 45
- b. Other person ended it..... 8
- c. NOT ended—it's still going on 30
- d. Don't know 17

16. Do you know how long it lasted (or has lasted so far)?

- a. Less than one month 10
- b. Between one month and one year..... 59
- c. Over one year..... 23
- d. Don't know 9

17. Did you suspect and/or confront your spouse?

- a. Yes 88
- b. No 12

18. Did your spouse admit the online affair?

- a. Yes, finally admitted it 59
- b. No, always hid it, denied it, or rationalized it..... 41

19. Did you ever learn the full truth?

- a. Yes 36
- b. No 35
- c. Don't know 29

20. Are you still married and living with spouse?

- a. Yes 86
- b. No 14

Some Observations about the above responses (from those whose spouse had affair)

Some of the key differences between the responses in the first survey (of those who had online affairs) and the responses from the second survey (of those whose spouses had an online affair) are significant.

--The percentage of spouses responding “Don’t Know” was high in a number of areas.

56% didn’t know whether their spouse was actively seeking an online affair

33% did not know how long it took their spouse to move to one-on-one contact.

34% didn’t know how long it took to begin “intimate sharing” and/or “sex talk.”

29% didn’t know whether they ever learned the full truth.

(This “don’t know” is fully warranted, given that **74%** of those who had affairs said their “spouse never learned the full truth.”)

--There was a significant lack of information about the extent to which the affair moved “offline.”

Whereas 59% of those who had an online affair said they met in person, only 53% of spouses knew this.

Whereas 49% of those who had an online affair said they had a physical sexual relationship, only 38% of spouses knew.

--Most marriages survived.

84% of those who had an online affair reported that they “are still married and living with spouse.”

86% of spouses reported that they “are still married and living with spouse who had an online affair.”

Comments from respondents who had an Online Affair

(who also responded to my 20-question survey on online affairs)

One gets caught up in the online relationship because you feel at first that it is harmless flirtation... every one does it at work in group settings. But reality .. human emotions and carnal lust start to rear its head and you find that you really care about that person inside the little box and you care about the life you have outside of the box. You become so torn and you feel dirty and cheap but are somehow still drawn to continue. I never would have thought that I could get caught up in something like this ...never even thought about other men until I met this wonderful sensitive person on the Internet. I am very ashamed that I care for him. I want to stop caring and let go.

Even though I still see my online love, I never wanted it to be this way. Way before any of this began I begged my husband to go to counseling with me yet he refused to admit we had problems. I felt so very unimportant to him. We rarely talked, he was constantly glued to TV or movies (he was known to bring home 3-4 at a time), and spent many weeks and weekends hunting without so much as contacting me while he was gone. I still feel tremendous guilt and think I always will, and I also know I will always yearn for what could have and should have been with us. Sometimes I feel I should have done more, but then I tried so many things with him I do not know what that could have been. And my affair was not about the sex, it was about feeling important to someone, having someone listen to me, and having someone who genuinely wanted to take care of me and be with me. I feel he is my best friend. This is the way it should have been between my ex and me, but he would have nothing of it. I cannot blame him for what I have done, but it helps me realize why I was so vulnerable to such a thing. The thing I hate the most is all the pain I have caused everyone, the respect I have lost and the fact that I can NEVER change those things. And I might add one more thing, when my ex found out, he was of course willing to do anything at that point. It should never take something this big for a spouse to want to improve their relationship. I will always feel guilty, I will always hate myself for what I have done, and I don't think I will ever truly be happy with myself because of this.

The feelings that I had for the online affair were very powerful and real. When it ended, I was devastated and suffered the same kind of loss if not worse if we had known each other in real life. My feelings for him were intense and very real. I vowed never ever to fall in love with someone online again because I never wanted to go through that pain again...and I never have.

It is amazing how quickly my online affair grew from a few "innocent" emails to having a physical relationship. I was honest with my other woman and believe she was also to me, but I can see how easy it would be to lie and make yourself out to be different than you are. I am also surprised how easy it is to find someone to talk with. By just going into a chat room and finding someone with an interesting name or interesting profile you could find what interests they have and strike up a conversation with them. It is very easy to log on and find someone to talk with you about whatever is happening in your life or theirs. Some even list their address or willingly give their phone number to call. It is so tempting and can be addictive. Thank God, my wife found out about my affair. I only wish I could have told her about it before she found out.

I have been married for 26 years with 4 children, three still at home, and am a fulltime homemaker; my online partner has been married for 30 years with three grown children; he is retired and a grandfather; he is 10 years older than me. We both value our families and want to stay married but value each other too. We talk about many things other than sex. That part of both our marriages has died in his case and lost its excitement in my case (my husband is a workaholic... I have all but given up on trying to solve problems in my own marriage... have even had professional help; we have a strong relationship but lacking in emotional warmth, and we've both come to accept this status quo). Both I and my online partner crave emotional warmth and intimacy. We finally spent a few days together, after careful planning, and hope to do a repeat, maybe once a year because of the physical distance and danger of discovery, involved. He counsels me on child rearing issues (he was a school counselor); we discuss families, marital problems, religion, cooking and travel/holidays. We meet needs in each other's lives not met by our own spouses, and agree on how far we want to take this. As he once said: ICQ can crash and burn before he'd put his or my family at risk. Technically, we HAVE put our families at risk already, but that is a choice we as adults made. I feel the benefits can outweigh the disadvantages of an online affair if things are kept in perspective and talked about; if there is as much honesty as possible, given the situation. We also know that our physical attraction is much like that of teenagers, and is exciting because of the forbidden and secret nature of the relationship. Ideally, we'd both choose to have a "perfect" or better marriage, but are happy to have met each other, to "supplement" each other's marriages. Is that rationalization, or what?? In any case, is real.

I've had 4 online affairs. One I ended when the woman insisted on meeting and consummating the affair. She lives in NY, I in the West. Our conversations were strictly cybersex. She frequently mentioned her sour marriage. Although I travel to NJ once a month we never met. The second to a local woman, also in a dead-end marriage. We met once after chatting for a year and speaking occasionally over the phone. We met after almost a year. Meeting her ended the online relationship when her physical appearance didn't match my imagined one. I was very disappointed. Not her fault. The third and fourth continue to this day. Both are teachers, one in the Southeast and the other in my same state. Both very intelligent with happy marriages. With each I spent weeks discussing non-sexual topics. Mainly chatting about our mutual interests. Both eventually trusted me and began to openly speak of their desires to have sex with another man. In spite of both having stable and happy marriages! Coincidentally they are the same age as I, 35. Once they trusted me they discussed sex very suggestively. But no cybersex. As for me, I love women. I don't chase women but I enjoy flirting and determining what their sexual desires are. I'm amazed how much they open up to me. At least so far, those in bad marriages are much more likely to aggressively suggest a personal meeting. Those in stable marriages I respect more. They are not in any haste to make marriage-ending decisions. Rather they want someone to discuss their thoughts about a "close friend," i.e. to seek advice from a man about the situation. I'm still kind of new at this. But I'm getting better at encouraging women to tell me their stories and share their desires. It helps to be very patient and honest. It's a lot of fun! My wife doesn't know because I travel weekly. One other note, like real life, it's best to limit the number of online affairs because it's tough to keep all the details straight. My biggest fear is that I'll confuse details about one woman with the other! Yikes.

I was surprised at how quickly I felt that I knew the man I was chatting with as well as how captivated I became. And yet, I hadn't even met him. I believe that our love affair never would have begun, if we had met in person first. There is just something so powerful about the written word. I remember eagerly waiting his responses to the words that I typed. My heart would race and my hands would shake. We would stay up until 2, 3 or 4 in the morning just chatting. Over two years later, I don't know how I managed all of those hours.

I found online cyber sex extremely stimulating. My husband is not interested in me because of the weight I have gained. All this is so addictive, because someone is paying attention to me, and flirting. I find it very hard to ignore the computer, I hurry to do all my household duties, so that I can spend time with my online lovers. I've never felt so alive in a very long time. My feeling is that it is better than nothing.

Online relationships are very seductive and compelling. They are also very dangerous, because you can easily kid yourself into thinking it is about nothing, that it is only a fantasy, and then your real feelings are invested deeply. It hurts just as bad as a "real" relationship when it ends.

I married the woman I had an online affair with, and feel very guilty and confused. Wishing I could turn the clock back. I ruined my first wife's life, although she says she would take me back. I feel stuck between promises, I've made and promises I've broken. The grass isn't always greener on the other side! I know, my marriage to #2 won't last or survive, and I hope #1 is sincere about reconciling, although, I'm not sure how to leave #2 without causing more trouble for more people. And I'm not sure reconciling is the right thing to do either. If I'm not in a mid-life crises, then I don't know what's happening. Anyway, this is the first place I've related any of my feelings about this situation. If it helps anyone to know how bad things can get, and make someone possibly change their position on leaving their wife for the computer babe, then I've done something good here.

I am not confident anyone ever expected, or could have even predicted this new form of 'cheating'. I think even people who perhaps NEVER would have had an affair in the 'real world' have become involved in online affairs due to the anonymity they are afforded here...the absolute discretion that is often so easily achieved here (online) indeed promotes this kind of behavior!

I think everyone is capable of an online affair. I know that I thought I never would do anything like that. I have been married for 8 years and have 2 beautiful children, and I never planned on anything like this happening. It just started as innocent conversation and one thing led to another until we were talking on the phone and then planning on meeting in person. I drove six and half hours to meet this man. I don't know what I was thinking. I almost lost everything, my marriage, my kids and everything that was important in my life. Right now we are getting ready for marriage counseling. My husband filed for divorce, but we are still together trying to work things out. I know if most people would think something like this through they would not do it.

I cannot believe the pain that the online affair caused so many people. I thought that since it never became physical, it could not be that serious. I was so very wrong. The pain my spouse experienced at being betrayed, the pain my online lover faced when we had to part, and the pain I experienced both from the deep guilt I feel and the pain of being separated from my online lover...it's all unbearable. Why did I ever go there?!

I believe online affairs are becoming more prevalent due to the medium used to start the affair—words. People are faceless, so they begin the relationship (usually) being honest about their feelings. It is easy to become close to someone when you are communicating through written words. What bored housewife wouldn't like exciting, romantic, interesting letters?

Using a computer, it's too easy to begin something that is hard to end. Too many people take the convenience of email lightly, substituting "real" conversations, body language, voice inflections, eye contact, with overly simplistic "black and white" communication that usually end up being false. Ever tried telling a "tongue-in-cheek" joke to another online who doesn't really "know" you? The risks of being misinterpreted are far too great! Same with flirting. In real life, our actual chances and contacts with another potential lover are fewer than in cyberspace, filtered by full use of all our senses. In cyberspace, fantasy can reign. When it does, it can rage out of control. Email and IM's rob us of the full use of all our senses, virtually guaranteeing disastrous results later. Using the computer to be the messenger gives a false sense of security without responsibility, and in real life, this usually is a formula for disaster.

Grass is not always greener on the other side.....

My husband was withdrawing from me, and this person online made me feel young again, and wanted and sexy and desirable.

I truly wish something could be done into warning others the consequences of this kind of affair. I don't think enough people fully understand the implications that come with online affairs. I would like to be used as an example to others that you don't know what you really have until you lose it. This online affair devastated my relationship. I'm trying to get back but the odds are against me.

The person that I am conducting my "online affair" with shares my feelings ~ we both love our spouses, (each of us being married over 20 years), have children that we do not want to hurt - BUT-our personal lives are stale and in a rut. I have personally tried working with my spouse who has completely shut down to me and refuses counseling. For now we are in limbo I do care about him and love him—I've even told him that I have been speaking w/someone online but there is nothing to worry about. He doesn't seem to care. After meeting my online buddy for the first time this week I am not too sure. Our only physical contact was kissing and had I not gone into my car when I did, who knows what would have happened. Never in a million years would I ever believe that this would have happened to me....I have always tried to be strong and put my marriage first but with a "shut down spouse," what am I to do? I know that one of the attractions of my "online" relationship is the Novelty of having someone listen to me—their responses, and this will probably fizzle out but at this point I feel ready to move onto a physical affair (very safely conducted) to satisfy my needs which I feel have been overlooked.

Was an old girlfriend from 12 years ago, she and I slept together at least 8 times in a three day period, I lied to everyone, even to the people in the message board where we met, but mostly to my wife. I had just come home from being away in the navy for 10 months, and I slept with her 3 weeks after returning from cruise.

I am married to a wonderful woman of 9 years with 3 darling kids. We have had a great marriage, yet had all the usual doubts over the years. My problems really began slowly, and because of a workaholic attitude and misconceived notions about my life, I started a spiral in which I would never recover. I got into porn, had sexual fantasies about coworkers, and even got a lap dance in a strip club, but that was only the beginning of the death-spiral. My online affair was with an old girlfriend from 11 years ago. She contacted me through my parents, asking them for my email address. It started innocent enough, and seemed to be a safe way to talk about our lives and feeling towards our spouses. After a couple of months it turned sexual. Not sure if it was because we got bored or what, but we both seemed to want it to go that way. We also began to regularly use the Instant Messenger system. After almost 4 months of this it turned to her asking if she could hear my voice, so I gave her my work phone number and she called. It was very exciting for us both, and dangerous, yet neither of us would admit to the danger. She called me maybe 6 or 7 times during a 2-month period. When my wife suspected that I was having an affair with a co-worker, she began asking questions. My attitude toward the family had become very indifferent and I did not participate well with either my wife or children. I didn't even realize how bad I'd become. When the opportunity to see the other woman in real life came up, we both took it, though with lots of hesitation. She came to my city for a school that lasted 10 days and we saw each other maybe 5 of those. We had lunch once, dinner once, and sex 3 times. I was able to hide it all from my wife and even though I felt guilty as hell, I still let it happen. It was even as bad as me making love to my wife on the same day that I was with the other woman. The other woman left town and we both, I think, felt relief. We continued to email, IM, and talk but I was battling my wife over the co-worker issue. I was feeling more and more guilty about what I'd done, yet was unable to stop the affair outright. I felt like I was being pulled in and when things with the co-worker issue got bad, I'd ask the online girl for advice on how to handle it and how to get things right with my wife. Soon after, my wife discovered that something was amiss when the cookie system in our home computer brought up the online woman's email address. When confronted, I lied. Lied my butt off. But my wife, deeply in love with me, refused to back down and pursued the truth through all available means and she became an excellent interrogator. I finally broke off the relationship when it started to get very ugly. The other woman verbally attacked my wife, using things I'd told her over the course of the affair to hurt her. It was horrible. I tried to get her to stop, yet she kept it up. My wife would tell me that she was continuing a dialogue with her, gaining more and more information, yet I refused to believe that the other woman would open herself up to the possibility of being caught by her husband. What she had done was have a male friend or brother or someone like that play the role of her husband to contact my wife. They started a dialogue and seemingly came to the conclusion that all we ever did was the online and phone call stuff (and that was the story we agreed to). I was very angry and afraid for my marriage and stopped all contact. My wife and I struggled over the next few months, not only with this issue, but that of the co-worker. I began real counseling 4 months after the end of it. I finally, after months of lies and being caught in lies came clean with my wife. We had been on the giant roller coaster of emotions, loving one minute then devastated the next because of my lies. My wife finally gave me an ultimatum—either come all the way clean or she was leaving; she had had enough of it. So I broke down and told her all the truth. It killed her. She made me tell the husband of the other woman and I did. I told him I was truly sorry and never wanted to hurt anyone but that yes, it happened. The other woman vehemently denied everything, but at least I was now clean with my wife and I feel much better about it. At this point, we are planning a divorce that I don't want. We have 3 kids and their lives are forever burdened with my foolishness. I truly love my wife and know in my heart I'd never hurt her again, but she will never

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get over this. I expect the other woman's husband will pay me a visit at some point and put his wrath on me. I do not blame him a bit. My career will probably be lost to this since I am in the military and they will find out. And I will lose my family, the most important part of my life. Why? Sex? Love? Dishonesty? Deceitfulness? All of them. I have come to grips with what I've done, but my wife, who has never wavered in our marriage, can not and will not stay with a bastard like me. I have, over the months turned my life and behavior around—the loving husband, doting father, equal partner. But because of my lies and the pure evilness of what I did over the course of a year and a half, I will lose everything. I am broken and ashamed. I will never look at myself the same again, even though I know I will never walk in those steps again. I love my family, and yet I know they will be gone—and it is my fault. I hope others can learn from this. It is not worth it. Talk to your spouse...get that communication going, and never for a minute believe that the online affair does not exist...it does and can and will lead to a path that is evil in every sense of the word.

I knew my partner for four years in Internet newsgroups, so I had learned a great deal about him and his beliefs. I had always pictured him as someone with a solid marriage and a satisfying life. Then I got my own Website and we began exchanging more email as a result of that. He began posting in my discussion forum and joining the chats I hosted. I told him about a loss I had suffered and we became closer after that. Soon we were chatting privately and that quickly became sexual. He "had to KNOW" if the feelings we had were real. I was more reluctant to test it out. I agreed to meet him only in a dark room. He flew out from the Midwest and we met in the middle of the night in a motel room on the California coast. The sex was fantastic and he fell in love. I was not so sure, but when he went home he immediately told his wife and she asked him to move out. In a few weeks I went to visit him and we spent 5 days together. During that time I fell in love with him too. We had been talking about him transferring to the Bay Area because I love California and couldn't imagine living in the Midwest. But after this trip, I began thinking about moving there, at least until he could transfer. The result is that I am going to be living there at least for the summer, and perhaps beyond that. This is my soulmate, one of the loves of my life, someone who truly knows me and loves me. The difference from other online affairs is that we had been acquainted with each other online for four years, and knew each other's beliefs about the big issues in life. We had that intellectual connection. Adding the emotions and then the bodies only intensified what was already there. I had admired and respected this person for years, and he had felt the same about me. My marriage was over in all but name. He had been planning to leave his for a long time also, but didn't want to go through the emotional pain and economic losses until we got together. I have an adult son and he has two children in their teens. I feel absolutely no guilt. I am utterly happy to have found love and to have given the same gift to him. After living together, things may not work out. But I don't think that will happen. Online relationships are very intense, because while they remain online, and are cognitive only, you are basically having the relationship with yourself. It's very hard to shift them into the real world with voices, bodies, personal quirks and idiosyncrasies. But if you do succeed in that, the real relationship stays just as intense. Online relationships are a fact of life and will increase in number. They have the potential to change the nature of meeting, dating, falling in love, and being married. I understand the fears of those who see the ease and intensity of cyberlove as a threat to traditional marriage. It's so much easier to find someone online and become intimate than it is going to the gym and the supermarket. It's even easier than at work because the pool of potential partners is so huge. But there's no getting the toothpaste back in the tube. It will be interesting to see how it all evolves.

My affair began when a friend notified me that my childhood sweetheart had placed his personal info on a high school alumni web site. I was apprehensive at first, but then gathered up the courage to write a note. He responded immediately. We had dated for four years in junior high and high school. We were intimate at a young age and had long term plans to be married and have children. Our parents ended the relationship fearing that our intimacy would lead to an unwanted pregnancy. We are two very intelligent people and our love for each other was extremely intense, our physical attraction and passion incredible. When we discovered each other online, it seemed that everything picked up right where we had left off in our adolescence. However, I am overweight and I refused to see him. This seemed to drive his desire and putting him off only made him more determined. Finally, he demanded to see me. He said he would come to my office and I could either reject him or meet with him. He was convinced that he could love me despite my appearance, weight, etc. When he would not take no for an answer, I drove 170 miles and confronted him. He was bald, gray, and had aged far more than I had. Still, the love we had for each other transcended the effects of the passage of 20 years (the last time we were together). We held each other tightly and cried and trembled. We told each other over and over again how much we loved each other and grieved the years we had missed. It was the most pleasurable incredible experience I have ever had. I have been married for 31 years and have 5 children. He has been married for 22 years and has 3 children. We both still have children at home. We both love our spouses but I am less happily married than he is. After that first meeting, things moved very fast. My feelings were overpowering. I am a successful professional but I found myself being distracted to the point of uselessness. I could not think about anything but him and being intimate with him again. At home, at work, every moment my thoughts were consumed by him. He emailed me at work at first. But his writing became so sexually explicit, I had to ask him to stop writing. That hurt him. Then, I found myself starved for contact with him and asked him to call me instead. He called me at work, and emailed my home. But even that was not enough for me. I drove back to his home town and that annoyed him. He is also very successful and well known in the community. He feared being discovered and the impact it might have on his wife and family. This broke my heart. I was ready to give everything up for him, but his take on the relationship was very different. He now wanted to go slow, take our time, and allow him to get his last child out of high school. So, as you can see, our roles reversed. I tried so hard in the beginning to resist him and avoid personal contact, but he was determined. Now, he wants to slow things down and control everything. He never came to my office but has made repeated promises. I have lost 40 pounds and 3 dress sizes and am well on my way to looking like the girl he always wanted. Still, he remains controlled and determined that the relationship will progress on his terms. I have cried my eyes out from the longing to just be back in his arms. He writes when he wants to, calls rarely, and maintains that he lost me one time before to stupidity and holds firm to this stance that we must "do this right" so that he doesn't lose me again. I don't know what right is. He does not provide a definition. I have written three emails explaining to him that I can not go on and have attempted to break off the relationship. Each time, he claims he is not going to ever let me say good bye and that I have to take that word out of my vocabulary. Each time, I have driven there it has been to tell him to forget it. Each time I have come home more in love than ever. The more he pushes me away, the more I am driven. He is so good at controlling his emotions. I am not. The last attempt to break it off has left me much more capable of dealing with reality. He just agreed to it and reminded me that we can maintain the relationship on his terms or end it and remain bitter enemies. I am now crying less, feeling very strong, but I have no trust. It is a devastating and
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painful place to be. The distance, the days between contact, and his very controlling nature make it very hard to find peace, much less see any kind of a long-term goal for this relationship. I believe that much of what has driven my desire is the need for intimacy from my husband. He is a patient, kind, loving wonderful man. But he has not kissed me or made love to me passionately in years. I am sure that the bond I had from childhood to my "lover" made the sexual aspect far easier and more comfortable than a casual affair. Still, the baggage that we both bring with us in combination with his extremely controlling nature, have made this one of the most painful, if not THE most painful experience I have ever had. My only advice to anyone entertaining the idea of having an affair, especially a long distance/online affair is: DON'T!!!! I do not foresee a future for us. I do not see anything ahead but heartache. I can not turn loose of this no matter how hard I try, no matter how much he hurts me. I am just suspended at this point trying desperately to learn how to control my passions and desires for this man. It is a rotten place to be. To put it bluntly, it SUCKS!!!!

I made contact with my high school sweetheart through the Internet. I hadn't seen him in 20 years. Our 30th class reunion is coming up next year and we hope to see each other again. Right now, it is still innocent. We have spent most of the time reminiscing, showering each other with wonderful compliments and admitting regrets and mistakes. Lately, it is becoming very mushy and we find ourselves wishing maybe we should have ended up together after all. Internet relationships are not just about chat room talk with strangers. Old friends/sweethearts/lovers making contact again after many, many years and beginning a constant exchange of emails—this has happened to several of my friends. Again, so far we are keeping it under control, but I must say the emails are becoming more and more "intimate" discussing our spouses, what we are lacking in our marriages, and other personal topics. We live 1,000 miles away and this is the one, cheap, anonymous way of keeping in contact with one another. I hope to never lose contact with him now. Neither one of our spouses knows this is going on. I miss him terribly and this fills a need for me. We have exchanged pictures. We have not discussed getting together otherwise. Every day, I gasp waiting for my email to open up to see if I have any from him. It's a real high and it makes me look forward to going to work.

I separated during the "chat phase" of this affair and went on to have other affairs, all but one initiated online. After one year of separation I moved back (financial reasons) and my wife does not want to know details. I need to tell her but after 8 months back home she won't let me talk about it. I strongly suspect we'll end up divorced after 21 years of marriage. I am "looking" again and I feel guilty. I was badly hurt by the non-Internet affair because I fell in love. My lover was committed (living with her ex-husband) and ultimately chose him over me. Now I fear love but I want to be in love so bad. The best solution is to fall in love again with my wife but "willing" oneself to fall in love seems an impossibility to me. I think it just happens or it doesn't. This whole affair/separation issue has caused the loss of my business partner (also my brother) and the near-total-loss of communication from my sister. He has apologized for judging me but my sister has not. That only aggravates the guilt. If my brother had not left, forcing me to buy him out for a large sum, I would not have moved back home. I would have divorced. I don't love my wife and have not for years. I just hope time will make things better again. Several times I was close to suicide but had the awareness to tell someone close. The last two years have been a very unpleasant experience and I wish I could turn back the clock.

I am 60 years old and have been married for 38 years and have a great family and grandchildren. My wife and I have a good relationship but it has become more like a brother and sister relationship than a husband and wife. Sex became non-existent several years ago and that has been more of a problem to me than to my wife. We have recently talked about it and have made some efforts to improve that but my impotency has pretty well made that impossible. We have talked about other ways to be intimate and my wife has expressed willingness but I feel that she is just doing this because she understands my "need." Sex is not important to her and she is quite content to live without it. A hug, kiss, snuggle are okay but within "reason." A few years ago, I did have an affair with someone I met on a telepersonals system. It was wonderful. I made it clear that I wasn't interested in anything more than the occasional tryst but feelings developed and the other person became more attached than I felt comfortable with. I finally confessed the affair to my wife. She was understanding and blamed herself for my dalliance but I tried to assure her that it was me who made the choice and not her. She forgave me but became more agitated as the woman kept contacting me even though I had told her that my wife knew and that I wanted it to end. However, several years have passed and I still have a desire for more than I experience at home. I have made contact with several women in chat rooms and have been quite intimate with them. One I have met in person for lunch several times but nothing more than kissing and fondling has transpired. She, too, is married and has no desire to leave the situation that she is in. We know that it is just a situation that will go no further than the odd contact that we have. We talk on the phone once a month or so but the conversations rarely involve intimacy or sexuality but are about our lives and our families. I doubt that the relationship will progress beyond this but that if a situation arose and circumstances were such that an intimate encounter could occur. We are just good friends not really lovers. There are several other women that I have met in chat rooms with whom I am also good friends. They know my marital status. They are also attached and have no desire to change that. However, we do get into more intimate conversations and I am sure that if we did meet that intimacy would occur. All know of my erectile dysfunction but that doesn't seem to concern them. I doubt that I will ever meet any of them though I would like to. Again, I consider them friends and I think that they view the relationship in a similar way. An intimate encounter would be okay but it wouldn't go beyond that. My wife doesn't know about these women except to know that now and then I am talking with a woman in a chat room. She doesn't really like that because she sees it as leading to another affair. So I hide it as much as I can and only talk when she is not home (she works part time—I am retired). Do I feel guilty? Yes, sometimes I do. Often I do. Because I was always taught that extramarital affairs are wrong and I believe that. But even with that belief and no desire to be without my wife, I still find that I am drawn to carry on with these relationships. These women have become good friends. Most of our conversations are not about sex and it is rare that we become intimate in our chat. We are all comfortable with that. It is a strange world we live in and the Internet has certainly made it more strange.

We didn't go into it thinking it would be an affair. I think something was missing in both of our relationships and we found whatever it was in each other. We just started talking and confiding in each other and we became very close. Now I don't know that either one of us can ever end it. He has since gotten divorced (not because of our relationship but because his wife wasn't happy in the relationship any longer), but I'm still married. Sometimes I want to leave to be with him. This has been going on for almost two years. We met after talking for about a year and four months and it was as wonderful in person as it was online. We do love each other.

My affair lasted 3 months. It was with an old friend with whom I had corresponded by mail for many years. We had been young lovers when we met, but were separated by college and her fear of religious differences. Since the affair ended I have spent hours and hours weekly dealing with the aftereffects. I have read numerous books and visited numerous websites. I have been an active part of at least 2 message boards dealing with Recovery for about 14 months, now. I have still not revealed this to my wife. After months and months of reading books and betrayed spouses' responses to affairs, I can see that informing my wife of the affair is probably in our best interest for an improved marriage. My hesitancy is that our marriage has been so strained and distant for so many years, due to my problems with alcoholism, depression and codependent problems from childhood, and due to her completely building her life around the children, that I fear she would leave me without giving consideration that our marriage could improve. I found out that I love my wife, but that the distance between us over the years has placed so much resentment and lack of sharing/intimacy that we are teetering on the verge of divorce without the affair. I don't believe in divorce as an option for me. She is not so definite about her feelings. She has threatened me with divorce on several different occasions over the last 12 years (we've been married for 19 years). The last threat was her rejection of my smoking cigarettes. I see it as an effort to control me, while she suddenly has decided it is a health issue and is unwilling to become a widow to a smoker. Our histories are quite complicated, with lots of dysfunctionality in our families of origin. I have explored mine, she has not hers. I am currently involved in family counseling, in the guise of helping our teenage daughter who has been having some adjustment problems. I am hoping to build the counseling into a couple's counseling in which we can explore the problems in our marriage. When we can begin to openly discuss our historical problems and begin to close the gap, I would think this would be when I will reveal the affair. I would like to do it in a session with a counselor present. Perhaps I am being selfish in withholding this information from my wife. It is admittedly in part due to my fear of abandonment. At the same time, I have come to a huge realization, now that I am no longer depressed, that there is a lot of untapped potential in our marriage that I have never been available to involve myself in. As a result of my unavailability, my wife centered around the children. I only want to get her attention again. In reading books, I learned of things that I have not known or realized, both with myself and her. I honestly want to be my wife 's lover again. I'm rambling, sorry.

I only began my online relationship with this man because I was very lonely, in a loveless marriage. My online relationship has been going on for over 2-1/2 years. I have since divorced, and my ex-husband never knew how involved I had become with this other man. I don't think he even knew he existed. I don't think my ex would have cared, even if he had known. In his eyes, it would have helped to justify the numerous extra-marital affairs that my ex had. This "other man" is still married, which is why we have not met in person. I feel closer to this "other man" than I ever felt to my husband, and feel that I truly, deeply love him. We live over 1500 miles apart, but are planning to meet in person within the next several months. I'm sure a lot of people have these cyber affairs as a novelty, and some do meet to have physical relationships. While I know it is easy for me to say that my relationship with this man is "different," I do believe that. We believe that we are soul-mates, and that we will be together for the rest of our lives.

Yes, I don't do this very often and when I do, it's because the other person is lonely and needs support. Yes, we both feel good about it, but let's face it, there are not many pleasures after one pays the bills, puts up with the BS, etc.. I moved to the UK from USA and I gave up a lot of my friends and contacts to find I'm in a family of in-laws that don't give a damn for anybody but themselves. I had many years of depression and hospitalization, I virtually have no friends...My Libido is shot! I lucky I can go to the bathroom!!!.. This so called "better way of Life" I got talked into has been a real headache and very costly. If my so called "Loving In-laws" thought of others more than themselves and didn't deceive and were not so insulting, especially to me who took care of an older relative and spent all kinds of money and time (which this is an expectation in this culture), then maybe I wouldn't do this...YES, I have been told by many experts that the British would rather keep to themselves and you take care of your own problems, so much for a family... My wife doesn't like me on the Internet all that much, but it is my only way to keep my sanity.. Other people have fun and affairs all the time, in fact If one doesn't, one is "Square"!!! Maybe if there was a little more love and understanding in this world instead of deception, manipulation and insolence, especially from this culture, then maybe one could make better friends and then maybe one wouldn't have to do the things one does in order to enjoy life...Did you ever asked the question, "How does the other person feel about the Cybersex? This is all so very ironic and hypocritical for if the human race understood sex and love more and didn't push it one way and discipline in the other to its "own advantage," we wouldn't have these problems. But then who is going to tell the human race what to do? Especially this culture! I just enjoy life for my remaining days and if the other party doesn't want the CS, then I don't do it...

I was one of the lucky ones. The man I met online turned out to be the kindest, most loving man I have ever met. We are very much in love, but he is in the middle of a nasty divorce living in another province. I have been married 30 years to a wonderful man whom I love, but have known for many years I am no longer in love with him. I would very much like to spend the rest of my life with my online love as he would with me, but my dilemma is moving to his province and leaving my friends and family. I am 50 years old and can't imagine starting over again, trying to make new friends, being apart from my family in a place where I know no one. But at the same time I can't imagine spending the rest of my life with a man I am not in love with, and never being with the one I am in love with. I am home now after having spent several months with this man and find I am missing him so much. My husband knows nothing of my affair or who I stayed with during my time away; he just thought I was on an extended holiday visiting friends and for that period of time we were separated. Now that I am home I find we both have changed, but neither one of us is sure what we want to do about the marriage, so we are doing nothing for now, just biding our time, maybe hoping one of us will wake up one morning and know what to do. My husband has had many one-night stands through the years and one serious affair four years ago, but through all the pain of those we always remained good friends and still do today. I really think sometimes if my online love were living in my area I could leave my husband, and still have access to my friends and family. I think that is the thing that holds me back, losing what I have taken years to cultivate. My heart is in Ontario, but my life is here in Alberta, and I don't know what to do.

I've met several women online, but I've only met a few, and only had sex with 2 of them...one was just for a few days in a hotel, then she broke it off..... the other has become a relationship that both of us are very happy with, because we have more in common than the people that we're both married to.... This is Love !

I think it is way too easy to get into an online affair. It's almost like sitting in a bar several hours (or as many hours as you spend online) -- eventually you're going to meet someone that interests you. The online attraction was definitely strong and made me feel very sexy -- even powerful. But I was drawn into the emotional attachment, the sharing, the caring, the talking, which was (and is) something that lacks in my marriage. I've since ended the relationship, but the feelings are still very strong. The guilt was destroying me, and what I know to be me. So it's back to "generic" chat rooms and web surfing where I stay out of trouble. Not as exciting, but at least I can live with who I am.

The person I was involved with was a friend's husband. He introduced me to chat. I was a shy person who would not talk about my feelings in person. But in chat you open up for some reason. We ended up sharing way too much. We had known each other for 16 years and always had something between us. It is now over and I regret it all. I lost our friendship and my husbands trust.

It all began when we first met in person. We exchanged emails and it was him who began to email me. He knew I was married and I simply welcomed it. It's quite obvious that I am not happily married...we tried to work things out...this affair was not entirely the result of our separation. We continued to chat online for over a year before we had sexual relations. No sex online ever occurred. Just getting to know one another. We are now seeing each other when we can and myself and husband are getting separated, not because of this other guy, a lot of our relationship was lost way before, otherwise I wouldn't have become involved with someone at all, if I obviously was happy. He cares for me a lot and I do the same, only time will tell what will happen. The toughest thing is that I have two children, but they will always be my priority.

I don't really think of it as an affair, we're not physically having sex. We do share intimate words but it is not a physical thing. I thought only affairs were official if there was some kind of extra activity going on, not two adults being there for each other I didn't even think that this was a common thing either...my guy online is very different from the guy at home and maybe if he expressed himself with more emotion, I might not have to seek other means of companionship. He's interested in my opinions, thoughts, views and so forth. My husband just wants to know when dinner is ready. Maybe if more spouses would spend a little more time talking this wouldn't be such a problem

The person I met online was in a live-in relationship at the time, I was married, separated and since divorced. He since broke up and met someone else (also an online person) whom he married several years ago, although he and I have been seeing one another about once a month for over 4 years!

I met my online partner through The Internet. We went to high school together 30 years ago. So I know him but haven't seen him in 30 years. We plan to see each other at our reunion this summer. We never dated in high school but have found we have really bonded through the Internet. So this situation is rather unique. We aren't strangers. We did exchange pictures to show each other what we now look like. Believe it or not, I have become extremely attached to him and love him. We connected intellectually and after seeing his picture I'm still very attracted to him as I was in high school. This occurrence caught me totally off guard. We are both married to someone else. We now only wish we had dated 30 years ago.

I love my husband very much and do not want to lose him. I should NOT have had an affair. Problem -- lack of intimacy. He's always refused marriage counseling. Hope we can work things out.

I regret it. My spouse and I are doing much better now. I am happy again.

Yes, I started having problems with my spouse because of that online affair. I have stopped already, but she doesn't trust me any more.

My affair was a little different because it was with one of my husband's best friends who we had been friends with for several years before he and I ever started "talking" online.....kind of a shitty deal.

Although my affair hasn't ended yet....I'm thinking of it....found him with another screen name in a flirting room.....obviously....he feels he wants to move on although he was only in there for a few minutes.....it was enough for me to feel doubt about him...and mistrust....I don't feel as I did about him.

I replied about the affair that I ended up meeting someone, but there were others that did not become physical, very different things. I believe the "online only" affairs are like phone sex compared to meetings.

Because you only have your words -- interests and life stories quickly become known. This leads to fairly easy -- and early -- decisions on compatibility.

I am really in love with this person and now I don't know how stop.

My online affair began as a flirtation. He and I are in the same line of work—just in different parts of the country. During my online affair, it was usually flirting, sexual innuendo, and sharing our secret sexual wishes and desires. To clarify some of your questions, I began conversing with him via the telephone after we became good friends online. We collaborated on several grants for work and speaking on the phone became necessary. I found out that my husband had been having an affair. He [my online friend] was going through a similar situation himself. And I agreed to meet and interact with him only after my divorce.

The thing I want to add is that being online doesn't mean the true feelings aren't there. Online relationships mean that you first know the person inside-out. In my case only proximity was the problem. I wish I had a computer 25 years ago to help me find the man of my dreams.

Scary that one can share the intimate parts of one's life. Questions are pretty appropriate. My contact was and is important, but on rough road.

I feel that my online affair has brought out a different side of me. He has helped me explore different areas of my life. I have never bonded with someone so much before.

You very well described the intense feelings I was having. I did lose my hubby over it for 1 year and that is why we met. Hubby left and by then I knew it was stupid but it was too late. In our real lives we had other dates and sexual contact, but found ourselves back together. Now we have a whole other can of worms to deal with. We have been back together for 6 months and I still can't think about the whole thing without crying.

I have to be honest, Online affairs are very easy. People think that wives and girlfriends can be with their man 24/7. Only to find out in the end that their man is being unfaithful. They may "Truly love their wife/girlfriend" but still find time to have extramarital sex. I have been through a lot in my life with online affairs. I am a 31-year old man who is married—and I have been through a lot of online problems.

I can't call this an affair, to me it is a love relationship, even if it is an impossible love, I am really in love with him, I am happier now, more relaxed..... I love him, without hopes of one day fulfilling this love.... he makes me happy.

A handsome man and very smart made me interested in him which was the reason we started having sex

In my case, the initial contact was through instant messaging. He offered pictures of himself—I never did. He initiated all phone contacts. After nearly a year, he just stopped communicating altogether—no more IM—no more emails. I miss him, but feel very comfortable having this over. In spite of the titillation offered by this illicit affair, I know it was an affair, and I'm glad it's over. Don't like lying (by omission even) to my husband.

After two years of the online affair, we finally met in person and I divorced my husband and married my lover. We have now been happily married for almost 2 years. I lived in New Mexico and he lived in California.

There are many lonely people out there. I think it is better to exchange electrons, or emotions, than to exchange body fluids. Too many women want attention, but are unwilling to give photos, or actually meet. I do not believe in a non-photo discussion, as it represents either a poor self-image, or an unwillingness to be recognized as a person with a face, body etc.

My husband has trouble saying positive things about me. When my online-lover said such nice things about me all the time, it was hard not to feel loved by him. Finally we both admitted that we feel more for the other, but have not acted upon meeting or anything physical. I do not want to leave my husband of 10 years for something relatively unknown. He just makes me feel special on the inside and I need that boost in confidence.

We became Best Friends and would never have a physical sexual relationship because our friendship is much too important to lose over that!!!!!!!

My online affair planted a seed for my desire to have a "real-life" affair. Shortly after I ended the online affair, I began seeking someone with whom to engage in an actual love/sex affair.

I found out one thing that most of the people that have online affairs are unhappy with themselves or their relationships with their spouses, or something is not going right in their relationships. I do feel that sex is secondary in the affairs as people are trying to fulfill their lives with the "things" that they are not getting at home. i.e. companionship/love/intimacy.

I met this person from a high school alumni website. He is 6 years older than me. We have both been in long-time marriages (16 years for me and 21 years for him). We just spoke on the alumni message board, initially (just fun stuff with other alumni). We would talk occasionally in the alumni chats. Then, after about 9 months, we began instant messages and emails. We would talk about our spouses, and sometimes sex. Later, we talked about how our spouses weren't meeting our sexual needs (particularly frequency). This led to more intimate conversations and finally cybersex. We have only been sharing an intimate Internet relationship for 6 weeks now, and our spouses are unaware. We each love our spouses and families very much. It just brings some needed passion and excitement into our lives.

I did have phone sex with this man of a few times.

I can say how I feel freely while I am chatting online. The person I chat with has the same needs and wants that I do emotionally and sexually.

I wasn't really looking for an affair, but I didn't shy away from it. I have been married for 23 years, my wife was pregnant when we married and I did not love her. That's a sad statement but true. When I met this lady in chat we had a lot in common, which my wife and I do not. I think it was the combination of my lack of true love in the beginning of my marriage and the fact that my wife and I share very little common interests that led to my affair. I don't know where it will end, but I do believe divorce is in my future. I am really interested in the psychology behind this, why am I willing to give up so much, my wife and I have had five children, three are still under eighteen...my job pays 50,000 a year but I believe I would leave it all for this woman I have only known for a few months. Doesn't make sense, does it...

The questions in this questionnaire are stated in a way which make it seem as though I was intentionally hiding something from my husband—which in my particular case was not the case. My husband knew right from the beginning about my online affairs. In fact when I was Cyber-married he was present and in total agreement. This cyber affair, opened our marriage more than any counselor I had ever seen. Through this fantasy (and that's what cyber relationships are) role playing game, I was able to investigate avenues of my sexuality that my husband and I were unable to explore...for a number of personal reasons. This exploration opened my mind to the possibilities and enjoyment provided from sex that I had never allowed myself to explore before. I was able to fantasize about situations that in real life would be detrimental or at the very least not a suitable avenue given my family situation (4 kids). I would like to state that I do realize that some cyber relationships are at the jeopardy of others, however there are a few occurrences such as mine, where the cyber affairs have made my husband and I enter into a world of sexual bliss, with each other...and the added bonus is that I have made friends (yes true friends) that I know I can count on whenever I am in need.

Best thing for both of us--being married was safe and it is good safe sex---doing things our spouses have tired of---we plan to continue.

This person was my old high school sweetheart. His name was on a site for classmates to connect to one another through email, etc. I never, ever wanted or expected this to happen. We feel like we found each other's soulmates after many, many years. Astounding since we both are happily married. I see how the Internet can open up a whole new set of problems (along with being a wonderful tool of technology these days).

I am afraid of getting hurt so I haven't had sex with him yet although things have heated up in the past few days and I may go with the feelings in my heart when I see him again.

He is married and I am married. We both are caregivers to ill spouses that can no longer give or receive sexual intimacy. We are both 56 years old and live on the East coast and West coast. Our talking online has given us both a lot of comfort.

I was not married when I started the "online affair." I was involved in a long-distance relationship and I put a personal ad on yahoo looking for a penpal with similar interests. I began chatting with him via email, which led to instant messaging within a few days. Then, a telephone conversation took place after a couple months. Then, 5 months after the first contact, we met in person. He knew I had a serious boyfriend but halfway through our "relationship," I told him we broke up. That was not the truth. After we met, the communication ended mutually. Ironically, I ended my relationship with my boyfriend because I found out he was married. I, in turn, became his online affair. SO MANY lessons learned!! Never again will I behave so selfishly. What comes around goes around.

I am 71 years old having a real life affair with a man 47. We met online and he knows I am a great deal older than he is. This is the most wonderful, sensual thing I have ever done. We are both extremely happy with the way things are going and plan to live together as soon as it's possible...It's a strange relationship I know, but we both have never been happier. Fortunately I look, act and think 10 years younger than I am...

We would still be together if her husband did not find out. I love this woman more than I ever loved my wife of 25 years. The pain associated with the break-up is unbearable and will not go away to quick. Communications is the most important factor in any relationship.

I feel like I'm a time bomb, fixing to explode because this has never happened to me before. I should have known better. But my heart won out.

My situation was not the typical. I started out conversing with an old high school boyfriend. It was just a friendly catching up sharing. He lived 3000 miles away and we both were married. In time we found out that both of us were in very bad marriages. We are mostly a support system for each other. Yes we do share intimate secrets of our lives but out of friendship. We are both Christians trying to hold on to bad marriages. We give each other support and encouragement and also we remind each other that we also need to take care of our own individual needs. We have no intention of seeing each other. Both our spouses know we email and that we have talked on the phone. I have even loaned him and his wife money when he lost his job. She knows of our friendship. Yes, we do

wish we were married to each other. But, that is not the case so we are getting through our lives as best we can.

I had several online affairs, simultaneously. My husband had come out as gay, and I found connecting with men online a way to feel better about my sexual attractiveness and I found the relationships to be very intimate. Some of the men I ended up meeting. Some I didn't. My husband and I arranged ahead of time (open marriage, I guess you would call it) who had what night available. Oftentimes, I had my mother-in-law baby-sit while I went to meet men. That had some sort of perverse pleasure for me. Ultimately I grew up, and quit living a dangerous, unfulfilling, and amazingly depressing life, and we ended the marriage. I am remarried to one of the men I met online. He was single (one of the only ones).

I feel that fate has brought us together, and just maybe he is my soul-mate.

Do not have online affairs if you are married. It's not fair to you or your spouse...and usually isn't worth your time or the pain of the other person.

I thought he was being as truthful as I was... Obviously not...his intentions of the relationship were not what mine were...I fell in love...he fell in lust...says he loves me...but....??

I knew the person prior to contact online. The accessibility to email and instant messaging makes it so easy to be on contact.

I think that there are a lot of people online hunting for the things that they aren't getting at home. It gets personal and so much more.

We met and were looking to meet couples for group sex, that is when it went bad. He then started meeting couples with his wife and left me. I wish I could tell other women not to do this. The pain is so bad.

I am very, very sorry that this has happened. I wish that It had not occurred, and now it's in the open, I am very, very distraught about the whole ordeal.

Be careful in online chat rooms....

We never had sex, yet but we have kissed passionately.

I have been involved in this.....for 4 years now though it is difficult and stressful at times it is also very rewarding. I believe this person is my best friend for we share everything.

I think that "Online Affairs" are not as bad as they sound. I actually had a short affair with my husband and he had no idea that the person he's talking to is his own wife. When I told him that I'm the one he was talking to he was really surprised and told me that now he fell in love with me all over again.

This online affair was due to a low point, as a result of finding out that years before my spouse had a physical affair with a co-worker that lasted one year...I needed someone to turn to, to understand, to help me through during my darkest time when my spouse looked in my eyes as a traitor, dishonest and untrustworthy. The other party also went through a similar thing so it was a connection...it was a way of helping each other through the deepest pain anyone could feel and we both understood it having lived it...not to purposely look for someone else. No one can know this deep hurt more than the hurting parties, not even the spouse who caused it. I certainly don't believe an online affair that never leads to physical is the same as a physical affair...having been put on both sides of the coin.

My affair saved my sanity and I have no regrets whatsoever about it. It was a risk I was willing to take and am glad I did; the rise in my self esteem and how I feel about life was worth it.

Online affairs are not worth the trouble...I hurt my husband deeply and I wouldn't want that to ever happen again so please think before you actually think the grass is greener on the other side... Cause usually you get burned.

I have been with my wife for 15 years. There have been sexual problems for 12 years. I sought an affair with someone that I could be myself with. The affair is ongoing and I must make a decision as to who I want to be with. I really wish one of them would decide, I feel so guilty and hate the thought of splitting up with either of them. The lady I am having an affair with is now pregnant! Just gets worse.

I am almost 44...my "lover" thinks I am 25. That is the only thing that is keeping me from taking a chance at a physical "encounter." By the way, my husband not only doesn't care, he has encouraged the progression of the "affair" to include phone contact. I consider this to be the death knell of my marriage.

The reason I had a online affair is that I felt like my husband no longer appreciated me or cared for my feelings...however after chatting with several men he opened up his eyes and realized it was partially his fault also. We are trying to work it out, but first we had to realize this was a serious problem. We made a list of everything that we thought was wrong in our marriage and fixed it. It was painful for both of us and for the other parties involved. However I think it strengthened all of our marriages in the long run. I will always wonder what it would be like with "Him," however all I ever wanted was my husband.

I regret the affair and wish for it to never happen again but it is hard to just say no....I don't know why either, because I am told that my husband is the best catch any woman would be able to get. I do think this is also very much so.....I'm no beauty queen and he is the handsome prince so I guess I just am stupid like all my friends say. I am scared of it happening again, but I find myself sometimes slipping.....

I began my online affair after finding out my husband had one which ended being physical. I wanted to hurt him as much as he hurt and devastated my life. But I found out the only one I was hurting was my new friend and myself, whom I was completely open and honest with.

A lot of people think what I did is wrong. Maybe it is. But I just wasn't happy with my husband anymore when I met this guy. He made me feel good about myself and gave me the confidence I needed to leave my husband. I know leaving my husband would've happened sooner or later I just didn't feel attractive enough to leave after having a child. My husband still doesn't know about my online affair; he thinks I just left. I plan on seeing this guy as long as it will last.

Our affair happened after we'd been email friends for over 3 years. It happened over the course of three months after both of us became severely depressed. It ended when his wife found out, although we are still in contact.

My affair began 20 plus years ago, and ended because he would not leave his family. We both got computers 2 years ago, and began emailing back and forth, IMing almost daily, and frequent telephone calls. We live 300 miles apart, but have managed to be together a few times. I was in love with him 20 years ago, and never stopped loving him. I am in love with him now. My husband has never suspected a thing.

Perhaps this is one of the ones that could end in being together forever. It has lasted over 3 years and still going on. I am hoping that someday we may be able to be together.

I know that this may be the exception and not the rule, but this is one of the ones that works. I met my "man" online after he had a bad breakup and I was trying actually to get him back with his ex, but in the meantime we fell in love with each other. We would talk for hours (at least 8-10 a day) online and in IMs; we didn't talk on the phone til maybe 9 months after we began talking. The Internet I feel was one of the best ways to start a relationship. Ours is based on purely talking and not sex; we've never been even the least intimate. (We've met once and hugged). What we have is incredible I have been able to talk to him about anything and everything and he's never judged me or even got upset at some of the things we talked about. What we have is solid and neither of us can wait to be together. I moved out from my hubby 2 months ago and we're in the middle of getting a divorce; and as far as my Internet man, he understands that I cannot start a physical relationship til this one is over. I know him so well and vice versa; he has never lied to me and I never felt the need to lie to him. I know that the bulk of people online do, but well like I said, this is an extremely rare case.

My online affair started at a time in my life when I was going through the illness and eventual death of a family member. My husband who was not sympathetic, encouraged me to go online to a chat room, I had no idea then what a chat room was. I found someone willing to listen, to sympathize, to care, and someone who was there when my husband was not.

"Don" and I have been seeing one another for close to one year. We share one brain, one body and one libido. We are so compatible it is incredible. I have left my partner, but John is still married to his wife and she has no idea that he sees me. She must live in a bubble. It's too easy. Anyway, I'd like to see this affair go to the next level, but it is too soon to tell.

My marriage was dead and my husband knew about him the whole time and did nothing to change it. I was not looking for anyone; it just happened.

My husband would not touch me because I gained weight. The men on the net were very understanding and horny and were more than willing to have cyber sex with me...some of them begged for my phone number. Others wanted me to meet them somewhere. I needed sex so bad, I was tempted, but afraid. This whole situation has gotten out of hand... I don't want to stop.

It was a very strange relationship. He lied to me also during the whole relationship, telling me he was separated from his wife. So when I went to meet him personally, I found out the truth. Not only was he still married, but they used our online/phone conversations to stimulate their own sex life and wanted me to join in as a third partner. Also, my husband did not find out about this affair, but he did find out I had cheated on him by finding out about a one-night stand that I had set up over the computer.

When one or both of you is married nothing good can come from it...only pain and guilt... All the trust between my husband and myself is gone and he is now having affairs for the sake of revenge. I guess I deserve that. All that's left of our 30-marriage is an empty shell... The only reason I got involved in an online affair is because I was so badly in need of attention, and now all I really have left to give me love is my 2 cats.... I have given up on affairs, I'm too afraid of getting hurt again...

This "affair" went on for almost three years. We stopped chatting about a year ago (it became awkward at home), but kept up the emailing (about 3 a day). We agreed never to meet because we didn't want to jeopardize our "real" lives. I stopped writing to him when it became obvious that our contact was just frustrating both of us. He's tried to contact me by email 3 times in the last 7 weeks. We've done this before, or at least I've tried to end this before. If he makes an all-out effort to resume our communication, I'm not sure how I'll react. I have to tell you that your analysis of most online affairs is right on. You described my situation perfectly. If I could do it all over again, I'd take the computer and throw the damn thing out the window.

I was a skeptic about 'falling in love' over the computer—until it happened to me. It was the most intense relationship I had ever had in my life, and I've had a few. We got to know each other inside and out, more than I had ever done in other relationships I had met in person. It seems you reveal so much more of yourself on the computer. It was 2 years ago that we had met in person. He flew across country and we spent 4 beautiful days together. Everything was as expected when we met, the love just grew. Unfortunately, it ended due to an ex-friend of mine spilling everything to my hubby, and my online love confessed to his wife. I'll always consider him my one true love, as painful as it's been. I do look back on it now, without crying, and now realize it was for the best since my children would've suffered greatly had I 'dropped everything' to be with this man. We still keep in contact with each other occasionally, and the feelings are still there, but we are both very guarded about falling back into it again. Also, my eyes have been opened to what I have here, under my roof...great kids, a good husband and father and a guarantee that it will always be great, if I don't screw it up. There were no guarantees with my online love.

I can honestly say that I felt love. My spouse owns the biggest part of my heart, but somehow, my Internet 'spouse' found his way in too. It was fun at first, then, like all things, it fizzled and the excitement was gone and I no longer needed his companionship. We still write a few times a year, but I have no interest in pursuing a relationship with him; I am with the one I truly love.

Neither of us was looking for an online affair. We had both been married for 25 years and both unhappy but for different reasons. We found comfort in knowing that we were both in similar situations. Neither of us could talk about the problems we were having with family or friends as the chat room was a source of expressing our feelings. We eventually met, both of us divorced and have been married to each other now for 2 years and very happy. But the one thing that makes a difference in online affairs is honesty. You can be whoever you want to be behind the keyboard and no one knows the difference. But because of our honesty, we actually met the same person we had been talking to. Honesty is the key word, not just in online affairs but any relationship.

I am still currently involved with my online partner. We have never met in person, but are hoping to one day. I believe we are really in love. This is not infatuation.

I specifically started visiting chat rooms, against my husband's wishes and totally behind his back, looking for something exciting. I had a few "sexual" online affairs before I met the man I'm with online now. It was supposed to be just a cybersex thing too. After my husband found out, the affair lost most of its appeal for me in regards to actually wanting to meet him and the phone calls. All the hiding and worrying about being caught is just too stressful. I'm satisfied to just have meaningful conversations with this man now, which is all that attracted me to him in the first place.

Online friendship can be a wonderful experience, but when the inner feelings come into the situation, it can have devastating results. I am very hurt and feel very deceived by my best online friend.

Meeting on a chatline, has about as much chance of starting a "good" relationship, as I do of flying to the moon! Online romance is just that...ONLINE, and rarely will it ever become a life-long commitment.

I was in a common-law relationship and had been told my spouse did not want me in his life anymore—"because my family can't stand you"! I started corresponding with an "anonymous" man online because I felt alone, and distraught, and lived far away from family and friends. My online "cybermate" had not been honest with me (before I flew half way around the world to meet him) about his alcohol problem or his time in prison for spousal abuse! I had been promised marriage and a "knight" to look after me and love me... a week later after an evening of verbal abuse and flying chairs... I left for home—thousands of miles away.... I have since moved back in with my common-law spouse who promised we would make things work for us (and have attended counseling). He had a brief affair with a local woman while I was away... in my own home and bed!

If my husband were paying more attention to me...I seriously doubt this would ever have happened. There is obviously a problem in our sex life as he goes weeks without wanting to make love. Is he having an affair? No...I am positive of this. He constantly complains about being too tired for sex...and yet, when I suggested he see a doctor...he just rolled his eyes at me. However...in the course of this online affair...I finally realized the affair was not the answer to my problem...just a way to avoid dealing with it. Communication is essential in all things in a marriage. I still may end up divorced...but it won't be due to an online affair.

The online affair has led to a 2-1/2 year relationship between us. We are both divorced and very happy in our relationship with each other.

The online affair is continuing, but the real-life affair I had last year ended with my wife finding out about her. Life is never the same.

If I hadn't been so unhappy I wouldn't have gone looking. As it was, my husband was using me as a free baby-sitter for his mother and father. Never helping me until this last year. I have been taking care of his parents for 12 years... not once did I get a thank you, you're doing a good job hon. If there was any hospital sitting, I did it... he was always too tired and never there. Lost love and respect for him 5 years ago and without that what do you have???? Nothing!!!!

It's been eight months now and I am still with him. We live 5 hours apart and travel to see each other twice a month. It's always special and so magical when we are together. We are gradually introducing each other to our friends but.....we are living a lie. We can't/won't tell how we really met. Are we ashamed of it? We don't know if that is what is wrong or do we just wish so badly to be able to tell friends something else so the stigma will not be there. We love each other very much.....and both have separated from our spouses. We make big decisions together.....like when and where we will finally settle down to live together. It's hard not being able to talk to others about our feelings without giving away "our big secret.". We are both professionals, and if intelligence had anything to do with knowing better than to let something like this happen.....well this would not have happened. It was loneliness that drew us to each other and it's love that keeps us together.

The person I became involved with was an ex-husband. He had gotten divorced, we started talking and old feelings resurfaced. I think part of the problem is how busy we've all become with our own lives. Couples forget to have a life together, but that need for sharing with someone is still very strong. The computer is an easy medium to find a friend and gives you emotional support without truly feeling like an affair.

It is so hard to stop, when one ends you are looking for someone else, or if your contact isn't there you find someone else. It is crazy, but I can't stop.

Yes, the affair which started online was an escape to fantasy. But it won't be fair to lay all the blame on the online-spouse. The problem starts when marital partners don't admit to and set about resolving difficulties in their marriage. In my case it was much easier to withdraw from the relationship, all the while thinking I was merely protecting myself from abuse. I should have had more guts to insist on resolving the situation with my partner, one way or the other, before seeking alternative coping mechanisms.

People have affairs for reasons, not because they are just looking. I was looking for friendship, because I was lonely and didn't have adult companionship.

The online affair fills some gaping hole in the marriage...a lack of attention from my husband. In 2 years of an online affair, we only met one time, and it was wonderful for both. But we are on separate coasts and will not leave our spouses. So we "broke up." I'm now doing more things offline but not completely able to let go of talking online to people.

I began an online relationship with another married man. We had been friends long before the online relationship. But the online (email back and forth) brought this sense of intimacy that we couldn't find in public. We had been attracted to each other (looks, stares) long before this...but had always kept our distance. We live in the same city, our children attend the same school, our family attends the same church. The anonymity the screen gives you allows you to say things you wouldn't normally say to someone in public. I really didn't know I was involved in an affair until after reading the online description. However, the fact that I had to be secretive about it let me know something was wrong. We never had sexual talk...just intimate talk about life etc....but, I honestly thought I was in love with him. It was just a fantasy...to cover up my pathetic marriage.

The attention and excitement was great. He was very persistent and clever about finding ways to get me to share my fantasies so he could fulfill them. Of course, his knowing them then gave him some degree of 'power' in the relationship. I think we both had very different reasons for letting this happen, but it was unexpected that we would feel as strongly as we do/did for each other.

I think that since online affairs have become so common, it is just one more reason that marriages fall apart. I know for me it was the cause of my marriage ending. I never thought once of leaving my husband until I started chatting to guys on the Internet.

It's safe sex when things at home are dull and close to nonexistent.

I don't see anything wrong with having an online affairs (cyberlove?) even if both parties are married as long as they know the limits so as not to jeopardized their marriages. It's a different story if one or both parties does not value their marriages and will meet each other for the real extramarital affair.

I just love the feeling of being desired ... pampered and wanted.

We think we love each other.

I only did what my ex had done. It just makes you feel good for the time, but you have to really watch what you're doing; you may really enjoy what you're doing with many others and this is not the best of times to have too many sexual partners— and this is coming from a 46 year old that does know better.

Online affairs are totally a risk and not worth it.. it is a FANTASY than destroys your real life... an online affair has brought me close to divorce... and I regret the affair SO much... financially, emotionally, and spiritually.

I did it is because they don't know you. You can give any name under the sun and all you are is a bunch of words on a screen. So why does the other spouse get mad?? No different than looking at playgirl or playboy....unless you meet them in person. Then you have taken it to another level... which I have done. And it wasn't worth my time. My grass on this side is much greener than theirs. and for that I will never tell him, because I learned my lesson. But I still have "cyber sex." And that is where I remain. I just get a kick out of being someone different every time.

My online friend and I do not meet anymore, but contact one another as friends (quick email) every 6 month or so. It's been over for 2 years.

I, for one, do not underestimate or undervalue my relationship simply because the media that I met him under was "online." I have seen counselors about what is going on in my life, and the feedback has been positive. One thing that was told to me, and I'll never forget it, was that when you meet someone online, or even how romances started decades ago by U.S. mail, you get to know the heart and soul of the person...and the mind. You're not so "into" the physicality of them. You meet the inner person....not what's on the outside. She went on to say...that sometimes...in "real life"..... people get sidetracked by appearances and they aren't in tune with the heart and soul and mind of someone...because they see what's on the outside first....and if that appeals to them....THEN they will see if they mesh. I fell in love with his heart, his soul, and his mind.....online. We are still together after two years.

All I wanted was sex; I love my wife but wanted more sex.

My comment is one you probably hear a lot. In my perception my marriage of less than five years was a stale, stagnant, alone union. She suffered from depression as prescribed from a doctor since long before our marriage. She was on and off of several medications. I felt lost because she was much of the time locked inside her cocoon and didn't feel like doing things together. I have insecurities also and felt wrong when I did innocent things alone or did not do them at all. I loved and still cared for my wife, but instead of pulling her up, she was pulling me down. The doctor told me there is little I myself can do for her depression. Feeling alone and new to the wonders of the Internet, I looked for friends anywhere they would listen. There I met the affair and the rest is history. I am not proud of the affair but I think an escape was needed.

If you enter into any affair, it means that something is not right in your current relationship. It's better to deal with that first, but something just happens.

The person I am having an online affair with is someone I went to high school with. We became reacquainted through a reunion website after not being in contact for almost 30 years. At first I was interested only in friendship with this man, but he quickly introduced me to the joys of cyber and phone sex. I am now deeply in love with him, although still reasonably happily married.

It started as just friends talking with each other. I'm not sure exactly where it all changed. We chat online 3-4 times a week. I've called him once, but will probably call again. He turns me on talking about sex; my husband is impotent and I'm only 32 he's 50. No chance of us meeting; I'm from the East, he's from the West.

My online affair began because I was, unconsciously, looking for something to fill the hole in my marriage. I believed, at the time, that it was a harmless, honest way of getting the attention I longed for from a man. This happened in 1994 when online affairs were almost unheard of. If it were to happen now instead of then, I may think twice about how harmless it is just because of the publicity and awareness that there is now. I am not saying it wouldn't have happened anyway. I just would be more aware of what exactly I was doing.

Contact over the Internet with other people made me realize that I did not have to stay in an unhappy situation, there were other people out there that I could share my life and friendship with. The Internet saved my sanity.

I thought I was a mature 37 until I started my Internet affair. This affair to date has been both exhilarating and frustrating. Exhilarating as it makes you feel like a teenager. Ensuring I am in the chat rooms at the designated time is such a thrill. I have plans to meet my cyber lover in person next year. However the frustration felt during and after cybersex is acute, the need for physical contact almost overwhelming. I have been reduced to tears on several occasions. The worst moment to date was when he told me he loved me. Not to be able to hold him at that point almost destroyed me. The way I feel at present will almost certainly destroy my family.

The online affair I had started off as a role-playing scenario involving one man and several women. Although I rarely spoke with the man personally, I spoke with the other women often and began to see them as my friends. I felt horribly guilty about what I was doing, my work and home life was slipping but it was an addiction I couldn't seem to stop. What I realize now is that what I was looking for was friendship and companionship. I have few friends and my husband and I were working opposite shifts, I was lonely. I continued in the Internet relationship in order to still talk to the women who had become my friends. Eventually the role-playing scenario turned into something that seemed very real to me and I participated in phone sex with him via voice chat. It happened once, my husband found out and I ended it immediately. When reality smacked me in the face I couldn't believe how I had hurt him. This made him withdraw from me and begin talking to women in chatrooms, one of which he eventually met and had a one-night stand with. I found out about it immediately and he ceased all contact with her. We both now know that something went terribly wrong between us and we are working on really talking to each other. In a horrible way, this has made us even stronger together; I only wish something else would have opened our eyes.

My online love and I met on a divorce-related bulletin board as we were both actively seeking divorce at the time. We had responded to each other for several weeks/months, and he finally emailed me with regard to a post I made regarding my interests, as his were similar. We emailed several times a day in the beginning discussing our mutual likes and dislikes and finally, about 4 months into the relationship, he admitted he had stronger feelings for me than just a friendship, and I had to admit the same. I think our relationship was unusual in that we were basically very good friends from the start and he actually tutored me in one of my college courses over the phone. Even when our relationship became more intimate, it never degenerated into a sordid type of "sex-talk." I think we basically had more respect for one another than to allow that to happen. We never, ever intended for our relationship to go beyond friendship and neither of us could define when it happened—it just did. He is now divorced, my husband and I reconciled and he and I no longer correspond. It was a terrible mistake to allow such a fine friendship to develop into something that could never have been... I do miss his friendship immensely, but wouldn't risk the loss of my husband in favor of rekindling that friendship.

Still married, but separated. This "affair" totally devastated my wife. I don't know if we will ever recover what we once had.

I will be leaving my wife soon so I can be with the girl I met online. We are in love. My wife cheated on me last year and that ended any feelings I had for her. We tried marriage counseling but it's just not there anymore. The trust was gone and it's time for me to start new with someone I can trust.

I enjoy online affairs and/or cybering. I find it very sexually stimulating and it is a lot of fun. I even prefer not knowing what the person looks like so that I can create my own mental image. I've been doing this for the past four years and have not met nor would I meet anyone that I chat with in person. I don't consider an online affair "real;" however, my husband would be extremely angry, upset and disappointed in me if he were to find out about these men. His thinking is that there is another man talking to his wife and he just doesn't like it.

It started out as a friendship, it grew into more. I wasn't willing to risk my marriage, so we're friends again, just friends. And although I do feel bad about the dishonesty, I have my husband and I have a friend.

I fell "in love" with my Aussie online lover but soon after realized it was just lust. We continue today to be the best of friends!

I was curious about the chat rooms and the whole cybersex thing. It is very satisfying to have online sex because you don't have to worry about seeing the disappointment or worry in the other person's face and you can definitely use your imagination. I'd do it again and again and maybe next time I'll have husband watch!!!!

The affair itself pales in comparison to what comes after the truth is known to everyone. All of the feelings that come after the affair—guilt, embarrassment, hurt, anger, mistrust (just to name a few) are so hard to deal with, for both the victim and the guilty party. It's been close to 2 years now since my affair, and I am still having troubles coming to terms with it all. I can tell you it will NEVER happen again, never.

Have heard a great deal about the "fantasy" aspect of online affairs. Don't think there is any more fantasy involved than there are with "normal" relationships as far as the emotions involved etc. If both are honest with each other, do not misrepresent themselves, I think that over time (my relationship is a year and a half old and counting) you can get to know each other very well, the love you feel can turn into something very real. And besides, when was the last time you spent 2-3 hours every night talking to someone you were dating in "real" life? Perhaps in the end you can get to know someone BETTER online.

We fell in Love, but are still with our spouses

I became involved with my "special friend" as I felt I wasn't important and had no value to my husband. My "friend" made me feel special and needed. It's been over a month since I ended the relationship, but I still think of him and miss him. I'm beginning to realize what we had was fantasy, but I know what my husband and I have is very REAL.

I think that it's important for people to really understand that something that starts out as innocent to the two people online.. may NOT be perceived as innocent by the spouse. Even if it IS innocent, it can cause damage to a relationship...trust-crushing.

I had AOL long before many did... way back when it was quite expensive to be online and the cyber world wasn't full of teenagers. I wasn't even aware there was such a thing as 'chat'... and happened upon it quite unexpectedly. I was not in a very good relationship...still am not and yet I stay. I have children, husband has a respectable position, etc. I have felt 'dead' for years...no emotional ties, no feelings of being important to him, etc. This 'friend' filled in a lot of blanks.. not just nights of "talk" that I'd not have had otherwise. I found myself rushing to the computer to read his emails... Although I am not proud of being a 'cheat' it has enhanced my life... made me feel like I was in fact human again. It has been going on now for nearly 5 years... not on the computer any longer. We have shared many things, but mostly a wonderful friendship... Sometimes I think it's not possible to have this kind of friendship in a marriage, ideally it would seem we could... realistically, the everyday stresses of life seem to kill the intimacy of marriage.

I am still in love with my "Online Affair." We want to be together and are working toward that goal. I don't understand that mostly everyone says it won't work and we should try to save our marriages when all we can even think about is each other. This has been one of the most emotional and stressful times I have ever gone through and I cant find any support groups for the other woman or other man; they just don't exist, but these people struggle also with a lot of issues. We fell in love and it's just not so easy to walk away...

This was not through a chat room. Out of curiosity I looked up an old platonic friend from 20 years ago, was surprised to find him and we began emailing. The friendship deepened over a period of 6 months. The potential was obvious, but I resisted it and he was always a gentleman, willing to "just" be friends. We saw each other occasionally, as friends. We finally gave into it, and care very deeply for one and other. I was planning on leaving my marriage already. My husband is mentally ill, and my life has been miserable for many years. I have been his sole caretaker so this is very hard and very complicated.

My online affair was with a Pastor. He was honest about who he was, so I believed everything he said. After all he was a "holy" man a rep. of God. This man got a huge promotion, and thus was afraid to engage in the physical aspect of the relationship. This situation sent me to therapy, which I am still in, due to the fact he was a preacher I swear I believed it all, everything he said.!!!

For fun, I placed an ad at an adult personals site, after 1-1/2 yrs of online cheating, my marriage is in shambles. Before my online affair, my husband was my best friend. Today, we hardly speak, and when we do speak, it is in anger. I have destroyed his love for me, because I couldn't quit. Cybersex is an addiction that is powerful and leaves behind a path of destruction.

The anonymity of a person is a key factor....I would not chat, or tease a person in a pub or club but.... the feelings generated in an online affair are 'very' real.....damaging even and could be likened to, or seen as worse than...phone chat line.

I think it would be valuable to emphasize the unique aspect of online affairs that it's easier to deny/rationalize that it's not "real" because it's not in-person, etc. The bottom line is that you're deceiving someone else & it doesn't take long before it does get VERY "real" because you fall in love and then you're in trouble... My affair seemed justified to me for that reason—I "needed it." But my marriage suffered and then my husband had an affair and we've been living in a very real hell for the last three years. My affair really ruined my life.

This man makes me feel so desirable and attractive and wanted sexually...which was not happening with my husband...I do feel guilty...but can't give him up.

God doesn't make mistakes and this was the best thing that has ever happened to me. A wonderful person that I hope to spend the rest of my life with. And the thing that worked so well for us was the honesty the online relationship gave us. Putting your thoughts down so you can read them and being held responsible for what you've said. That's why most contracts are written and not verbal. It's all there in the printed word. No room for mistakes. It makes all parties honest.

I have been married for so long and the spark have been gone for a while now. I need that back in my life again. I may be ready for that change and go to the next step! I have fallen in love with my cyber friend... and to both of us, its real! So now what? Can this work out or not... only God knows!!!

I never realize how many lonely people there are in the world. Actually, I thought my loneliness was a way of life. I feel the affair I am involved in has honestly made my marriage better. I now have much more patience with my husband, because of what my lover has taught me. Don't criticize me, until you have walked in my shoes.

I would suggest to ANYONE to end your relationship with your spouses before getting involved in ANY type of affair. They all seem wonderful and fun and you submit your heart, then you suffer from it all. Because like anything.... nothing last forever when beginning on a lie. "If I only knew!"

This was the most foolish mistake I have ever made. This man cared nothing for me in reality.....it was my sense of neediness that kept me going back for more....my lack of self esteem.....and the feeling that I was being loved and wanted.....which was total delusion on my part.

My husband is cold in bed; so is his wife. Both of us fantasized of things we could not have. Both of us are educated & professional people by profession. But we have this empty room in our heart that needs to be filled. We felt we have each other online by chatting and it filled up the loneliness and unsatisfying sex life we both have. We are sharing a lot of common things and I really like him very much....but we never met yet.

I confessed the affair because of the guilt I was feeling. Soon after confessing, I seriously considered leaving my wife. We attended some counseling sessions and I made the decision to remain with my wife and ended the affair. However, after about 1-1/2yrs, I have recently restarted the online affair.

I wish I had never seen a chat room

I connected via email with a friend whom I had not seen in about 25 years. We had never dated but had strong feelings for each other, which were rekindled through the e-connection.

I actually knew the man I was having the online affair with. We couldn't meet face-to-face regularly so we used the Internet to communicate.

I have known this man for five years now. No matter what we do, we cannot go without speaking to one another. Even though we are both married and our spouses do know about this situation, we still keep in close contact. This is by far the hardest, most painful situation I've ever been in in my entire life, though it's also been one of the best things as well.

Its so easy to fall into an online affair, but not so easy to admit it and do something about getting out of it,

The Internet has provided an even easier method to reach infidelity. It even alarms my unfaithful self how easy it is.

My own sex life with my husband is poor and it was the sex which I found thrilling.

This affair made me realize how diseased my marriage had gotten. I sought counseling and he refused. The counselors informed me that I had been neglected physically, mentally and emotionally. I thus sought a divorce after 3 months of therapy and hoping he'd help fix things. When he didn't, I left.

People should think of what they might lose before they start or continue the affair, you don't only lose your spouse, you lose the trust of your kids, and your internal peace.

Been separated for 19 months, physical contact lasted only 2 times in a month, then it was over, was online for about 4 months with online affair, wife found out, within month it ended after the physical part. I'm VERY sorry it happened, ruins a lot of lives, not been happy since then.

My experience was the result of asking a question in a forum dealing with marriage. During the interchange (before anything improper ever transpired) I discovered my husband's affair. NEVER did I think I would be involved in such a thing. My "friend" and I just emailed about mutual interests. Hiking, Mountain climbing, family, aging parents (his dad was ill, and I had lost my mom and am dealing with an ailing father. Then one day I emailed him that I had just found out that my husband had bought a diamond ring for a woman he had had an affair with in the past. My husband had ended it (or rather told me he had). Shortly after that I was having improper dialog with my email friend. We both just stopped emailing after about 6mos. This is the first time I've talked about it. Thank you...

I thought of it as a friendship. Only now that he has ended our chats, do I realize how much I really liked him. I miss him so much.

Having an affair allowed me to be myself completely. While I know I was intrigued by the fact that it was a new relationship, why I cannot end it, still baffles me.

Online affairs happen because home life isn't good and the person online is what is missing in your life.

My online affair gave me the courage to face the fact that my marriage was over before I ever started "chatting" and I am now happily married to the person I met online 5 years ago.

Someone who listened, made me feel like a teenager.

They are not all sexually oriented or based on lack of sexual needs. Our relationship is about 1 month away from our 4-year anniversary. Sex is but a miniscule part of our relationship. Maybe we are atypical or maybe most of the data out there is just wrong.

We're both professionals with college educations, children, actively involved in our churches, committed to rearing our children, and the best of friends.

I have no regrets about my 'online' affair, it was suppose to be just a 'one meeting' but has been much more than that and I have enjoyed the attention. However it's not something that I would ever do again, it also comes with a lot of heartaches as well, especially if it is over a long distance. I have no doubt that I will tell my husband in time about my affair and if we split it won't be due to that fact, things were bad before I even contemplated having an affair with this sweet friend of mine.

I find it still very hard to consider that what I had/have is actually an online affair. I know... denial... and all that.. I do not think this person that I chat with is my "soul mate" nor do we lie that we love our spouses. (His spouse knows and does not mind of his online activities.) And my husband also goes online a lot and has had an online affair. I suppose it is all just confusing as to who and how it is hurting.

This person is someone I worked with a long time ago. We were good friends then. We started emailing friendly notes and it escalated into an affair about 3 months ago. We have no intention of breaking up our marriages. But we do intend to continue this affair. We both derive a lot of satisfaction from it, sexual and intellectual. Our spouses are happy with their own lives and disinterested in having a passionate relationship. If anything, our affair has enhanced our marriages. We would not break up our marriages, as it would hurt too many people. Having known one another for over 20 years, but not seeing one another in a long time, we still haven't lied about our weight, and know one another has shortcomings. The cyber love and sex we engage in is just too satisfying to give up right now. In fact, we may never give it up!!

I only started talking seriously to this person after my spouse told me he had had an affair. The person that I started talking to online had sought me out about 2 months earlier as we knew each other 30 years ago. He simply went to measures to find out where I was and what I was doing now. We started talking as friends only and even though he told me on many occasions that he had always been in love with me. I kept the emailing on a friendly basis. Three months after my spouse admitted his affair, I told my friend and he started becoming more serious pursuing me.

An online affair is not harmful as long as you keep it online.

I cannot begin to tell you how wrong I realize this was to both of us as well as our spouses. It started out as an innocent question and before I knew it, it was full blown online and telephone affair. My husband had had an affair and I was trying to understand why married men stray. I asked the question in a 50's chat room one night and a man who had had numerous affairs answered my question. We began to chat on a regular basis and before I really knew what happened, I found myself more than interested in this man's opinions. I finally put an end to it when I realized that I was doing the exact same thing to my marriage that my husband did. Online affairs are just as destructive to a marriage as a physical affair. I became sincerely interested in this other man, more so than I ever had in my own marriage. It became more than physical, that's why I never became physically intimate with him. He became my best friend and confidant and when I realized that I wanted to go further with it, that's when I stopped it completely. Please encourage your readers to steer clear of the Internet. It is dangerous and addictive.

The emotional impact is every bit as strong as it would be in real life, I believe.

We both realized what we did was wrong so we both ended it. I realize I cannot get involved in people's lives...it gets me too close.

I believe that when your spouse does not satisfy your emotional needs and communicate with you regularly, it opens a door of vulnerability. As a woman, who is alone a lot, and has a husband who is a workaholic, I miss the chemistry with someone.

The relationship started as a scientific exchange, became gradually personal and "she" gathered strength from the perceived warmth and my willingness to listen to initiate her separation from a dangerously abusive partner. She visited for short visits (first one on the spur of the moment) for about 10 times before moving lock, stock, and barrel across the continent to now live within 5 minutes driving distance (having found her perceptions to be true). I am still married, always circumspect, see this lovely lady almost daily, and we almost feel like being in a bigamous relationship. It has lasted 2 years and is still getting more affectionate. She is **TOTALLY** different from my present (and from my former) wife and we revel in a stress-free relationship, since she has openly acknowledged that I am the steadfast type, unlikely to get divorced (at 69!). Sexual deficits, we find, are deplorable as a function of age (she is 59), but readily bridged by these miracles.

I have been seeing this man now for 2 1/2 years and we've been up and down, his divorce was final in November, and now he wants me to marry him....I'm considering leaving my husband of 27 years ... I'm 47, he's 38, (my husband is 52). I have a 14 yr old son and 21 yr old daughter. I truly feel I could be happy with this man forever.

Not happy at home, think you can find happiness online but makes things worse, and always leads to disappointed...hard to realize the difference between fantasy and reality, and always comes to an end eventually and end up hurt. And in the meantime real life relationship is in even more trouble then before.

An honest friendship is the result of what seemed to be a online affair. We became good friends and share this friendship with others. There was no "love" or "sex" actually involved but a nurturing relationship for both in times of trouble in our marriages. Now, both marriages are great and we became friends with no ghosts inside.

It is so easy to be drawn into an affair online. The computer allows you to open up your thoughts and feelings in a way you might not if the other person were there in the flesh. It is also easier to rationalize an online affair as not really being an affair since there's no physical contact. However, the emotional involvement is there. Unfortunately the feelings are about someone whom you've never met and you don't know what he/she is like in real life. And if your spouse finds out about it, it hurts as much as a 'real' affair.

Comments from respondents whose spouse had Online Affair

(who also responded to my 20-question survey on online affairs)

I think that at first they don't think online flirting is dangerous because they think it will always just stay online, then they start to have feelings that are not based on truth because they don't really know each other. They are exactly what the other person wants them to be. At home there are responsibilities and reality; online there is excitement and fantasy. Then they talk on the phone and think they are already friends and it is an easy step to meet. The Internet and all of the chat services are a very dangerous arena. People are seldom who they present themselves as and fantasy can be a wonderful escape.

I denied that something was going on, ignoring that little voice. I found my wife's email account open on the computer and looked in the message folders finding some very explicit fantasy email and a log of their physical meetings. Extremely devastating, but I had a few hours to digest the situation and confronted her immediately with what I found. I told her that my biggest fear was losing her and I wanted to get counseling, but she had to make the call. She did and we are better after 2 months of counseling than we have been in 18 years of marriage. 1) If you think they're having an online affair, they probably are. 2) If they minimize the screen and get nervous that you're looking over their shoulder, something is wrong. 3) We have an 'anyone can look' policy now. If one of us asks to see what the other is doing online it's ok, and we have instituted this with the kids also.

After twelve years of marriage, my wife became involved in an online relationship which progressed into a phone relationship with a man from Maryland. She has spent hundreds of dollars in long distance charges and was quite clever in keeping the phone bills out of sight. We reside in Canada and I can't say for sure if they met. It is possible that he came up for a visit and my wife met him when she was supposed to be on her midnight shift at work. Unfortunately I have not called her at work to verify this because only emergency-type calls are accepted at her work. As far as their relationship is concerned, if not a physical relationship, it's certainly been an emotional relationship which to my mind is just as serious and has hurt me to the core. She has downplayed it, saying it was a platonic relationship. But when I initially confronted her with evidence (emailed photo of the man along with his tel. #), she stated that she was infatuated. Then she said she misspoke and that I was making a big deal about nothing. This has gone on for six months with no resolution in sight other than separation, and I really want to keep the marriage together for the sake of my children and my relationship with my wife. I hope she sees the light and eventually ends her relationship and realizes that our marriage is worth saving. I hope it's soon as this has been emotionally devastating for me and I'm not sure how much more I can bear. Being a male I'm supposed to keep a stiff upper lip, but this situation is just as difficult for men as women and I thought you should be aware of the impact on men as well. Thank you for listening to a broken heart.

They met in person before the online affair. As she lives in China and we live in France, they spent lots of time online together. Usually talking into the night. Because both of them travel a lot with their jobs they were also able to see much of each other.

I think that most people probably don't realize the danger in chatting with people instead of trying to communicate with their spouses when they feel there is a problem. It is too easy to become involved with someone you feel will be more understanding, but forget that they are only presenting one side of a situation, yet they receive the response they are looking for. The hurt and pain this causes to the other people is indescribable and is still causing problems for me. They don't realize that once trust is broken and they aren't willing to talk about the situation or try to turn the blame for their mistakes to you only make it more difficult. For me it was not just an affair, it was the emotional involvement that hurts me more than affair itself and I am having a difficult time trying to trust again. All the signs, being online, the phone call with no answer, being late etc., just make me question his actions again and just because he tells me there is nothing going on, which he said while this was going on repeatedly, are difficult to believe when he won't openly discuss this with me and still doesn't respond the way I would like for him to. He tells me it's because I won't just let go of this and move on, but I really feel he doesn't understand the depth of hurt, pain and feeling of betrayal that I felt and now I feel like I'm not even worth the effort to have him help me through this. Although we are still together I feel like our relationship is just slowly dying. If people would only think of the consequences of their actions prior to becoming involved with someone perhaps they could avoid the pain afterwards. I don't understand how people can become so involved with someone they truly don't know, and after they met then he decided he wanted to stay with me and truly loves me. I keep wondering if she had been all he thought she'd be if he still would have come back to me. She was aware he was married, she is divorced, so she felt she was justified in what she did, which she informed me of when she felt it was her duty to call me after he broke up with her, which was the only reason he ever did admit the affair. I still haven't given up but it has been very difficult. I hope you can help others to see the problems this can cause to everyone involved. I always felt we had a good relationship and he told me it was just so easy to become involved that he got carried away. I have reminded him that the choice was his and he made this choice and could have not had the individual contact with her. I doubt he would be as understanding if the situation were in reverse, yet he expects me to just forgive and forget. I hope your research helps other to avoid these situations.

I expect that a "face-to-face" affair would have been more difficult to deal with than a computer/phone relationship. But I'm certain that the feelings of betrayal and sexual jealousy are as real and devastating in many ways as those produced by a "live" affair. In the end, after the rage and grief have been dealt with, can trust survive? It's an open question, I think, and the answer varies from couple to couple. One thing: don't look for rapid recovery. An online/phone affair is a life-altering experience for both partners in a marriage. But the "offended" partner may take years to heal and regain a workable level of trust in the relationship -- if it ever is achieved. Seek professional help. Don't hide your feelings, and demand honesty on the part of the "offending" partner. Statistically, most such couples ultimately remain together, but the quality of the relationship and the reasons for remaining in it need to be analyzed honestly and thoroughly. An after-the-fact relationship is a fertile breeding ground for an ongoing co-dependent situation based on emotional neediness and fear of being alone. Emotional devastation is a tough basis upon which to rebuild a shredded relationship. . .

Online affairs are just as devastating as real life affairs. In some ways I feel that they demonstrate more danger for both parties because these people can portray themselves in any way they choose. In addition I feel that the emotional involvement happens much more readily. Typically people feel less threatened to explore their fantasies and share their desires than they would in real life situations.

My husband insisted that it was just a friendship and that he and his online partner were just looking for company. I was (and continue to be) hurt by this rationalizing. Their affair progressed from nightly games of cribbage to cybersex, to secret email accounts, to exchanges of photos, to more than once-a-day letters and every-night chats. Eventually they exchanged pictures and were professing their love for each other on a daily basis. They discussed their sexual fantasies and told each other of their dissatisfactions in their marriage (relationships). She said she was a single mom. She also told my husband details of meeting other men in person whom she had met online and at one point asked for his phone number. I confronted my husband and he ended the affair immediately. I insisted on seeing the email messages because I did not believe him when he said it was just a friendship. He had tried to erase the messages but I got to them before his hotmail trash can was emptied. What I saw in her letters shocked me to the core. It was evident that he had told her many, many things that he was denying to me previously. I could not look at the letters he sent her because those he successfully erased, but hers to him told me more than I wanted to know. He said he didn't think there was anything wrong with their relationship because he had no intention of ever meeting her. Given the rapid progression of their relationship (6 to 10 weeks), I put no faith in that statement.

My experience has lead me to believe that the Internet gives people freedom and secrecy that they don't normally have in day-to-day life. My situation started with my wife playing a game online for fun. Within a couple of months, she met a man, playing the same game, who shared some of the same interests as her. It then turned into her being online playing games and chatting with him from about 8pm until around 3am. Needless to say, our sex life had ceased to exist. I confronted her numerous times about us not having any kind of intimate contact. She swore up and down that it was just entertainment for her. After about 5 months, we traveled to see a music show and he met us there. I was uncomfortable from the start of that night. About a month later, she decided to plan a trip with a girl friend of hers. When her friend backed out of the trip, I told her I was sorry that her trip would have to be cancelled. She told me that she was still going by herself. I couldn't believe it. I was not supportive of this idea at all. She ended up going on this trip by herself and on her way back home she stopped to spend her first night with him. They ended up meeting a couple of times after that while I was gone to see family with my kids. After getting her to finally admit about it, she says that it was always just a friendship with him. She says that she never would have slept with him if I would have just supported her on her solo vacation plans. While dealing with this situation and trying to get her to end all contact with him, she met a boy 13 years younger than her (31-18) at a part-time job and proceeded to have an affair with him. Needless to say, we are way past the idea of it just being an online affair. My condolences and sympathy to anyone else who has been put through the pain of an affair. I would never wish this pain on anyone.

My spouse was also this woman's supervisor at work. She was only part-time in the evenings, so they mostly communicated online late at night while I was sleeping. I intercepted some very graphic emails from this woman and some also written by my spouse. I was shocked when I discovered this happening because I had no idea.

My husband actually had 2 online affairs....the first was revealed to me by my husband after the week it started, this one never turned to phone conversations, meeting etc. The reason he revealed the first one was because he felt guilty about hiding it from me. Even more he wanted me to approve of his outlet....see he had gotten into a domination/submission group online and knew I wouldn't be into this kind of scene...so he felt that I should let him have this online stuff on the side (this was all revealed 13 years into a what I thought was a very healthy and mutually sexually satisfying marriage). Anyway I did not go for it and hubby deleted all such sites/links and let the poor girl down easy. We started really concentrating on our marriage, dating etc....then about 3 months after the first incident we had some financial setbacks and I took my first job out of the home in 12 years. I don't know if it was because he felt bad about me working, and the fact that I worked the second and third shifts and he for the first time had total responsibility for our children for 8 hours a day. But I think the real reason was that he just gave into the temptation of a sexual deviation that he had not really worked out yet. It was just too enticing. So for about 2 weeks he again found a willing woman to have cybersex with then she started pushing for phone calls, then eventually a meeting....the meeting was what tipped me off...he really was bad about making excuses for an out of town trip...something he had never done except for work...and the job he held at the time did not include out of town trips. I was suspicious...so much that I, who was not the least bit computer literate...(felt I could blow up the computer if I hit a wrong button)...got on the computer, had my kids boot it up and show me the basics, then sent them to bed and for 4 hours with help from friends and family online learned how to trace, navigate and find any scrap of evidence that he left undeleted. Eventually I figured out what he was doing and who with. By the time I had her screen name she was online and I proceeded to confront her....she denied it at first, then apologized and promised to leave my husband alone...hubby was not expected until the next morning...but his guilt got to him and he couldn't stay with her all night (that's why she was online) He came home about 3 am just when I had finally gotten off the computer....I immediately confronted him and he never denied anything. We started the slow process of recovery, he cut all ties to her and all those sites again. This time he made a promise to talk to me if he was tempted and we would work through it together. All of this was about 2 years ago and we have really come out better in spite of all the pain. Hubby has stayed away from these sites and I have tried to understand what the attraction was...while I feel he could have gotten some use out of a little counseling one on one, I am happy with the progress we have made. Mostly I think we made it because he was so willing, and open to discussing the whole thing no matter how painful for both of us. Thank you for the chance to discuss this and for your site...it has been a tremendous help over these past few years.

My ex-spouse fervently denied everything until all the evidence was at hand. I don't know how long it lasted, but eventually the affair ruined our marriage. She did not "know" what she wanted but would not let go of the affair. Therefore, I did not have a choice but to let go of her. As far as I know, she is still in contact with him, but I do not suspect that they see each other anymore. By the way, we live in the South and the other person lives in the Northeast.

He was on the computer a lot summer '99 and was hiding it. In September, I found an email from her to him dated July 17, telling him she had found a furniture rental place for him, hope it would help, ended it with "I LOVE YOU." I called the place, furniture had been delivered in August and I got address. Went to the address, downtown, it was apartments, went across the street to my husband's office, very calm, and said, "We need to talk. Shall we do it here or go across the street to your apartment?" He said nothing, I asked what was going on, and he finally said he was getting ready to move out. That was the beginning of my hell. When I confronted him about the other woman, he said "she has nothing to do with this." When I asked him when he was planning to move out, his answer was "I hadn't thought about it." My answer, "Now that I know, I want you out now." It took 5 days, each day he would agree to tell our son he was moving, but then would say he hadn't planned to do it today. Since then, I became quite the detective. In January I had stopped by his apartment. He offered to go downstairs to the store to buy wine, and I tore through everything, finding a bank statement with account in his name only, airline tickets he didn't use in November and a picture of her in top dresser drawer, a baggage ticket in hall bathroom dated in December (from her city to ours) with her real name on it and an empty bottle of Viagra in his medicine chest, first filled in December. Took bottle, ticket and bank statement with me. I didn't let him know what I had found. The after 6 weeks, our son decided he wanted to see his dad, he had refused to see him. The following week-end, he told us he was going on a golf trip to Florida. I knew he was lying, did some checking and got him confirmed to her city, not Florida. Went to his apartment the night before to talk. He said he still didn't know what he wanted but did not want to file for divorce. He was content the way things were but there was no way I could continue to live in limbo having proof that he was going to see her the next day. Confronted him, told him I knew he wasn't going on golf trip, but going to see her. His response "You'd better leave." I told him if he was on the flight tomorrow night I would be seeing an attorney. He went that Friday and I signed the papers Monday. I had already been talking to an attorney and had everything ready to go before I confronted him. I felt I couldn't file without at least telling him that this trip would be the last straw for me, and give him the chance to at least cancel the trip and get some counseling. It's now April, the divorce is still going through. She was here again 2 weekends ago. The therapist my son and I are seeing has said "she's" just a diversion. My husband has intimacy problem, can't get close to anyone, why else would he pick someone 2000 miles away? There is so much more to my story...

My husband of 25 years began his pursuit of what he refers to as his "online friendships" over two years ago by placing an ad in the AOL personals and responding to ads that he found. He targeted the Florida area because (I strongly believe) he would go there every month or so on business. He exchanged photos, sent them gifts of clothing and intimate wear, and at least one sent him her bra.(?) I know he was sending them his original erotic stories written in chapters. (He has never shared them with me, but I did see part of one). Early in his online encounters he met an erotic dancer whom he sent many gifts to and attempted to have her meet him for a weekend while he was in Florida for a business trip....when I found the letter that expressed his regret that she had turned him down I was devastated and confronted him. He says this is all fantasy; and everything else is fantasy...the nights on the computer, gifts, phone calls and visits. (He did pursue this dancer, trying to see her a number of times while there in Florida, but she was not interested. He finally gave up on her about a year ago and began making more "online friends" ...many more whom he does speak to on the phone and I believe he sees when he is in Florida. One of them, about a year ago, was involved in sex chat IM...but she has in this past year contracted cancer and now he says she is a friend (he says they are all only friends) and that I should not be jealous. I could go on and on...I

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have been to counseling (by myself, because He "didn't need it"!) My husband has very serious health problems and I think that chasing girls is his way of escaping how awful he feels about his life and health. His online activity seems to have taken a less hurtful direction lately...but this online secret stuff has really taken its toll on me emotionally, physically and spiritually. I tried to change him...but have come to realize only I can change myself. I really do miss him so...all the secrets and lies have wounded us both. So many sad stories, but I suppose that without tears in the world there would also be no laughter. Thank you for giving us all this place to go so we know we are not alone.

Very devastating experience. It was so easy for him to do this and keep it secret. Wonder if he ever would have told me about it if I had not discovered it. Disturbing that it started in a "romance" chat room for married people...apparently filled with opportunities for infidelity. Equally upsetting is how he was able to rationalize that he wasn't really being unfaithful to me even after he began to talk with women on the telephone and then went as far as to actually meet a woman in a nearby town. He contends that he wasn't planning on leaving me (we've been married 22 years) or our three children but was intrigued by the excitement of a sexual encounter with another woman. He tells me that they never actually had intercourse but did touch each other intimately and have oral sex. I did want to know all the gross details. I am far from being over this. We are receiving marital counseling. I am 43 and he is 44 years old. I feel like I'm on an emotional roller coaster...trust is shattered and he wants my forgiveness. I find myself questioning him and wondering if he is telling me the truth or only what he wants me to know. I am trying to work this out without involving the children but I sense that they know something is wrong. You don't just throw away 22 years and the life that we have built together. We are trying to work this out but it's not easy.

Perhaps one of the more frustrating aspects of online affairs is that so many people ("professionals" included) do not believe that they are "true" affairs. One need only have lived through such an affair to know the devastation and personal anguish it causes and to then know it is "a real affair." I believe that (as you described it once in better terms) if it must be kept secret, it is an affair. I have learned that what starts online in many ways offers the next step into the reality of physical sex from what was once cyber sex. It seems almost like a testing of the water in a cold pool...first you put your toes in, then your leg, getting more and more "used to it"...then you jump in with your whole body. Another frustration is the fact that there is no way to compete with the fantasy world of cyber relationships or cyber sex...it is wonderful each time; it is fulfilling every time; and there is never a dish to wash or laundry to clean. It may seem to the cyber partners as a "perfect world." Both get to hide behind whatever "masks" they choose to wear. In my case, my spouse began online and moved into the real world. He was having an affair locally when he began his cyber-affairs, which then turned into real world affairs...in other words, he tested the waters all over the place! Since I was somewhat naive as I now look back, I didn't recognize anything amiss at first. My family actually "joked" about how much time he spent online and at the gym...and, well, you know what was happening online and how there was really no gym. Once I figured all this out...and it took me time and effort...the world as I knew it literally ended. It is a lesson I wish I never had to learn. Perhaps what you write and have written may serve to alert others sooner than my eyes were opened and to (in some sense) give them an awareness of what is to come. As they say, forewarned is forearmed...and for your effort there I am grateful.

When I began to suspect an affair, I confronted my spouse who denied it. I wanted to believe him, but more and more lies kept cropping up. I finally discovered three days unaccounted for during his "fishing trip" with his cousin and made a final confrontation. He refused to tell me where he'd been and I insisted that we both see separate counselors to determine if we wanted to stay married. He knew one of my conditions was that I be told the truth as to where he was. I made it clear very quickly that I wanted to work things out in our marriage. A few weeks later, he agreed and we attended joint counseling where he disclosed details of his affair. Those details were total lies. He'd told me it was all just for sex and with only one woman. I found a hotel receipt a week later (in a different city from where he'd said he'd been) and asked for the truth. He "came clean" or so he said. I realized the next day his story was still inconsistent and at this point found out he'd had an online affair just as characterized in your book "Monogamy Myth." He spent three months totally involved with his online lover and they met for sex 10—20 times. He says he ended it at their last meeting the day I confronted him because reality was starting to enter into the picture and he suspected he wasn't really in love. They continued to contact each other after this time and while I was waiting for him to decide if he wanted to stay married and tell me the truth. Finally during a phone call a week and a half after I confronted him, he ended the affair and told his lover he wanted to work on our marriage. He showed me how easy it is to meet people in chat rooms and explained some of the common acronyms (asl: age, sex, location), etc. My husband was actively seeking someone to have an affair with and his online activities made it very easy. Unlike most people, my sex drive skyrocketed after I found out about the affair. I knew intuitively that we had to improve our sex life immediately or we'd never make it. I also knew intuitively that I had to start having sex more for pleasure. It's only been a month since I confronted my husband and he already feels that everything he was seeking was already available to him within our marriage and he blew it. I think the affair had to happen because we both needed a major wakeup call. My early confrontations only drove my husband closer to his lover. I'm sorting through things and I think we'll be stronger than ever before.

We received a wakeup call about our marriage in January and began working in earnest reviving our nearly 25-year-old marriage. I felt that I was totally committed but that there were still ways he wasn't. For instance, I knew that he had an online woman friend. I was uncomfortable with the relationship, but he insisted she was a necessary friend and made it clear that if I made him choose, I'd lose. He had me convinced, because of a variety of events in my life and the lives of my family members that I was overreacting and reading more into his relationship than was really there. After he had left for 3 days at a church camp, I found an email that he had written her that proved without a doubt that he was still having an affair with this woman. I confronted him over the phone and spent the next 3 days home alone trying to figure out where to go from there. He has been home 4 days now and, blessedly, events have made it possible for us to be home without our daughter around. I feel confident that we still love each other deeply, that we both want this marriage to work, and that he is finally being totally honest with me. But we are not very far down the road yet and I cannot predict what will happen. There has been a lot of damage done here, to all three of us (I am including the other woman that he loves). I feel I am in the position of having to figure out how we got here, and how never to get here again, and also how to comfort my husband over the loss of his other love. I expect a real roller coaster ride. Already I've had days or parts of days when I feel the pain and anger so intently that I can't imagine moving on, and other days or parts of days that I am calm and clear and feel that I really understand some of what he was going through and how he could love another. Together or separately, somehow we will survive.

My husband and I have been married long-term (35+years). The woman he began having an affair with worked with him at the office. She is a divorcee with 2 grown boys, as are we. My husband and she began emailing each other--she is the information systems administrator and new how to engineer the connections, etc. She began sending emails to the house. I found out about it when my husband took off a week to stay home and help me recuperate from surgery. The emails kept coming and he wouldn't give me the password to access the mail. I was able to access the mail through the cache and then confronted him. (t was just as you describe as "knowing" but not knowing--this had been going on for years--I've felt stupid for not confronting him earlier--the emotional closing out is hard to confront a man when he is intent on leading a separate life. The woman is still mailing things and sending things anonymously (I guess she thinks I'm real stupid and can't figure it out since their affair lasted so long and I didn't know). My husband wants to just move on and doesn't realize that I need to process and talk out my feelings and emotions. He just feels so guilty and wants me to just "get over it." I'm having trouble doing just that, especially since I have not retaliated in any way against this lady or my husband. I teach school, and this week I received a newspaper article (full page ad) which tells how a teacher lost 70 lbs. with a handwritten note saying, try it, it works. Of course, it was mailed from a different city and the note wasn't signed and there was no return address and the address was typewritten on the envelope. I am having problems getting my husband to realize that I am still under siege from this affair. Thanks for letting me get this last incident off my chest.

According to my husband, they were just friends. After about a year of chatting, IM's and phone calls I found out it was more. I caught my husband in the basement in the middle of the night masturbating on the phone. He lied to me saying he was talking to a friend he met online. Over the next two months he continued to make contact with her and continued to lie to me about his relationship with the lady. I went out of town for a weekend and bugged our phone line. When I returned, the tapes confirmed my suspicions. On the tapes, my husband was masturbating. They were telling each other how much they loved and missed each other. I also got into my husband's screen name and found emails sent to each other. She talked about being his future wife and they had picked out names for their future children. I immediately changed all the locks on the house. During this time he phoned from work and I told him not to bother coming home. He immediately left work. I did let him in. He admitted everything even before I could present my evidence. This was such a shock to me. We are trying to work things out but it's been very difficult for me. Something about hearing your husband tell another woman how much he loves her leaves me feeling pretty empty inside. It been 3 months and I know he has tried to contact once. I don't know what the future holds but I am becoming stronger everyday. I have to for our daughter who is 5.

The Internet for my husband turned into a nightmare for me. I had never heard of "Sexual Addiction and NEVER imagined "Gary" to do what he has done. He is so addicted and into such perversion that he in soliciting sexual encounters through a sex site. He pays for the site. He now has a bisexual woman living with him and the two, together frequent Swinger Clubs. It is nauseating to discover your "Christian deacon husband" photographed nude with multiple partners. He apparently has NO FEAR of contracting any STDs and has gone from a loving husband, father, and Grandfather to a VERY SICK MAN. He had emotionally abandoned me 6 to 8 months prior, when I asked "about another woman." It was not only another woman, his secret dark life revealed bisexual partners, couples for "threesomes and moresomes." He is pathetic, and probably has a great prospect of getting AIDS and/or other STDs. Sexual Addiction is not a game, it has hurt and ruined our family

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and has torn apart a marriage of 26 years. I really never suspected and I did not know about the years of porn in his life. He is SICK and addicted and no one can make him see it. I am ashamed and devastated. What is ironic is that he is an Insurance agent and sells Life and HEALTH insurance. I want the world to know about SEXUAL ADDICTIONS. My therapist has told me that sexual addictions are harder to treat and cure than Crack Cocaine. It is serious, it is insane! A person who is addicted to SEX and refuses to seek special counselors for help, has set themselves up for a Life Sentence of Grief, Pain and Destruction if not a Death Sentence—from AIDS or Aids related illnesses.

Hardest time of my life for sure. 15 years married, used to be a drug addict until 7 years into marriage. Doing what she did to me back then. Let all family and friends know about this; she got really mad. Of course she thinks she has done nothing wrong, and tries to diminish me so she can justify herself. But it did not work. I told about this thing to all family and friends, and she got really mad. I also had a way to contact this guy, few times at phone, than chat room. He ended this relationship some time ago, but my wife was still contacting him over the phone. Then two days ago I followed her to a phone booth and busted her, called her mom and sisters and gave them this man's phone number and had them call him up. Has also been threatened not to answer my wife's calls. He then called me on my mobile phone and he swore that he had called the relationship over, and he had just talked to my wife over Internet. He had told her to forget about him because he moved on with his life. All this has happened last night. About the sex issue, we have been married 14 years and have a 15- year-old boy and an 10-year-old girl. It hurt but I think, considering all I did to her while I was heroin addicted, (things like stealing money from her and all kind of other things), I place this encounter like it happened before we had met. I mean people have more relations before they get married. I can consider this just like that, and hope it makes sense. Anyway, now this thing is definitely over, she has not talked to me all day today and slept on the couch last night after throwing shoes and lots of other stuff at me. She also says that I am never going to have her back. I think she hates me now, but it is ok, I am not giving up because I love her and found out more about myself and my wife in this last 7 months then in 14 years. Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to your work.

My husband's online affair was with an EX-Girlfriend from 30 years ago. This Ex-Girlfriend found my husband's email address on his Alumni High School website. She contacted my husband through emails and she initiated the online affair. In their emails they discussed a lot of how their love was back 30 yrs ago and how happy there were to have found one another again. Their emails were very intimate. My husband was honest to her about the fact that he was married (15 yrs) and that he and his wife were expecting their 4th baby in a month. This woman didn't care that he was married, nor did she care that his wife was pregnant with his forth child. All she cared about was her needs and how lonely she was and how much she loved him and that she has always loved him even all the years that they had been apart. She was very pushy in her emails and within a few weeks had talked my husband into calling her on the phone. After their phone call, they both emailed each other, stating things like what a rush it was to hear each other's voices and how they both felt that their relationship was growing. The EX-Girlfriend kept pushing him to meet her in person and how she longed to kiss him, touch him, make love to him. My husband always made up excuses "LIES" as to why he couldn't get together with her every time she would plan a meeting place. His lies were he told her he had 3 jobs and couldn't get time off of work. He would lie and tell her he had to leave

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the country on business for dates she would plan them to meet. I think my husband enjoyed the intimate attention he received by her emails but never had the intention of meeting her in person. Their online affair lasted 4 months and when I confronted my husband about her, he denied it all, even denied that she was ever even his girlfriend 30 years ago but only admitted that she was a girl he grew up with as a child. Once my husband knew that I knew about their online affair, he immediately ended it by emailing her and telling her it was over and that he was a happily married man and that his family comes first and always will. It has been over 6 months since their online affair ended, and to this day my husband still denies that he ever did this. But I know the whole truth, I read ALL the emails, which hurt me beyond belief, and I don't think I will ever get over this pain, it eats away at me daily. The thing that hurts the most is he denied it, after all! How do you forgive someone who won't admit to doing anything wrong, even when caught red-handed. I still love my husband very much, even told him if he was that unhappy in our marriage, perhaps we should get a divorce, so he could be with her. He denies there ever was a her and says it's me he loves and wants to spend the rest of his life with.

At first he denied that it was an affair since no physical contact was made. But after sharing your articles with him about online affairs, he admitted to the affairs. He still won't give me details that I feel I need.

For those who are desperate and want sex for sex, the addicts to sex are advertising blatantly in these forums.

My spouse began this when he began to travel and was alone at night. He began out of curiosity, loneliness and sexual frustration. Unfortunately, he became addicted to this and it began within two months and became a nightly ordeal. He did not participate in this at home initially, but after a year he changed jobs, still traveling, but working from home, then he began getting online during the day when he was at home and would have online sex occasionally and but would usually have phone sex, because he found the sounds more stimulating and satisfying. This went on for three years and over this period, he had online/phone sex with over 50 women (all but 6 were married) and met 5 women and had sex (oral) with 3. This came to a halt when I developed a condition which was originally believed to be herpes (thankfully it was not). At this point he confessed everything and swore not to do this again. We began marriage counseling immediately and continued for 2 years. During this time we moved, one condition of my staying with him was he would get off the road immediately and if he did not, I would not stay. He did get a job and has been promoted which has resulted in another move. He is a changed person now and says he is very sorry and regrets the choices he made, but is thankful for the changes in our relationship. I find this difficult to accept because the only change I see is the change in him and his determination to make our marriage work. He is certainly more committed now and we are Christ centered in our relationship and do couples devotions together. One of the things which has come out of this is that he was unhappy with himself and did not have anyone to talk to and was not feeling loved because I had refused to have phone sex with him (this was my own issue with "dirty sex" and not what nice girls do). He felt safe with these women (according to him) because of the anonymity of the situation and the individuals, yet in listening to him, he had names, phone numbers, addresses and family situation, Hello??? According to his recount of this, he was always honest with them and most were no more interested in leaving their husbands than he said he was of leaving me. Yet several of the

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relationships lasted six to twelve months over the phone/online. Interesting was the fact that any he saw, the relationship ended with or without sexual contact. In the beginning he was defensive about these women stating he was selective and didn't just pick anyone. When asked about his criteria, he said he was looking for married women, 25-55 (he was 42 when this started) and who presented as educated women. He thought they were all "nice women" and I was unfair when I referred to them as sluts or whores. He felt they were online because their husbands did not understand or try to meet their needs. And no they had not shared their feelings with their husbands anymore than he had with me. He accepted all they said and saw all of them as his friends who understood and wanted to be there for him. He even had the nerve to tell me they served as counselors to him. Really how does this happen that your mistresses are your counselors. The perplexing thing to me is that he chose women who smoked (he hates smokers), women who ran around on their husbands (something he has stated disliked for) and women who were overweight (he complains about my excess weight). Of course he states he was not EVER looking for a replacement for me nor did he ever think of leaving me. He was not looking for love, only sex. Well after two years of this ending, we are together and our marriage is better. For him, it is as though this has not happened. For me, it is constantly coming up as a negative reminder due to everything in my life, the traveling, the places we go, things we see and most of all, the daily experiences and situations we find ourselves in. To me his actions were personal and did reflect negatively about me and it has been a pain I find it hard to live with even today. Most days I am fine and can do well, however I find quiet time is hard for me and it is difficult for me to be away from him. I wish I could understand what he and the women were looking for if it were not a full blown affair. He still denies he had an affair, he only had SEX and that is different because he was not emotionally involved. Hello. This is one of the worse dangers of the Internet. It has allowed the worst of inhibitions to be acted out, supposedly in the safe environment of the Internet, but as we all know, it has led to a feeling of safety which leads to moving outside the online status. I pray that God will continue to bless us and allow us to both heal so that we can live our lives without this again.

My wife's online affair started in a chat room discussing a TV show. We had moved to a new town four years earlier and she had absolutely no friends. She was not happy in our marriage, mostly because she had transferred all her angry feelings for her mother to me. Her mother had always oppressed her and now that we were over a thousand miles from her mom, I became her oppressor—she was addicted to having one. We had had financial fights (I save and she spends), but worst of all for her was that being a mother turned out to be a lot more work than she had expected. After our first child, who had severe colic, she said she wanted no more. I coaxed her into a second and looking back at the diary she kept during her pregnancy, she wrote that she never wanted to be pregnant again, that she hated her husband, and that once she would be able she would leave me. The only thing she ever wrote in her diary related to hate and anger. The year after our second was born I was desperate to win her over and make her happy. I sent her on a solo trip overseas to visit her relatives—something we could hardly afford. She had a wonderful trip with her English relatives, but on her return to Canada she was angry at her family and was feeling very superior. I was able to get a home computer from work and encouraged her to use it and the new Internet features—at that time I had never heard of Internet affairs. I was desperate for her to not hate us, but she was very indifferent. In the chat room, she met a university student who was a year older than herself. She was 29 and he was 30—I was 34. For at least a month they responded to each other's postings about the TV show and eventually had these discussions on personal email. I

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was aware that she was emailing another man, but I was somewhat blind to what this could lead to. Their discussions became very emotionally deep, such as the meaning of life and how lonely they both felt being prisoners of life. These discussions I did not initially know about. Although I was happy that she was making connection with other persons—something I had been trying to push her towards for years—I was not comfortable that it was another man. I convinced myself that I was being needlessly jealous and that women could have men as friends as well. After all I worked with women at the office that I could call friends. At work I would call home and found that the line was always busy. Three to five hours a day. What I did not know was that they were also having telephone discussions. My wife told me that they wanted to meet in a few months time. I went into a long trance. Eventually they would talk on the phone on Friday nights—my wife would unplug all the phones and lock herself into the second living room. One day I reconnected a phone without a mouth piece and heard 30 seconds of their discussions—they were both masturbating as they talked about what they would do to each other if they were together. I couldn't listen any more, I hung up the phone and walked around shaking. I was very confused—I felt that she did not love me and that there was no hope for us. We had two kids, 4 and 2, and I was not sure what was going to happen. I confronted her, took out the book called "Open Marriage" from the library and asked her if this is what she wanted? She was very much taken to this person and in no way did she want to end her discussions and her phone affair. One day she told me she was going to meet this person. She left on a Saturday morning and came back on Sunday afternoon. It was one of the most difficult moments in my life. I snooped in her things, found Polaroid's of his privates, audio tapes of him masturbating for my wife, letters stating she had done the same for him, etc. She came back and said that she was sorry. But it did not stop there. I was totally devastated and in shock. The next week I called our family doctor to tell her what was happening. She told me to come and see her after work. After listening for a bit she said flat out "your letting her do it," "you should be angry," and "you have a right to be angry." Immediately she set me up with a psychologist/family councilor that she knew and wanted me to talk my wife into going with me for counseling. My wife was outraged that I had reported the goings-on to our doctor, but I can tell you, it was the wisest move I have ever made. My wife consulted with her lover about the proposed counseling which he cautioned her against, since the counselor would try to break their relationship. This enraged me. We had so many fights. She wanted me to let her continue with her relationship until it naturally died. I demanded that it stop. I felt that if her relationship naturally died, that she would only be staying with me because I was there. I told her that I could never accept that and that it would cause me to be forever insecure. When the fights were going full steam, she became very vicious with her attacks—she said that I was ugly, that he was a better lover, that he had sex for three to five hours at a time, that he made her feel special—something I would never be able to do. Yet she didn't want to leave, but she sure wanted to hurt me for trying to make her end her relationship. Eventually I broke down and cried uncontrollably in the bedroom and she listened at the doorway. This happened a second time and she started to realize that she was hurting me. Our counselor, meanwhile, had her hands full trying to make me understand that these things happen, and in front of me explained to my wife that the more conservative choice is sometimes the best one. I was burning, being depicted as the conservative family man, while the other as pure excitement. I was hardly cooperative when these tones were used, so finally our counselor recommended that we have a trial separation. I flat out said that I did not want that, I simply wanted this affair to end. At our councilors recommendation we had arranged for babysitting service twice a week to give my wife a break from the toddlers. Every one of these breaks, I later found out, she spent with her lover. Great. I was pulling my hair

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out. I told my wife that I did not want a trial separation and asked her if she did, she said no. One day, after one of the babysitting days, my wife got off the computer and forgot to turn it off. I was shaking as I went to look at what she had been reading and writing. She had written to him about the afternoon they had spent together videotaping themselves having sex. I snapped. I told her that those tapes had better be there on my return from work the next day and the affair ended or she was out the door the next night. She was shaking. I thought this was the end of our marriage. The tapes were there the next day, destroyed, and she said she was ending the affair. I know that she saw him at least one more time after that, but then it was ended. How long did it take to heal? The fact that I'm writing this six years later is an indication that I'm not yet over this ordeal. Did it make our marriage stronger? I'll say that she is now an active participator in our marriage and that she no longer treats me as her enemy, but rather as her friend. As for me, I have no sympathy for any of her whining, which I quickly snuff out when they come up. If she barks at me and I think it's unreasonable, I immediately bark twice as loud. It seems to get things over with and avoids her from taking a complaint and turning it into a malady. We don't talk about the affair, but I think about it every week. I wish the other man dead each time. Now I don't have an Internet connection or account! Probably never will again. My wife has now made friends in our community and the fact that the kids have been in school during the last five years has also widened her circle of acquaintances. The principal reason that I did not end our marriage is because of our children. My parents were divorced because of my mother having had an affair and I wanted to avoid the same outcome. As I look at my kids that are now 8 and 10, and my wife whom I love, I know I made the right choice. I will never in my heart ever forgive her, but I don't bring it up either. Sometimes, I think that I want to have an affair of my own so that I won't feel so slighted. Maybe I will one day.

Chat rooms, IRC, ICQ are nothing more than electronic bar scenes. I know my husband would have never started an affair with someone "in the flesh." The fake intimacy and ease of saying things you wouldn't to a newly met stranger are what makes online affairs so easy to start, maybe without realizing it. There is also the addictive nature of the Internet and the ease of the secrecy. My husband "talked" to several women over 2-3 year span from all over the world and the country, and I now know those can be classified as affairs. The last one lived 3 states and 600 miles away. She was the first to actually come to meet my husband and then the fuse was lit. The sexual tension was so great, they immediately started sexual touching as soon as they met. You asked if they were looking for an affair. I believe the other woman was. My husband "met" her on IRC, she was looking for "an old male friend" who had moved to our state and my husband responded to her. I wish I had known about "emotional affairs" and how dangerous this chatting stuff was. I had superficial knowledge of it, but prided myself in knowing that I was secure enough not to be threatened by it. If I had known how dangerous it was, I would have taken action two years before the physical affair happened. However, I don't think my husband would have believed it a problem and probably would have refused to go for marriage counseling.

My husband and I have for many years faced financial problems, but were working hard to buy a house...at the very moment when the house sale fell through and we lost money in the process...my husband and I had to figure out what we were going to do, i.e. find other housing etc., he took his wedding ring off and we separated within 3 weeks... reconciled in 1-1/2 months, but the online affair still persisted... until I asked him to leave since he refused to end it with her. We have been intimate during the entire separation, and he has been living with her since the separation...while

telling me that he needs space and wants to have time to think. Meanwhile, I have become pregnant. a high risk pregnancy at age 40, a pregnancy we wanted many years ago...however, our youngest child is 18 and headed for college. This was more than unexpected, however my health is in jeopardy with this child. This has not changed the circumstances between my husband and I, he still remains living with his online relationship, who by the way is 2 years older than our oldest son....she is 25 and a single mother and my husband is 40 this year. He was lead to believe her to be someone other than what many others have witnessed differently. While he is at work during the day, she has sent email messages from his email address portraying herself as him. She sends me messages...regarding our son, has tried to contact our children, buying them gifts and shows up to sporting events and has taught her son to call my husband "daddy." My children do not want anything to do with this woman, and my husband believes that she isn't looking to marry him. She has repeatedly referred to me when talking to others as the "soon-to-be-ex" when he continually says he is not saying this at all. He has not wanted to file divorce, nor wants me to. Furthermore he doesn't want me to leave the area of which I have said I would do. My husband and I have lost many things from the effects of this.... he lost his job and unable to attain another full-time job since (6 months now.) With no income coming in, I was faced with having to sell one of our vehicles to pay bills, was looking seriously at being evicted from our home, and since my husband was not able to meet the car payments, we lost our second family vehicle through repossession. As a result of this he travels by bus to see us (weekly), and he spends weekends with me... Being faced with devastating circumstances, I don't make any plans beyond the next day. My husband and I have been spending these weekends going out to dinner or other places, courting if you will, or just having him here for dinner and the grandkids here to spend time as a family. He refuses to recognize the effects this has had on our life, and what damage has been done. I have never wanted my husband and I to divorce, and still don't...our wedding anniversary is tomorrow... Aside from the problems of my pregnancy, I suffer from insomnia, and have been emotionally unable to cope with the day most times... I seriously want my marriageand to reconcile. I believe that marriage counseling would only be beneficial for us....however, he is not open to this at all...he blames me for this and yet verbally says he is not. I am at a loss as to what to do.

The amount of pain caused was unbelievable. Affairs of the heart hurt far more than a random act of sex. When someone's spouse gets involved in such a highly-charged fantasy-driven relationship it becomes more of an addiction than a reality. Lying becomes so easy to keep the addiction alive all the while telling themselves that they're really not doing anything wrong because there is no physical contact involved. After having found out about my husbands affair, nothing is the same, part of you wants to believe that it's not that bad because there was no physical contact involved, but on the other hand, it is simply devastating to realize that your spouse of more than 20 years could think so little of you, and lie to your face, and jeopardize the marriage for someone who only exists via words on a screen. Do people online really believe everything that they read? Are they that desperate or lonely that they will accept the false reality being typed to them? When people get involved in such situations they are assuming that the other party is not falsely representing who or what they are, when people can't look each other face to face and talk they can't see the other person's eyes, or hear inflections in the voice, what about sarcasm? All of these can hardly be conveyed using a computer. Modern technology has made it possible to communicate with people all over the globe with the stroke of a button, yet, never have couples been so far apart living under the same roof. Everything in life has a price, it appears that online communicating has got people chatting with each other as a distraction of our real lives, the real price that is paid here are the

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families of these chatters. The fallout after an online affair is so far reaching. How do you explain to your child that daddy is in love with a person on the computer screen? What kind of example is this setting... after 8 months of harrowing pain and suffering the conclusion I have come to is that there is no way to make sense of such foolish behavior. My pain and my child's pain are still with us each day, though I stayed with my husband, the innocence of us was lost. Online cheaters are very, very selfish people. The fact that they choose to use this method over really having a genuine real time person shows the lack of backbone. These selfish people want to have their cake and eat it too. These selfish people also believe and create only what they want to hear from the online affair.

My husband plays an online game. We had a brief crisis in our marriage at which point he met someone in the game. They began an online affair and she almost immediately planned a trip, 6 weeks in the future, to meet him. He gave me a story about how he was going to spend his week's vacation (cabin) but went to spend it with her in a hotel. I checked his Internet account a couple days after he left, not really sure why because I never would have suspected this of him. I found the shocking evidence and immediately called his cell phone. He returned home in tears, eager to reconcile and disbelieving that he could have done something like this. She tried to contact him a few times but he was adamant about closing the door on this secret second life he had constructed. It had gone so far as his telling her "he hadn't love me in years" and that it was only a matter of time before we divorced—in fact had told her that he was planning for sometime in June to leave me. The crisis that had initially started the affair was brief and well over by the time they met. He says that he cringes when he thinks of all the things he did and said (slept with her twice) but as to why he didn't stop things before they reached such a point, he says that it was easier just to go with it rather than tell her he was not going to go through with it. And that on some levels he felt like he wanted to do something "for him."

We have been married 10+ years and have 3 kids. Most of our years together, we've worked separate shifts. We had grown apart in a lot of ways. He and I both marvel though at the coincidences that got him into an affair, something that is simply against his personal values. He met JUST the right kind of person at JUST the right time. And she was willing to spend \$1000+ to meet him, he did not take an active role in their meeting other than to pick her up at the airport and tell me a lie as to how he was going to spend his week's vacation. Although the experience has been simply awful to go through, this has made both of us realize how important we are to each other and to re-evaluate our own behaviors in our marriage. We have been in counseling since it happened and both are trying very hard to be a "couple" again rather than two people who happen to be married. The difference in our marriage is profound. He still plays the online game but we both realize now that his excessive play time was an escape from a life that he was not happy with. He plays far less and is very concerned that it does not bother me when he does play. He is becoming re-involved in our household and kids' lives. And I, for my part, am being much more giving than I was before. A big part of him felt very used by me for many years, he felt that he was only a paycheck to me. We both had fault in this and we are both trying to change the things that were destructive to our relationship.

They both lied to each other about things, and they both cut me down, she also attacked me after I found out, saying things like I was a fat pig, stupid, and a shag and that she was so much better than me, my husband sent her a picture of me. Also she was married with two kids!

My husband was very depressed and was having difficulties at work. When I found the evidence of the online affair, it was the day he was meeting the woman at a hotel. I searched all his files and credit card statements to find that he had been using Internet porn and visiting strip clubs from time to time. I was shocked and surprised because he could have told me these things and he chose to keep this all secret. I think that this hidden life helped to set the affair all up. I have been reading about sex addiction and many of the things he has told me are attributed to sex addiction. If it had not been for the Internet, he wouldn't have been able to find a willing stranger so quickly. He just wanted sex (no emotion at all)...he found the women and the one he met in dating clubs and such.

After I found out about my husband's online affair and subsequent "sex chat room activities," I gave him some insight as to why I think he "went there." I asked him if he would ever go into an Adult bookstore, a triple-X movie or a "brothel." "Of course not!" he exclaimed, "Someone might have seen me." Exactly!" But sitting at his computer, in his own home, with his wife in the next room, watching TV, all of the above was merely a "click" away. AND it was a "secret." AND it hurts as badly as if he had actually visited all those places IN PERSON

My husband is going to see her this weekend to end it with the other woman. I have heard this before, but he feels it is time he ends this and he wants to get back to our marriage and our life prior to the chat rooms. He has learned a lot about the entrapment of the online contact and sexual part of it. We have been married 26 years and this is very devastating to me, he is currently living in his own apartment but told me 2 nights ago he is going to end it with her for the final time and wants to move back home so we can begin the process of recovery and rebuilding. I am not quite sure why he has to go for the entire weekend to tell her this, makes me question some of the 'ending it for good.' But he wants to do it face-to-face this time with her instead of over the phone or computer. I only hope he means it and she is whatever enough to let it go and let him return to his wife, family and best friend. She has had 5 affairs that she admitted to my husband before him and finally divorced her husband just recently. She was in the process of divorce when she and my husband hooked up. I know he told her nothing but LIES about us and our relationship (he has told me so), and I have no clue whether she has been truthful or a liar also. Your article on online affairs is so absolutely correct. I gave a copy of it to my counselor that I have been seeing for that past 6 months due to this affair. Thank you for all your help.

He would chat late at night while I was in bed. He started with pornography online. He chatted with at least 2 women. One was married that he later met. She probably didn't have an affair after she saw that he was black. He had another online affair that I know of. He never told me but I think he may have had sex with her. He was more verbally passionate with them than he was with me. They later corresponded on email.

This online affair ruined my marriage by ruining all trust. He moved out of the house because of the other woman and we are now in the stages of a divorce, because he fails to admit that what they have is a threat to the marriage. And also fails to admit that there is anything wrong with it, even though they now live in the same apartment complex. And she moved from another state to be closer to him.

My husband has had two online affairs. The first he ended as he felt guilty and did not want to harm what we have had for 27 years. The second started two years later when he met another teacher at a science convention he was presenting at. She contacted him a few months later for teaching information and it started from there. When I found out about it, I inquired further to find out they would meet at other courses and conferences and have sex there. Coming home to two unsuspecting spouses each time. My dilemma is that while I have divorced my husband despite his promises of fidelity from now on, he continues to have a relationship with this teacher. He believes that since our marriage is over he might as well continue. This is accurate but I wonder whether I should let the other husband continue on in the fog as his wife attends these science conferences and courses to merely sleep with my ex. I don't know the proper thing to do? I wished someone had told me the truth.

My wife tried to pick a name nobody in the chat rooms was using, seemingly innocuous. Alas, a surfer with a similar screen name found something in common with my wife; today they share a common residence.

My spouse sought out women on the AOL 'member directory' who were single and had 'sex' somewhere on their profile. He was arranging to meet one woman when I confronted him. He had several online affairs over a period of 6-7 months.

What people do not realize is although there may not be physical contact, sometimes emotional and intimate things that are said hurt your spouse as much as an actual physical relationship.

Your spouse should be all you need in a man or a woman. When you go outside of the marriage and rely on another person other than your spouse, you make your spouse feel inadequate. It doesn't matter that it's just online, just sharing private information with anyone of the opposite sex and caring on as if you want more fulfillment from this person emotionally and with sexually explicit language makes your spouse feel bad! PERIOD!

My discovery of the affair was by finding a voicemail from the online person -- when confronted, it supposedly ended, yet I found out 2 years later that emails continued and may continue even now (2 more years later). In the interim, another affair (this time in real life) started and has since ended. I view his online affair as a precursor to the real life one.

I would have to say this affair was the result of a depression for both of these people, every time he confessed, he would dump her and try to make a new start. They became each others comfort zone, the one who wouldn't criticize. They would pat each other and have pity parties because their spouses weren't making life easy for them. There are so many things to tell.....I don't know where to begin and this is not the place for it, I suppose... I do hope you will be devoting time in this book to teach spouses how to find things on the computer and catch their mates before it goes too far. sometimes a bat to the head can wake them up b4 it goes too far. I have learned my way around a computer and can tell so many tricks on how to discover what is going on... and even though it is in print, they will still deny, deny, deny... but they will know and be able to make decisions based on fact.

These so many opportunities to become trashy nowadays, I'm becoming slow to realize that my wife is interested in these types of relationships (YUK).

At first my husband denied everything and didn't tell me the truth until he was going to leave me to be with this person. We decided on counseling instead and after 18 months are still working to put this marriage back together. During this process he said many cruel things to me that I find hard to forget. The hurt is still with me. I also felt like I had to compete with his ideal relationship formed online. It was impossible to compete with his fantasy. That competition caused more pain and anguish. I have problems trusting him again and I often wonder how long it will take or if it is now impossible. My feelings of rejection run deep and the details are too extensive for this comment section.

It is my opinion that the Internet has destroyed and will continue to destroy many marriages in the years to come. It has been almost three years since my husband's affair, and I am still having trouble dealing with it. Nothing is the same anymore; it never will be.

He was actively seeking the other woman out. He used the online activity as a way to escape from his problems and to escape from reality. Most of the online activities happened when I was sleeping. He would tell me that he needed to do some job searching via the Internet, but that he worked best in the early morning hours (1 a.m. to 6 a.m.). Using this deception of being at his peak at this time helped him to carry on his online affair. The other woman worked at the answering service from midnight til 8 a.m. It is often slow at the answering service at this time, thus she used this time to carry out her online affair.

This affair started face to face and went to cyber because of distance. She lives in Canada and he lives in California.

I find it interesting that most men don't consider online sex talk, an affair. That's it's no big deal. It becomes an addiction though. My husband would often spend 6 hours or more online, especially at night. It has killed my marriage and now I'm only here because of my kids.

This whole thing has ripped my heart in two. My husband and I have talked about what took place and it has sure let us both know what areas we were lacking in. I do know my husband loves me and I'm glad he decided to open up finally; I may have even open up myself better to understand him I don't think I was always willing to listen to what I was doing wrong.

I think the one thing that is so insane and damaging is the rationalizing that comes with it. For example: "It's not like I was actually going to meet her or do anything with her. It's not a REAL affair. That kind of thinking really drove me crazy! He honestly didn't believe he was doing anything wrong and couldn't understand my reaction. The sad thing is, he is still trying to meet someone online.

Ongoing affair, 2 years since first physical contact. On checkout out the male "other" party, he has had a history of many affairs, and brief marriages for money, until the money is gone. Wife has been informed of all info that I have found, but he is a smooth seducer and has a line for every accusation. 2 of his ex-wives have even traveled over 300 miles to warn my wife of him. He is just

too smooth and wife just won't let go. I have stopped making issue of the events and life has gotten better between us, but the affair keeps ongoing.

Online affairs are very real...and very painful. Even if actual sexual contact is not made, it is just as devastating as real infidelity. Betrayal feels the same no matter how it is thrown at you.

I filled out your survey although I was not involved in a conventional marriage. However, I was living in a committed partnership with another woman. We even decided to have a child together. She became the stay at home mother and had little in her life she felt in control of. She has since told me this is why she also believes this took place. She left my son and I and moved cross-country to be with this other woman that she met in the chat room. She is, however, wanting to come back and try to start again.

The online affair has been over for two years now and we have returned to an improved relationship. My spouse was willing to give up the affair to retain our relationship; he did this for me, even though he still felt that he could continue both relationships. I don't feel that he even really accepted this as an affair, but used this definition to "humor" me. The only reason that they didn't meet was geography, it was planned and that's when it was fully disclosed. Ah, the tangled webs we weave!

I'm in the military and at the time of the affair I was away from my wife for three months. My wife had just found out about online chat a few months before I left for the three months. I noticed that she would chat with men. I would tell her to be careful because I thought chat could be dangerous. She would say that she was just having fun joking with them. But after I left she decided to meet one guy to introduce him to one of her friends, but her and the guy ended up together. She broke it off when she decided that she was wrong for doing this. Now she has decided not to work any more and devote her time to me and our life together. I'm still not sure if it will work out but I have decided to try. The worst part about this is I'm not sure if it was because of me, my job, her or chat

She was his first love and she sought him out through the Internet to his location, appeared at his office on an alleged vacation, then the email, photos, etc. I put my foot down, had him stop, but he felt it only chit chat, but the one email I intercepted had definite innuendoes towards far more than chit chat. She happens to be a college professor in your field and felt she was doing NO wrong. There's still a twinge of mistrust when my husband uses the computer.

I think you have to expand your definition of 'affair.' I don't know if there were sexual conversations, but I do know that there was a definite sense of emotional intimacy. That was more devastating to me than just 'sex'. He was giving 'her' the good part and I was stuck with the dip-spitting, beer drinking, lump with a remote sitting in an easy chair. He no longer has access to the passwords for the computer. Solved? I doubt it, but at least I'm no longer a computer widow.

Wife blames husband's lack of intimacy—sought from someone else vs. confronting husband directly.

My husband had physical encounters with multiple people he met online, which started with just "chatting." He had been addicted to pornography long before the computer.

Some people do not consider online affairs to be infidelity... and certainly not to the same degree as a physical sexual relationship with someone other than your spouse. But I believe online affairs are infidelity -- the offending spouse is sharing an intimate part of themselves as well as their time and emotional energies with someone other than their spouse. It is a true betrayal and deeply wounds the innocent spouse when discovered.

My Husband had several online partners. All went at least as far as phone sex and regular phone conversations. I only know of one that became physical. Thank God she lives 800 miles away. He even chatted in men masturbation rooms and had phone sex and phone conversations with some of them. It is a very scary world to me, filled with incredible deceit. My husband says it is a culture all its own. Pseudo-intimacy and a system of honor among thieves. I found out about the online stuff first and then the rest was uncovered. It has been the darkest year of my life. I am recovering but I hate the Internet. Interesting that I found your site. It was a life-line to me early on. Thanks

This online affairs are harmful to the family of the married person involved in this affair and the way I see it with my spouse he is addicted to going online, not knowing I know what he's doing but he is on denial, period. It's painful for my side; I'm in emotional distress about this. I don't know how long I can take this. I'm afraid our marriage might end because of this affair and we have two wonderful children who will suffer because of this online affair.

The other woman messaged my spouse out of the blue. For a few months they exchanged IM intermittently, although there was a period of about 2 months when there was no contact (probably she did not have computer access during that time). About four or five months after she first contacted him, the relationship turned into cybersexual. The graphic content of the emails shocked the hell out of me when I found out (I had seen a "clean" email he sent to her on our AOL account and had some suspicions; one night I stole his office keys and went into his office to check his file cabinets and computers and found the print-outs of some of the IMs along with nudes of her--the confirmation was devastating and shockingly graphic such that I feel/felt I did not even know the man who had typed those things to a stranger). He claims they never had sex, but from his emails I told him it was not for lack of trying. He would let her know he was coming into town, but she would find some reason not to show up. He claims he was never serious, this was all a game. Needless to say, his "game" was not one I would have thought to play. Indeed, even in the darkest moments of the marriage, I never contemplated straying--even via email. It has been less than one month since all of this has come out--there are days I want to strangle him for being so reckless and thoughtless with his marriage and with our children's futures. But, we are working on everything. He is beyond repentant, but some days--like last night--it is just not enough for me. Some days I am feeling the pain anew.

I think People think that it is not a affair or wrong because there is not contact but if you are having sex and it's not with your partner and not alone, then you're cheating and it takes away from any affection the other person could get. I also think the other person must feel so alone because they feel embarrassed or alone that no one would understand like how I feel. It hurts

After meeting with his online "love" 4 times in person my husband decided that he should change our entire lives for her. He had been going through a difficult period of depression prior to his affair. He was already suffering from mild depression a few months before his affair, and then his mother passed away which only made things worse for him. Our schedules became such that I was away from home all day at work and he worked from early afternoon until midnight, leaving a lot of free time for his computer. I think he was lonely and depressed and ripe to hear the right things. Unfortunately he heard, or read the right things from his online lover, who then became his real life lover. We were separated for a month and a half. He moved back home a month ago. I tried my best to handle things mentally, but could not cope with the devastation of this and ended up hospitalized for depression myself. While I was hospitalized he came back home to take care of our 8 year old. He says that he wants to try to work things out, but he isn't sure what he wants. I, of course wonder whether he came back because of guilt. He says he isn't sure about his feelings for me anymore. In his eyes she's "perfect" and he believes he is in love. And after a 28-year marriage I don't quite know how to compete with that perfection.

I think it is easier for people to do this than an affair in the flesh affair. First, because they can present themselves as they think they are...not always a true picture. Second, I believe that the fantasy is very exciting to these people. I also think that the women are not looking for friends...they are looking for a man...period...and it is much easier to snag one this way, especially since the real spouse is not seen or heard. The real spouse becomes a phantom, if you will. If these people bothered to lift up the phone, then maybe what they are doing...the pain they are causing another person...that they are hurting children as well...would become real to them. They don't...because they are selfish and completely self-centered.

I still don't fully understand why she continues with this issue. We have even separated for 6 months. Now she is home and is miserable. I love my wife but I value her happiness. I don't know if our marriage of 12 years will last or not. I just pray that she will find something in me to fill the void she feels by his not being there for her anymore.

Because sexual contact does not occur, the parties involved often perceive their actions as harmless or "just a bit of fun," which has very serious consequences whether the involved parties choose to believe it or not. There are a lot of lonely, unhappy people who seek to use the Internet as a substitute for dealing with their problems,

My husband just wants to move on with our marriage and doesn't want to discuss the affair anymore. I still feel betrayed, after 16 years of what I thought was a happy marriage. He refuses to go to counseling, saying he is dealing with it. I did go to counseling for myself immediately, and he agreed to go at first, but has not followed through and says he doesn't 'need' counseling. I feel this could occur again, because he hasn't dealt with whatever it was that made him have this affair. I'm not sure what the answer is, but while I love my husband I am scared. This is the first time this has happened I am sure, but I feel he won't look at his feelings or past events in his life either that may have precipitated this. His parents each had an affair when he was young (his father) and then when he was 18 years old. They are still together. Sometimes I think this is genetic, but rationally I know this behavior is learned. What to do?

I've known about this for 3 months... it has been the most devastating event in my life. I never knew what "true" emotional pain was until this happened to our marriage. It affects your mind, body, heart and soul. Most definitely a true test of your love for the Lord.

My therapist keeps telling me it was all a fantasy, but the pain is very real to me. My husband no longer goes to chatrooms, at least that is what he tells me. Will I ever trust him again... probably not. Unfortunately, my youngest daughter, who is quite computer savvy, found his email ID and told me about the affair. He has caused so much pain in this family it is hard to understand why I decided to work on my marriage. I believe the bottom line is I still love my husband and did not want to dissolve the marriage, for the sake of my children and us. He has admitted it was a big mistake, a mistake that will take a lifetime to heal. I often wonder if the other person is online searching for him, hoping he will contact her again. My only thought is I hope she recognizes the damage she has done and asks God for forgiveness. I have no sympathy for her, and hope she is in more pain then I and my children.

Just a comment or two...my spouse never had an attachment to just one person on the net...he had many, many different "friends," some lasting as long as a few months...but his activities covered a number of years before I even had a clue... We are working through this, and we are coming out stronger for it, although it has been a rough road, and the ONLY way a couple can recover is if BOTH are willing... There is a proliferation of this kind of infidelity...and each month I add to the growing list of online resources, forums, clubs, and email lists dealing with this kind of betrayal...

My husband was going to gay chat rooms that catered to people from our immediate area. My family saw what he was doing before I did, because he did not know he was on their buddy lists and could be tracked. I was humiliated and devastated. Then I learned he'd had an affair with another woman about a year before the chat room fantasies. It's been months, and I still feel terrible. I'm receiving psychiatric care, medication and counseling in addition to marriage (?) counseling with my husband. He apologizes, but he is rather cavalier about the whole thing. He does not have empathy for my feelings, either. He sees my devastation, my complete breakdown, and he is unmoved. He says I should not feel the way I do. We are both alcoholics, but I am in recovery. He says he can "control" his drinking. He has also been emotionally abusive to me our whole marriage. Now that I've been sober a year, I see how he has manipulated me and controlled our marriage. He is very kind right now, but like the drinking, I have no assurance that his aberrant behavior won't recur. If he can control his drinking, why didn't he all those years we drank together? If he can control his behavior now, why didn't he while he was haranguing, berating, deflecting, accusing, confusing and demeaning me for 13 years? My husband must be a sadist. And I'm an idiot for staying. You may use my comments in your book.

I am still hurting over this, I would to love to trust her again...

This affair was an old girlfriend from high school. Think he was trying to recapture his youth. Can't believe how stupid and childish he became during this time.

I have given my wife three chances to change this addictive and destructive behavior. This is her last....

My husband's boss told him about net-meeting and before too long, my husband realized he had a 'knack' for sex talk. He was talking to six at one time. He met two of them, one which turned sexual when he was on a business trip in her part of town. However, had this NOT turned into physical sex, the betrayal was still as painful and real when I was under the impression it was just cyber. The sites and chat rooms that encourage this stuff are numerous and while my husband now sees how sleazy and wrong it was, at the time he could 'rationalize' it because so many others were doing the same thing. We're working on our marriage one day at a time. When the trust is broken it is not easily repaired.

My ex always justified the "chatting" til 2am or later as "legal" since there was no physical contact. We RAPIDLY moved to divorce within 4 months of my wife getting online, and it was my ex that filed for divorce. The grass is always greener.....

Husband ended 18-year-old marriage because of this affair and has divorced me. He is still with this person.

Spouse encouraged/pushed me into it—friend was not getting any. Encouraged affair with her best friend.

My wife actually had about 20 or more of these affairs, which was all through email. I was lied about and my kids were discussed as well in her letters.

My spouse doesn't know that I know about her affair.

He thought he was "In love" with someone he only spoke to 3-4 times a week and 3/4's of that online talk was cyber sex. As is typical, he knew nothing about her but thought it was so serious that he would eventually have to chose between me and his stranger. To add pathetic to sad she thought she was in "wuv" with him to and was willing to leave her husband for him and uproot and most likely terrify and traumatize her babies. What a glorious medium this Internet is, and yet such a innocuous yet vicious drug it is at the same time.

I think that the introduction of the computer into a home and marriage is not a very good idea. Discussion and guidelines must be agreed upon and accepted by both spouses. AOL is all about sex.

My husband has had multiple online affairs with many, many other men. He still denies that there is anything wrong with his activities. Six months ago, he promised me he would stop, but I just found out this weekend that he has continued. I have insisted that we see a therapist as the sole condition under which I will remain in our marriage. We shall see what happens.

We were going through a very hard time in our marriage and he had several online affairs—one after another. Some resulted in phone calls. He didn't stop until it led to a real affair and our marriage and ourselves were almost totally destroyed. Now—1 1/2 years later, we are almost recovered.

My wife did not end the affair. I did. I blocked the other guy out and threatened to lock my wife off the computer.

My husband's affair resulted after an old girlfriend contacted him. While he thought she was not that involved, later I found out she had been stalking me. In the end, she was very upset that he violated their trust by telling me about the affair. He was shocked to find out how far she had gone and how likely this was to cause our divorce.

This was totally devastating and changed my whole outlook on life. There is no way that a "real life" affair hurts any more than this did. Now, all over the Internet, I keep seeing it said that online relationships are much more intense, better, and more "real" than the ones established in person. It hurts, is all I know for sure.

The Internet is the perfect cover for liars...no one "sees" you, there is no way to check on what you say, true or untrue, real or imagined.

We have just started to see a counselor, but he acts very differently towards me now. I am not sure we will ever get back what we had, or that I will ever fully trust him again.

My spouse seems to be addicted to online chatting. He spends hours at a time on the computer, completely ignoring me and our son. He says it is just friends but we have seen the messages and some are definitely sexual in nature. He says he wants a divorce but I want my husband back. I just don't know how to break the addiction.

The thing that was so bad was this was why we split up for 1 year over this stupid affair online. He just came back 3 months after he did this. He said it was to show me how weird it was for him when I did this to him, how bad he felt. I know now. The only thing that gives me hope is I confronted the lady online and she said they were friends and she knew a lot about me and said he adored me and that they never talked intimate at all. They both said the same thing. I confronted her without him knowing and he was always telling her he shouldn't talk to her and she'd say why we are just friends.

My husband and I had a wonderful marriage until he met another woman online. It began innocently until he began emailing her daily and eventually met with her and began calling her. He now claims he has deep feelings for her and no longer loves me and wants a divorce. It is all happening so quickly that my head is spinning. My husband was an excellent man and I never saw this coming. He also claims that I've been a wonderful wife but that he just "fell out of love" with me. My whole world has completely shattered around me and all the while I keep thinking "I haven't done anything wrong here, yet, I'm being punished for his sin!" I wanted to work through this and he refused, saying he knows how he's feeling and wants to be with this woman. I am so disgusted and hurt!

I have just found out, this woman I'll call "Ann" keeps calling the house. Who is she? I have told my husband that an "Ann" has called, and he responds that he doesn't know an "Ann." However, she keeps calling the house and emails—daily, several times. Our relationship has trouble—but I really don't want an affair added to it.

I have been married to my husband for 9 months. We have dated for 9 years, we are 25. We bought our computer with our wedding money. It was only 1 month after we got married that he and a friend were chatting with 2 girls at our home. I laughed and thought it to be funny. They decided to email back and forth. I had no idea it was so serious until he started to act funny and separate himself from me. He told me he didn't want to be with me. He stayed out with his friends all night. he told me he was going on a trip to look at hunting ground. He hunted all the time. I told him ok, I thought it was a good thing he get away for a while. A couple of weeks later he told me he was going hunting over Thanksgiving so he didn't have to take extra time off work. He had gone to meet a 17-year-old girl in another state 2 times. They never had sex, they only kissed. We are doing good now. It is very hard. He had talked to her on the phone every day. His cell phone bill was over 400.00 one month. This lasted about 2 1/2 months. We have never broken up and have only been with each other. We have never had any problems before. I still don't understand why he did this. He said he doesn't know why; but says he is sorry and will never do it again. Trust is hard.

My husband was having more than one online affair. He said it was all fantasy, but come to find out later, it turned into reality. If I hadn't found out on my own about the affair, it could have lasted indefinitely. Even though he said it was fantasy, the way he talked to the other women hurt me very deeply. He should have had a "real life" affair, it couldn't have hurt me any more or any less. It was very real for me!! Unfortunately, for him, he didn't erase the email out of his file cabinet. That is how I found out about the affair and all of the "sex" (in detail) that they had online and were planning to have in-real-life ("IRL, as "they call it") It made me sick to my stomach to read this stuff and to know that he was cheating on me. I think that people think that, in the beginning stages, it is fantasy because they aren't "actually talking to them on the phone or in person" that it isn't cheating. But they get caught up in it and it becomes an addiction (as my husband states) and before you know it "things" have gone too far. Even though they haven't actually physically had sex with the other person, they are still having an affair and it is very real to the person who they are cheating on (i.e. spouse). I think that this type of cyber-sex should be considered adultery because it is very real and real people are doing it.

I was married previously to a man who cheated on me with my best friend for three years, we divorced because of that reason, and some physical violence took place...it is very hard for me to trust any man with my heart or my presence for fear of getting hit, but I am now engaged to this man... I came over and logged on to his computer and found some letters from a girl who said how much she enjoyed feeling him inside her...I confronted her, she told me everything and then him...of course he denied the entire situation...the next day I received email from her saying that she lied about it all...that it was just a fantasy of hers to be with him. She said she didn't want any more contact with either of us. The main problem we are having is he chats with women and it's very sexual talk, he says it's just a game and there is a fine line and he doesn't cross it...I can't understand why he feels these games are necessary, its quite obvious that someone has already crossed the line and it's gonna get someone hurt. He still insists there is nothing wrong with it. I feel like I don't make him happy, and he's seeking other things that I am not aware of, or he wouldn't have this need...I cannot marry another man who cheats. I'm at the end of my rope, I am the kind of person who give 110% in every relationship, and I don't give up on anyone, but I don't want to waste my time with him!

If anyone believes that this not a real affair, they are sadly mistaken. This is not a game; you can and will destroy your spouse.

I think it leads to more than just on line.

When your spouse spends more time with their computer than they do you the person they are suppose to love.....there is a problem...somewhere.

My husband started spending a lot of time online, playing games and chatting with those he was playing with, several months ago. My husband works with animals, and this person with whom he's having an affair has lots of pets and seems to share his interest with animals. They started chatting privately about four months ago. I found this out after he admitted the affair. She is also married, unhappily and I guess needed a compassionate person to talk to, which my husband is. I thought we were happily married, although now my husband says he really hasn't been happy for about five years, especially because I spend too much time with our three kids. I wish he would have told me first that he was unhappy instead of telling her. He says he still loves me and doesn't want a divorce, but he loves her too. He says he will end it, but not yet. She lives 800 miles away, and he went to see her for the first time this weekend. I am just trying to get through this sanely.

I think this is becoming a larger problem than people realize, and the fact that often there is no physical contact makes it easier to justify to the cheater that the behavior is not "improper." However, the emotional connection is at least as painful to the spouse. The ambivalence regarding whether chatting with another person is really cheating drives me crazy. If you are bringing another person into your marriage, either emotionally or physically, it is a betrayal of your vows.

We are friends with the other couple; they both state that it is pure friendship only, but I have my doubts....

He rationalized it by saying that he was just swapping sexual fantasies with a friend who was having some troubles... to see who could get the best "story." He really became addicted to the practice and used it as a diversion to keep his mind off of the real-life affair he was having with someone else. He would also trade intimacies, IM, Private Chats and emails with the person he was having an affair with. Most of these things he never admitted doing.

I'm sure people don't start out looking for an online affair. But the allure is certainly there. Someone in a chat room always feels like they are going through the same thing as you are. That's why they are categorized. If people would spend a fraction of their time communicating with their spouse, the person they have a history and a stake in life with, than a complete stranger that they find themselves suddenly soul mates with, a lot of "Online Affairs" would not happen. People who do this do not realize how devastating this can be.

My husband's "online" affair, which ended up being a physical affair, began a couple of weeks after we got our computer. Never in my wildest dreams would I (or any of our friends and family) have ever imagined my husband having an affair. It just goes to show that anything can happen, especially when you least expect it.

Thought it was definitely over, but the other woman (someone I new personally) has tried to initiate it again.

I left my wife because she chose the Internet and her cyber lovers over me.

I have been married to this man for 16 years. I absolutely thought I was the luckiest woman in the world. I would have bet everything I own this would have never happened to me.

My wife knew the man online for 2 years without my knowledge. I found out by looking at a cell phone bill while she went to see "friends" that she said that she worked with. One of the friends was the gentleman that she called and chatted with. Of course, she didn't tell me that he was on her list to spend time with. I called the phone number on the cell phone since it was in the same city that she was visiting. I asked if she was there and the answer was that "she is at the condo with her boyfriend." I then called the number that she had left us to get in contact with her and she answered. I confronted her and told her what had just happened and she denied that she was with him. Later she said that she was with him. I told my 21 and 20-year old children and they told me that there was something to show me. It was that they had caught her in an affair 8 months earlier and confronted her. She told them that it would never happen again. The kids were devastated, as I was. The kids and I are in counseling, and my wife and I are separated, planning a divorce. It's been an emotional roller-coaster for me since I had no idea that this was going on. We have been married for 23 years. She was a perfect wife except for this. I love her as a person, but hate what she has done to me and the children.

The Online lover has all the advantage over the spouse. She only needs to be sweet and listen. The at home spouse has all the daily hassles to handle. Of course the Online lover is so much SWEETER.

The affair was supposed to have ended, but I found evidence of it still going on or another one had started, names could have been changed, neither of the names are being used now, so who knows. It's supposed to be over but I really don't know for sure

I am married, but I told my husband to move out and he did, just before Mother's Day. He refused to go to counseling of any kind, though I started immediately, and would not communicate with me or anyone else about why he did this. He says he doesn't know what led him to this, and I think he probably doesn't realize all the reasons. I hoped for him to see the light and want to come home at first, but it is hard to talk to him and now he's being defensive and I am angry. Perhaps it is best he not come back. I have very mixed feelings. We have a 15-year-old daughter and 11-year-old son. Our daughter is more upset outwardly, and I'm not sure my son has come to terms with the whole thing yet. My husband does visit them often and calls them each night, and I'm not sure he should come here at all since he wanted out, and I told him so. Just a very stressful, sad time for us all! I hate not knowing everything, but not knowing what to expect is scary too. I have seen a lawyer about separation and glad I did. Work to do. Thanks for this informative web site. I copied and pasted info from here and sent it to him, but no response. He doesn't want to hear it. Thanks for listening.

I believe it started with cybersex. He had an addiction and it encouraged him to seek women with the same addiction. He was on the computer morning, noon and night. It is also part of his career (programming computers). When I had confronted him about his online "friends," I was physically abused as well as emotionally. Also, the children became a part of his abuse. It was a nightmare!!! He was arrested in 1998. The assault that evening started with the oldest child (female age 15). Her password was deleted from the computer and she had asked him to put it back, she was told to use his. As he logged on she was subjected to his porno-screen saver and she was telling mom. Do I need to say any more. He was convicted in 2000 and is currently on probation. I believe in this case he is a man who has a deep hate for women. He had the power in the beginning of the relationship. He was a con-artist. He is currently conning his new girlfriend. She even appeared at the criminal trial to defend his current behavior. He's romantic to her and loving to her 4 children. Of course she is 10 years older (45). "She's standing by her man." I guess that my 2 daughters and I had some relief when the criminal judge let him know that the children and I were not at fault for his behavior, that he was. The better statement was made to his new girlfriend from the judge and that was, "I have no doubt that is how Mr. and Ms. relationship was at the beginning." I am not sure how he met the new girlfriend, but she will soon learn she will not be the only one for him, when he feels it time to have another and another he will. I have no doubt it will start in cyberspace. History will repeat itself, the emotional abuse has already started, but she's the better women she can fix him.

I don't really see online "affairs" as being the same as actual affairs in person.

I believe it's truly insidious. An unhappy person, alone at home much of the day, suffering from depression -- my wife "needed" the high, exhilaration from the affair. She's had multiple online affairs -- locally, and arranged to meet men in places she's traveled to. So easy to find people, connect with them privately using email and phone cards. I bet it's happening much more than anyone knows.

The two had engaged in sexual activities before we had become married. We had been married five years when online activity started. I found out by reading emails when inbox was not logged out, just happened to be ON our sixth anniversary.

My husband was having an online affair at night while I worked third shift. I came home from work early (around 3:30 am and found him with his pants down, literally).

My husband's online affair lasted 13 months. It ended the day before a business trip to her area that he intended to meet her in person. She finally had to admit that the pictures she sent of herself were pictures of her sister-in-law. AND the other two people he talked with online were other aliases for herself. She did manage to convince him to meet her, probably hoping that he would decide he loved her anyway even if she was very overweight and much older than the person he thought he was having phone sex with.

Husband created a whole new persona in a profile (claimed he was a widower), which attracted females.

My husband is a DEA agent who had an email affair with another agent's girlfriend. Even after I confronted both of them three times, they continued to have contact, as if to thumb their noses at her boyfriend and me. Finally, I told him, I will not divorce you unless you continue seeing her. Four days after he had convinced me he was sorry and I had asked him to move back into the house, a neighbor called me and told me that he was over at the woman's house, four streets over. I went over there and that was the big showdown, basically the end of the marriage. I feel that he continued to see her in order to get rid of me, in spite of all the attempts we both made to 'save' the marriage. He wanted this all along, but wasn't man enough to say so.

They knew each other from Basketball tournaments but never talked before. Because my spouse was going to a 3on3 tournament and was on the other person's team, the other person mailed my spouse and welcomed her and that's when it began.

There is a great deal of pain associated with Online affairs. Although there was no sexual contact in our case, there was a great deal of secrets shared etc. Things that can never be unspoken. My wife came to me and admitted her wrongdoing. I love my wife very much and want nothing more than to work through this. I can only think ahead and take it one day at a time.

The guy found out how our relationship was going from a girl my wife met, then put them in contact with each other, where he started to tell her everything she wanted to hear. So it carried on from there.

My husband and I are still married but he is living with online lover and struggling to come back home to work on marriage. I believe the other woman here has an upper hand since my husband shared with her many of my faults and she uses these to make him stay with her.

My wife and I are still married but not living together at this time. I still love her. She has not met this guy yet but she is going to meet him at the end of the month I know this to be a fact. She promises not to have sex; she says she has developed feeling for him but doesn't know what kind of feelings.

I fought with my husband for over 2 years regarding his online activities. We had found your site and used your suggestions but nothing worked. We went through counseling twice, but he just agreed with everything that was said while continuing his online activities. It became easier for him to hide as he just quit getting online at home. He spent those 2 years going from chat room to chat room looking for the "right one." He finally found someone close enough to our home that he was able to meet. They moved from online chats to daily telephone calls, and eventually met in person. After a few months, they both left their respective spouses and spent about 3 weeks together. Like most affairs, I think the chase was better than the catch and they both realized that nothing would come of what they had done. She went back to her husband, and I agreed to let my husband back home. Oddly enough, my husband said they had talked about the article concerning online affairs, but he says they didn't see themselves in the article, and didn't think it applied to them. Maybe in the future, you can address that aspect of online affairs, but if your spouse is lying about his activities, there isn't much one can do to change his behavior, if you think he has already changed.

My spouse had "many" online affairs with many women. We live in Canada and he had contact with women in the USA and all across Canada. He traveled on trips to meet these women, had sex with them, and some of them believed that his relationship with them was one-on-one... I had been able to check his computer and he was sending poetry, love letters, pictures, in a "draft" format to each and every one...just simply changing a few items and of course, their names, or nicknames... Upon confronting him, he denied and denied; we broke up and then he admitted and said it was true. Of course, there is still much more that I know that he thinks I do not... in any case, we have reunited, but I am very suspicious and unable to trust him... as if it will work out or not, I don't know. I can forgive, but have a hard time forgetting...

I suspected that my husband was having an affair on line, but what mostly was worrying me is that he could be in love with a woman online. When I read all his messages on ICQ, it was full of sex with many women and one in particular. I did not make a big deal out of it because he was not in love with anyone it was just sex. So my big fear was that my husband falls in love with another woman (which was more important for me). They also wanted to meet him in real but he completely refused. So I thought to myself that after 20 years of marriage (I'm 42 he is 43) he deserves some extra fun as long as it is only sexual and online, not real. I would like also to add that some of his messages really turned me on and it improved our sexual life, which was becoming boring with time. I don't tell him that it turns me on what he is doing, I just told him that even if I tell him to stop, he will do it behind my back. So I prefer that he knows that I know, but don't agree 100% with what he is doing. Sometimes I get jealous too. I hope I managed to help you in writing your book by adding my positive experience with online affairs.

As far as I am concerned in the right context, and with openness and honesty between the partners it can open up many doors and be a wonderful thing just as any fantasy can be.

I would conclude from personal experience that once the computer goes from being a "family" activity and turns to a more personal form of entertainment, that trouble is on the horizon. As in any activity that family should have full access (even if it be a sports activity that one enjoys or any other activity), once the person begins "excluding" other members of the family, this should be a warning that something is not normal. As we do have activities that are our own personal form or enjoyment, it should be a red flag to a spouse if all of a sudden the activity changes abruptly, or when a spouse asks to be included, behavior changes to a state of resentment or excuses as to why participation is no longer desired.

I confronted both my spouse and the other party. My spouse told me that he would not contact her anymore. "I have no problem with never speaking with her again." This took place prior to his knowledge that I had found and confronted her. He was surprised that I was so bold as to contact her personally. (Not by email or ICQ.) I felt if nothing else I should have opinions voiced to the BOTH of them. After all, they BOTH consented to this behavior.

My husband found online a woman he knew before we were married. This made it particularly painful.

The online affair was very emotionally intense for my husband to the point of him wanting to leave the marriage and his three kids. He still denies to this day that he had an affair. But as I see it, it is an affair of the heart not a sexual one.

I can't get past this, especially when you think that you are happy, and I always trusted my husband. I read your article in a magazine, and it made so much sense to talk about it which my husband does not want to do.

I am glad that I found your article in a magazine. Now I know that I am not alone in this. It is not something you want to talk about to friends.

He became violent when I proved that I knew! This only occurred last night. I have confronted him at least four or five times. He always denies or minimizes it.

It is now 8 months after this affair and I have problems with it... still I can't figure out why I thought I was over it and had moved on, but I keep going back to it and I am miserable. I want to move on, but I keep feeling that everything I held dear is gone. I don't know much about the affair. My husband will not talk about it to me. He keeps saying aren't you over it yet. He says I haven't forgiven from the heart. Our sex life is so bad that I feel like running away. He is very selfish in bed and takes, takes, takes all the time and it has made me so I am getting more and more repulsed by him. Sometimes I think I shouldn't have married him because he admitted to me before marriage to sleeping with his brother's wife. I also felt then it was a mistake and would never happen again. I feel my husband is not really repentant and he still has a cheating heart.

I think in today's day and age, and with all this technology available, you really have to watch out for what's going on in you life. Your man can cheat and not even leave home. There are too many unscrupulous people out there... that in a blink of a second will destroy marriages and trust.

The affair my spouse had online was a homosexual affair. Being online allowed him to explore these feelings, and eventually led him to come out to me, then our kids, his family...and we divorced. In the meantime, while we were still together, he had numerous online experiences (every waking hour he was online or on the phone with a guy). Also, he encouraged me to explore online, which I did, meeting various men, and establishing relationships with them. I guess I should stop now, as I could go on forever on this subject. Feel free to email me if you want more information. All this online time was before AOL became a monthly fee of \$21.95. We were paying by the minute for this, in addition to the phone bills. Oh, and we had a baby (number 3) during this time, also. Looking back, I cannot believe we survived.

My husband's online affair has totally ripped our lives apart. But we are working very hard at patching things up and so far we are doing a very good job.

I don't know how others viewed it but even after all the pain and hurt, he still believes he did nothing real wrong, he is sorry he hurt me but maintains it was just a game and not real to him. I often wonder would she agree.

I am 38, male, married for 17 years. I have suspected for a while, but now I know for sure that my wife and my friend of 3 years have been having an online affair. What started as simple sports gossip (our kids play hockey together) developed into sexual innuendoes, secret glances at the rink and a fantasy world. I broke it up before they went to bed, but he said that he would have been able to lead her that far. She was a willing participant, but doesn't admit being attracted to him (He is 15 years older and a lot uglier). Of course I threatened to kill him as my pleas to my wife went unheeded for her to stop whatever she was doing because I knew something was up. I would be playing online backgammon with her while they were instant messaging each other, saying terrible things at my expense and mocking my words to her. I am in tears now. You see because of this, she now doubts if she ever loved me, ever. I am waiting for a call back for counseling. I did the forgive thing, it helped me a little but just sent her further emotionally away. damn

Meeting someone online is such a "safe" environment, and such an easy escape.

My spouse gets very angry at me when I enter his favorite chat room. Has not admitted to an affair, but accuses me of spying on him. Clicks the screen off when I enter the room. Always finds out, later, from his source if I have been in his favorite chat room. We do not relate to each other any more. Gets very defensive when I try to tell him how I feel. He says that I am imagining things. I feel very broken hearted and alone. Don't know what else to do.

Words and support in a chat room can be a powerful way to forge an emotional attachment. My wife had no idea "it would turn out like this." For want of a better analogy I liken it to being seduced by the dark side or the force.

This was a high school boyfriend she ran into at her 45th high school reunion. This was after 42 years of marriage and was the last thing I would have suspected. The only thing I noticed was that she was spending a lot of time on the computer.

Some 500+ chat room and email contacts over a 6-month period facilitated and advanced an already too-close friendship that rapidly blossomed into a full-blown affair.

My husband had an online affair with someone we both knew. These situations do not always occur between strangers.

I found all her intimate cards and letters she sent to him, and actually made copies of some of them. He knows I've read them, and I let her know I read them and made copies. She seems like she does this a lot, as she has special little business cards with herself in revealing lingerie with her private web site. Her spouse seems quite suspicious and with good reason! I just don't want it to go any further (i.e., meeting each other in person). My husband says he loves me and I have to believe him. I certainly won't put any demands on him about stopping; it has to be his choice. She's married with 4 kids and seems to be attention deprived (from her husband). My husband is not attention deprived, but is certainly infatuated with this cyber slut.

Online affairs usually start as fun and games and end up becoming something much more serious and complicated. These affairs usually end up with a broken up family.

My former husband spent 75% of the day and night online. He had several women he "talked" to but always insisted that he "couldn't control" what the women were writing to him. "I love you XXX, you're such a good friend, I'd like to see your big XXX." At times this would go on while I was sitting next to him at the computer. When I shut off the online service he went ballistic. When I took a cable off the computer in an attempt to get him to stop, he was as nice as could be, believing I would give it back to him in a few days. When I didn't, 3 days later he packed up the computer and left, without his toothbrush or medication. Since that time our two sons rarely see him because he says he always has to work or it costs too much to drive over to see them. He is online all the time yet doesn't email or chat with his sons. The loser that he always was throughout our marriage (he didn't work for the last 5 years of it) came out of the closet and he is where he wants to be, without responsibilities. Although the break up of my "marriage" is painful even after 2 years, I realize now that it was the best thing to happen to the boys and me. We are a family of 3, who love each other and do for each other each day. We are always engaged in something and on the go without the emotional baggage of seeing our spouse/father choosing to spend his time with someone else. At least now we don't have to be a part of it.

I knew something was wrong. Husband was working all the time. Began going out with coworkers, who he really didn't like. Didn't want to be around the kids. Physically harmed me. I thought he was having an affair with a former colleague. That's why he so adamantly denied having an affair. I had to actually discover email from the other woman re: sex to get him to admit it. He met her in a bookstore in a US city while she was in town on business from Europe. They had at least 2 sex encounters each time she came back to the city -- that I know of. I kicked him out and threatened divorce. He broke it off with her and claims he didn't ever have contact with her again. I am currently 7 months pregnant. Found out when I was 5 months. He had first encounter with her 10 days after baby was conceived. We found out I was pregnant 10 days after his first encounter. He wanted an abortion (3rd child and we are Catholic). This was another signal something was very wrong. I found out about the affair 4 months later.

It does not matter if the affair is online or offline, it can still break down your trust for your spouse and cause major problems in your marriage. I am still trying to overcome this happening and I still have not regained the trust I once had.

I think it was very degrading, him talking to this "kissy-face" on voice chat while I was in the room. In 2000 I had a stroke over the while thing.

I cannot begin to explain the pain, betrayal and disgust I feel for my partner's behavior. We have been together for over four years and were engaged to be married. I was planning a wedding! Instead of coming over to help with dress plans, my mom came and helped me pack all his stuff. I kicked him out. He had an affair with a woman last summer. He rationalized, admitted, apologized. I accepted, we got engaged. Now this week it happened again! With the same person! I decided for all the pain and embarrassment he caused me, that public humiliation was the only way to feel better. I emailed all our friends and family telling them about the whole sick thing and then forwarded all the letters for them to read. It has only been 3 days since I kicked him out. But he cheated, yes it is cheating. And I can never trust him again. I am so hurt right now, all I can do is cry.

My husband is a sex addict who had been using porn magazines and developing "friendships" with women for several years. When he discovered the Internet, with all its porn, sexlines, chat rooms and search programs for people looking for "friends," it was as if it all been created just for him. In a matter of weeks he was completely consumed. It has only been in the last 9 months that he has worked to overcome his addiction and stayed away from such activities. He went from porn magazines and videos to chat rooms, cyber- and phone-sex with women he met online. It cannot be stressed enough the dangers of porn and the contribution of the Internet to the decline of life and our society. The Internet drew my husband into a world that no longer included real people with real emotions and interactions. It sucked the life out of him until he became nothing more than a virtual husband and father who lived to be online. I have come to HATE the Internet because of its effects on my dear husband (it made him a shell of the man he used to be and had dreams of becoming), and would love to see it just go away. Of course, we all know that it is here to stay, thanks in part to all the sad and lonely people who think that to speak with a stranger online means that they have a friend. I applaud your efforts and wish you well in your endeavors.

My husband went from one Internet affair to another, changing names as the women he was involved with caught on that he was cheating on them as well. My husband also walked out on me and 3 children (leaving us homeless) to move in with a women he met on the Internet. He has since left her, and continues to go from one affair to another. We were married 20 years, had 4 children and one grandchild. I am now ashamed to say I knew him as he has hurt so many.

I think in this very hi-tech era, online affairs is no longer about chat and all that. It's also about mobile phones that make it so convenient to have an affair. Furthermore, not enough education was done to warn people of the potential of emotional harm it can cause to everyone around them. I know I am one of them and I am giving up soon.

From what my spouse has told me, it all started out as a "game," something to do as a fantasy. Even though he knew I didn't like it, he continued to go online and engage in behavior that I never knew he was capable of. When he did meet someone in person, he says he regretted it immediately. He had been drinking, and "recovering" from some personal tragedies (death of stepmother, daughter getting pregnant). The person he was involved with was far from anyone he would date/be involved with in public. She was very large and not well educated. (I must admit I tricked her into sending me her photo by pretending to be a male online. Talking with her online convinced me that she was not well educated and that she had also actively pursued the offline relationship because she is looking for a husband.) We have talked over the whole affair, I have no doubts that my husband is sorry and that he regrets ever starting even the online affair. He feels, as do I, that he was easily "addicted" to the easy availability of online porn and the chance to be "someone" and still see if he had appeal. He does not have a personal computer account. He does this willingly as a way to ease my mind somewhat and for his own good as he says he does not want or need any more of the online life. Combined with his drinking, the personal tragedies, and his unwillingness at the time to "burden" me with his problems, he was prime. I want to believe that this is all over and we are working together to keep communication open and he is more than willing to talk to me about my fears and concerns.

I just confronted my wife on this, so I don't know how it will turn out yet.

My husband believes that online "flirting" is not an affair because there is no contact. He says that it's just a game, that it's not a person, and that since he doesn't masturbate and ejaculate it doesn't count as an infidelity. The problem for me is that it never stays on the computer. He doesn't type well, which is his excuse for giving out our phone number. He sits down with the goal of finding a woman his age, chatting with her for a few minutes, and then getting her to call him. It's amazing how easily and quickly this is done, I'm talking minutes. I have a phone bill from last month with six different women's phone numbers that he talked to for hours! This last one was the worst. They were actually making plans to meet. When I found out and confronted him he said he thought we could all go bowling or something!! But his friend told me a different story of the excitement my husband felt about meeting this new girl. The catch in all of this is that my husband never goes near the computer sober. In fact, when he's sober he hates the computer, hates for me to be on it, and laughs about how stupid it is. It's when he's drunk...and sometimes his drinking binges last three days...that he turns to online romance. It is a means of escape. When he sobers up he is literally devastated by what he has done.

This form of betrayal is the hardest to overcome as there is no way to truly be sure that no new contact is made. Also the soul sharing aspect hurts so much more than physical betrayal.

I found out about this computer stuff 2 years ago. It had been going on for approx.6 years with a lot of different people. We are still in marriage turmoil. He does not want to learn from this. He is in therapy, who knows what they talk about. I had been going, I had asked for a separation 3 times and he will not leave, so we are living with this garbage everyday. The therapist thinks he is passive/aggressive and they are working on it? Who knows, it's like pulling teeth and I just don't have the energy right now. 3 teens, 1 going to college soon, and I have no help... he just sits there. Oh I wish it would get better. I also wish that this subject be taken seriously. It is still a vow breaker and just because "no body fluids" were exchanged doesn't mean anything, til I guess that person goes through it. Yeah the marriage was in trouble and always was but 2 people have to be willing to fix it. It's not just one PERSON'S job and dealing with the other person who acts like 5 most of the time, it just is wearing. Thanks. I was able to find out what this was about by your information. This is going to be the break up of so many marriages. Sad, so sad.

My husband has PTSD and at times feels very alone and not loved. He became involved with a woman who has had several online affairs. This woman claimed to be a counselor and had knowledge of PTSD. She became so involved in his condition and worked herself into his trust. We have been married for twenty-two years, and he was ready to divorce me for this woman from another country. She is a 52-year-old woman that was willing to leave her family to come to the USA to marry my husband after talking to him for two to three months. He ran our phone bill up to over \$5,000 before I was aware of what was going on. I left him for six months, filed for a divorce. My prayers were answered; he came to his rational mind and realized what he was giving up. I find it hard to believe the number of lonely people that are on the Internet seeking love; my husband was one of them and the woman was also a lonely heart. It is very disturbing to me that people can be pass their self off as who ever they want to be. This woman surely cannot be a counselor of any type, to involve herself with someone that has PTSD, and a married man at that. I hope someday my husband and myself can better understand what happened to us.

My wife had an affair that began at work. The other guy moved away, she maintained contact via email, he failed to respond for quite some time. Once he began to respond, they were very sexual responses, requesting nude photos, etc. He has been married for about 6 months, I guess the excitement must be gone, and he is seeking it elsewhere. Just when you think your life is back in order, life throws you another curveball, which would be o.k.- if I could hit curveballs.

I am not positive about if she did or not have an affair. I know they talked on the phone first then started communicating through email at least two or three time that I know of, then all of a sudden it stopped.

My husband had hundreds of online affairs, an average of ten at the same time. Most of the women seemed to think he was only cybering with them. Most of them (he saved all of his encounters) seemed to think it was a deep, meaningful romance and if they knew he was married with children, they seemed to get a thrill out of it. Much talk of soul mates, being in love, wanting to meet him for a real life affair, many frumpy photographs. The pattern seemed to be, after 5 minutes to one year he would become bored and move on to the next conquests. They would email him for a while asking if he was all right, why was he ignoring them, that they loved him...etc. He was already bored with the whole thing by the time I found out. He told me it meant nothing and I was silly to be upset about it. I don't know if I will ever be able to fully trust him again.

My spouse started his online affair with a woman he knew before they exchanged email addresses. I think it was being online and not in person that gave them the courage to bring up sex in the first place. He has made the comment that he wishes he had never heard of email. So do I.

My husband's online affairs were with many, many other men. Thanks for the opportunity to share this experience.

I am still married to my spouse, but we are now separated again because he wants to "rebuild" our relationship.

Our home was totally out of control during my husband's affair online. The only thing I can compare it to would be trying to live with a drug addict. He would get up early, (2 or more hours) and stay up late, while still working 10 hour days.

My husband's interactions were with an old girlfriend, so there was no lying about his age, etc. His interactions were all email, e-cards, jokes and phone calls and all kept secret from me.

In this case both knew each other through work and friendship.

I am so crushed; when browsing the net member profiles I saw my ex-husband of 1 year's picture, actively eliciting sex and web cam use. He presents a totally different picture to me and our son. I'm sick about it and don't know whether to approach him or not for fear of jeopardizing his son's relationship with him.

No one can imagine the pain reading about your wife's fantasy that she is sharing with a complete stranger... Is simply hurts.

Online affairs have the same impact on the partner being cheated on as if it were a real affair. But the dizzying height of the Internet makes it much more of an issue than ever before. The hurt and the distrust felt the same regardless of the type of affair. The fact that instead of being committed to one relationship, the cheater is making excuses for dealing with what they perceive to be a problem at home. In any event people have emotions, online affairs are no less devastating than the real thing.

Before being confronted with the truth, my husband was thinking that all he had done was "just a game." Like a computer game or a Nintendo. You are in another world, somebody else. He became aware this was not a game anymore when they have had sex, which was too late... Talking to her every night on ICQ would help him to forget he was feeling bad about cheating. ICQ is really very dangerous...

After my wife left me and filed for divorce, 3 months later, we went to a couple's relationship weekend and we reconciled. It has been 1 year since we got back together, and she hasn't chatted online since.

Affairs like this are such a fantasyland! He has been living with her for a month now. You would think after 17 years of marriage I wouldn't feel like I had to compete with a computer for my husband!

Obviously he was actively looking for some type of relationship he wasn't getting at home. I was mad at all the time he spent online and ended up pushing him yet further away. I wrongly assumed I was safe, he would never cheat on me! He's a great father and husband, a pillar of the community. I just wasn't paying attention.

It's important for people to know that if your spouse's computer with Internet link becomes more important than the spouse and family members, you may be faced with the possibility of an online affair.

Chat rooms are not a good place to go if you are not happy in a relationship. People online make themselves very appealing to the person who thinks they are lonely and not in a good relationship I am in the beginnings of trying to make my marriage work after my husband met someone in a chat room and finally met her and had an affair for almost 6 months. It was devastating to me and still having a very hard time

This online affair lead up to a real-life affair with another woman.

I don't think having online affairs should happen on the computer. Because it hurts the other partner if one of them has a online affair.

I agreed she would 'visit' her 'Internet honey' for 3 nights and days. 2 months later she left me and moved in with him. 6 months later I have an Internet love and she is moving in with me next month...and I got the better 'deal'...

My husband admitted the affair, asked for a divorce, quit his job and went to where she lived. After only a short time, she was finished with him and he came back to my town, and wanted to reconcile.

When the individual is "in it," the denial is high and the realization that they are caught up in it is oblivious to the individual having the online affair. It starts off so innocent, then one thing leads to another (as can be expected when you start sharing your life interest and aspirations) and before they know it they're in so deep they block off all who have meant so much too them. My belief about this is that it's because the Internet looks to be the perfect world, where no one shows their faults.

I need some more information about this...because I am still not sure where my marriage stands.

It is so good to know that I am not alone. The effects this affair had on me and our relationship were devastating. It has been a year exactly since it all broke loose. (I was the one to find all the letters in email form and the Websites my spouse had joined, mind you). I am still dealing with trust and suspicion issues. I am still angry deep down inside also. A part of me still doesn't believe it could have possibly happened to us. We are the "perfect" couple, and have been together since high school. My whole image of my husband and our relationship has totally been destroyed. Not to mention the self-confidence issues I have been dealing with... We have come a long way in the past year. Lots of talking and lots of prayer have been involved. I think eventually our relationship will be even better than before. Eventually...

My husband says that he loves me and will never leave me, but this woman makes him feel like when we first fell in love. We have not had sex in a long time and she makes him feel young again. He is on a lot of medication, which made him impotent, but it seems like it is not this way with her. They work together on the Internet, writing a book and he takes off once a month to go see her. He says it is because he needs to discuss things face to face with her, but this is not so. He talks to her every night at 10pm and spends at least 2 hours talking to her about her daily problems as she is getting a divorce but has an autistic son to take care of. My husband was mad when I told my daughter what was going on; he said she had no right to know, but I had to talk to someone and he had already talked about her to our daughter, bragging about how good a writer she was...and our daughter is not silly. She asked what was going on, so I told her.

I have more anger toward the woman that had the relationship with my husband than with him. They were both married.

I think it is a shame that a partner of 20 years can share his deepest, most intimate thoughts with a total stranger than his own spouse.

I have to say that I lost most of my trust that I had for my husband. We had not been married long when this happened. To this day, I still do not have 100% complete trust in him. I don't know if I ever will again. Whether the relationship is physical or online, the end results can really tear your partner apart. The one having the affair would understand if the same thing happened to them. There is so much to lose; not just a person, but the emotional issues cause the loss of trust.

I felt very betrayed. I was also upset because I suspected nothing—my husband told me the whole truth about 18 months after it happened.

My husband became addicted to the chat rooms. I never realized what he was up to until he had already spoken with 20 or more women. He met 3 of them in person and had sex. I caught him on the computer by reading what he had written. My life has been hell, he is broken and now I don't know whether to try to work it out or go. We have been married more than 25 years. This is a man I would have bet my life on. I obviously didn't know what he was capable of, or do you think the Internet was like drugs to him. We have gone to counseling but he still can't tell me why. These women weren't physically attractive or intelligent; in fact, they were low class and not my equal in any way, shape or form. But I'm still left with the hurt. The night I caught him I felt as if my life had crashed, burned and blown up. Why?????

I was and still am devastated by this online affair. I found out when the "other woman" left a phone message on our home phone (claims by accident) in front of my 8-year-old son. It went on for 16 months before that call, with daily constant emails at work and home, nightly 1 to 2-hour private chats, regular phone calls 3 to 4 times a week. Before I accidentally found the emails he forgot to delete on an "old" computer, my husband claimed "just friends." The "other woman" (though married also with four children) wanted my husband to run away with her like her other friends who met the love of their life online had done. Supposedly, he never went to her due to a fear of flying, but whether he paid for her to come east is unknown. My husband works in computers so the lies during the nightly private chats were that he was working. I have forgiven my husband and he claims he will never cheat again but trust in his words and the pain of betrayal is so hard to forget.

When I started suspecting my husband, I put a program on the computer so that I could read his mail and instant messages without him knowing about it. When I confronted him, he denied it, but when I pulled out printed emails and IM's he knew he was busted! This all happened almost 2 years ago and it still hurts. Things that he should only say to me he said to another woman.

My partner of 9-1/2 years was looking for erotica online as she felt she needed to expand her sexuality. Eventually she decided she may be lesbian and had a real affair with another woman. This all occurred in the last 3-4 months, and we're currently in the process of separating. I would love for us to stay together, but she's decided that if she is lesbian then she can't possibly live in a sexual relationship with a man. She says she hasn't made up her mind yet whether she is lesbian, bi-, or "just overly curious," but it doesn't look good for us. (And it all came from the online affair initially.)

Even if my wife's online affair had not moved on to a physical relationship, it was still devastating. She had another online "affair" that did not proceed to a sexual relationship, although they did meet in person. This relationship has been more emotionally disturbing to me than the sexual affair. I think some of this had to do with the fact that I had to force her to end it. She thought it was only an innocent friendship, but it wasn't to me. **I think people need to realize that if you have any kind of relationship with a member of the opposite sex, and your spouse does not know about this person, it is an affair.**

I thought I was happily married—but it was "I am married, she is happy." Her heart was never with me from day one. The affair was the accumulation of years of suppressed emotions.

I emailed the woman and told her what I knew and that we were trying to work on our marriage. I told her that she was a hindrance and that what they were doing wasn't going anywhere. She then stopped IM him. (As far as I know.)

The people you least expect to do this are the ones who get sucked into it.

It ended as soon as it was discovered by me. True fantasy fulfilled for both of them till Mrs. reality discovered it

My husband didn't only have one online affair, he was cheating on the women he was cheating on me with...had several going at once. Some were talk (including marriage discussions) only, some involved cybersex, and at least three included actual physical adultery. We were in therapy for five months after I found out about the first (and what I thought was the only) one; turns out he lied to the therapist and to me the entire time he was "committed to saving our marriage" and was actually trolling for and finding additional women. I filed for divorce on grounds, and it should be final sometime early this year.

Although I am still with the cheating spouse, he has committed 2 more acts of online cheating since the initial affair. These has not been physical contact, but were close to that stage as well. At this point, I am terminating the marriage agreement after 18 years of togetherness.

We knew each other for 5 years before getting married. We were newlyweds of 3 months when I discovered it. I had the feeling something was wrong, and I was right. I found a file on the computer containing an online conversation. I wanted to die. At first I felt bad for "spying" on him. I confronted him and he insisted it was only an online thing that he never met her and would not. We spent 2 days in bed crying and he promised he would never hurt me again. The next day, while he was outside, I went back to the computer and found the rest of the conversations and read them all. They referred to that day when I was out shopping with my mother, buying my wedding dress, when they did it all day... I confronted him again and he spilled his guts... told me all. It went on for 6 months; she wanted to rescue him from getting married as he was telling her that the sex was not satisfying him. She (35) was unhappy in her marriage so she wanted to rescue him (26). They had made plans to run away together after our wedding, get a divorce and raise her 3 children together in another country... He snapped out of it and left her when I discovered it. Since, we are working on saving our marriage and our relationship and are working every day to never forget what happened. Therapy was the key for us and thank god he is willing to do what it takes to heal my wounds and his also. Hope this will be of use for your research. Thank you for this website and for sharing your experience with us. Bless you.

My husband and I were married for 2 weeks before his first affair began. By the time I left him 10 months later, he had slept with at least 6 other women. Then he had the nerve to say it was all my fault; I was too cold, too beautiful, he couldn't fulfill his sick fantasies with me like with these other young girls.

My husband and I are both 22, we dated for 4 years before we were married. He pressured me into marriage. When I asked him about why he even married me, he said it was "the only way that he could keep me." His father had the same problem. His parents' 25 years of marriage ended a month before mine. My mother-in-law came to me six months into my marriage and asked me, "What would you think if your private phone line, one that is designated for computer use only, rang one day and a woman asked to speak to your husband?" I could not answer her, because I had the same problem.

They were trying to move the affair offline. He was talking only to women in our town. It only ended because I caught him, them.

I believe my husband has been truly honest with me in talking to me about why he felt he needed the companionship of other women. Although he talked with many women, he did keep a safe distance from most (at least once they admitted to wanting more). However, as a teenager he was always rejected and never felt sexually attractive, a woman he met online that lived close offered him a one-night stand to help him prove himself. He accepted, somehow feeling that this would help him feel better about himself, thereby making him a better husband for me. He now doesn't understand where his feelings were coming from but knows that he got too "wrapped up" in the chat world and the attention he got from people there. Although this wasn't a long-term affair and had no strong emotional ties (he had no desire to see or talk to her again), it still had a devastating impact on our relationship. We realize now that somewhere along the way we stopped talking to each other and are now working on strengthening our relationship through better communication. We now talk to each other about our feelings rather than talking to anonymous people on the Internet. Thank you for shedding some light on a subject I never thought I would have to face.

It hurt real bad. My wife denied everything from the beginning, but I found out through phone bills and phone numbers lying around.

This happened overnight (literally) and was caught through investigative snooping... it's like it's the real thing; don't know how to take it. Ss it truly a bit of fun or as bad as the real thing...?

My husband doesn't think that he did anything wrong, and is still mad that I found out. He says if I were doing my "womanly duties" he wouldn't have done this. He gets mad at me for every little thing and doesn't want to talk to me, or hug, or kiss me, NOTHING!

At first I thought of it as no threat until I found out that they were talking on the phone and I saw that he typed the words " I love you. " We are expecting our 5th child in next year, so it is hard for me to just leave at this point. This all happened on ICQ. He does not know that I go into history and see everything he writes to these other women.

I realize that the person who had the affair, ultimately, was the person who made the choice to do so. But I have found that my wife does also need someone to talk to and get advice on how best to resolve issues that may still exist—for her. Whereas your site has been incredibly valuable for me, there is little for her.

My husband still swears that he was only looking for an online friend to chat with since he works alone and has no social interaction with people. He said they are very good friends and this stranger even had the nerve to call me to try and patch things up with my husband who I no longer trust. I found out about the online affair one evening when he thought I was asleep. I walked into the home office where he was at the screen. The first two sentences I read were "Hi Hon—it was great talking with you last night." It took about a week before I was calm enough to discuss with him and it's now been about three weeks and I'm still trying to deal with it. After 26 years of marriage, I've lost my trust in him.

It taught me a lot about computers; I became a super cyber spy, cold busted him. Came to your site because I have no trust, and we are trying to go on; if not, then we'll move on.

My husband had an electronic affair with a good friend of mine. Their intimate communication occurred almost exclusively via email from work. I became concerned about the amount of contact they seemed to be having and sensed something in my relationships with both of them that wasn't right. When I began asking questions, my husband admitted that he was doing something that didn't feel right to him either. Because the relationship was both electronic and emotional (not face to face or sexual), and because I cared deeply about both of them, it took a long time for me to feel that my anger at them was justified for their secret and intimate communication. It took a while for me to feel OK about asking him to stop having even casual contact with her. It was liberating to finally get there. At first I also tried to keep up my friendship with her. But we are now no longer on speaking terms. I just can't figure out how to work on both relationships. It has been a painful loss for me.

This relationship was with a person that was supposed to be friend of both of ours.

I think an online affair is worse because you start to distrust all, and it is so hard to find out what is going on. The spouse constantly denies it, although you find out that he attended sex chat rooms and hard core Internet pages, then you find strange messages sent from your computer, but he denies ever sending the emails. I've tried for 5 months to find out who was the receiver. Impossible. No one can help you and it feels like you're on a dead end.

I found out four months ago and I am still devastated. I can go on okay for a couple of days and then the hurt overwhelms me again. He is very remorseful and has never cheated in 28 years, but truthfully I would have left him if this happened 10 years ago.

My husband lies until pressed, and changes to different lies when he realizes what I know. He won't talk about it unless asked. He hides whatever he does. I find names of girls on computer logs. I can't see what they say to one another, only names. One girl told me what kinds of things he says, when I contacted her. I didn't want to believe her. And once a long time ago my husband told me more, but said he'd stop doing this. Now I know he's doing it again. The names keep appearing.... I can only imagine what they say ... whether they meet ... talk elsewhere ... I don't know. But more than any of it, I'm tired of being lied to.

The E-affair was with an old boyfriend. Most of the contact was through email. The divorce wasn't because of that affair; it was because of the physical affair that she started two months later with someone else.

My spouse hid this affair until the woman called me to let me know how it was gonna be. She drove to Michigan from Louisiana to be with him. He told her to come. When she arrived in our town, he then made the decision to not see her. By then, the damage to our marriage had been done. We are still trying to make things work, and I am still looking for answers; your website has been helpful to me. Thank you

We are a gay couple and this has been a very difficult issue for us. It has made me reluctant to trust him again.

I think online affairs should be considered as emotional abuse as well as cheating. In my case my husband was doing it with a web cam and with someone he worked with—which in this state is grounds for dismissal from his job. If it had not stopped, I would have gotten them both fired from their jobs.

To me there is no difference between an online and offline affair, sex is just the byproduct. The betrayal of trust, and sharing of intimate thoughts, and paying attention to someone else are the real issues.

I am pregnant and he is using the affair as an escape from reality. He left two jobs to concentrate on his affair—I am 8.5 months pregnant and provide our only income. He has also flown from Europe to US to meet her, but she lost her nerve. We will eventually divorce.

I just wanted to add that I found it very interesting that the "other" woman was so wrapped up in the fantasy of the online world. She was actually a friend of my spouse's family and the more I learned about her, the more I found that she was actively (if not overly) involved in the fantasy of the Internet. She floats around in fantasy worlds as and she openly admits that she loves spending hours a day, creating new identities for herself and living out fantasies online. It's a whole culture of people that are VERY interesting (if not pathetic).

I am still living with my spouse...but we are currently in a very critical situation due to that affair....

I KNOW factually about one online affair, and I greatly suspect there were others. My wife became so enamored by it that she would sometimes spend as much as 16 hours a day online.

To this day -- over 6 yrs after finding out -- I still can not and do not trust him. It has totally destroyed my self -steem. I feel dead inside and he doesn't care

A face-to-face sexual affair would have been easier for me to deal with than what I'm going through right now. When two people engage in an online affair, the entire premise of the affair is written communication or on the telephone... so much of my personal privacy and our relationship details have been compromised. So little of this was actual, a fantasy-based affair. It's so hurtful.

This has been a very painful time for me and my family... we have 3 boys ages 3 and under. I had no idea he would cheat but did so when I was in the hospital trying to keep from losing the last baby! I still have a long way to go as far as healing goesand I have known for over 2 months.

My husband used the Internet to begin an intimate relationship with someone he knew from work.. The correspondence began as teasing and flirting by a much younger and beautiful girl who knew our family well. She was at the time having several online relationships with others from the same work place. I do not know how many of them led to physical relationships, but my husbands did eventually.

A new coworker in my office with 3 teenage boys (new to the area) put a personals add on yahoo. She got a response from a "potential Catch" Since I live in the area where the response came from she showed it to me, wondering if I might know who it was. I told her that I knew the man and that he was married. She said, "That Bastard, I specifically stated no married men." I said, "Yes, what a bastard." The potential catch is my Husband. He had described himself and his qualifications perfectly except he left out one small item. Me.

I caught my husband of 20 years trying to set up "massage" appointments with "lonely housewives" he found on line. I am still attractive and very willing, so I don't know what to do or think. He also admitted other "real" affairs (years ago). This is breaking me apart. He, of course, doesn't want to talk.

My husband had an online affair with an old girlfriend he hadn't seen or been with in 26 years. She reached him in December through a website that helps find old classmates. The online affair quickly took off and reached an intensity that I could have never imagined. He thought he knew this woman. What he had known was a 15-year-old girl. The online affair was all-consuming for him; emails constantly from work and phone calls constantly from wherever he was... all the time maintaining a loving relationship with me. At the end of January he asked for a divorce. I can't put into words how out of the blue this was. We have had a very good marriage. Now I am left to wonder how good was it really. He has decided he made a big mistake. He has recently seen photos of his online lover. He feels he was mistaken and misled. Now he wants to put our lives as a couple back together. I love my husband very much, but I am unsure of what the future holds.

They met on a visit to Las Vegas. Supposedly, no sex occurred. They began a long distance affair of the mind. She lives 3000 miles away. I caught him talking on the phone to her (his work cell phone), then found her pictures. He told me he was in love with her, that they had so much in common. It devastated me, but I fought to get him back. I told him this relationship wasn't real, that they both were putting their best feet forward to each other. How could you know about the other person if the only contact that you had was by phone or computer? That's not the day-to-day kind of knowledge that comes from being with a person. He told me he broke it off, but to this day, I really don't know.

He is still in denial. Blames me for his affair. He doesn't take responsibility for his mistakes. He still thinks he doesn't need counseling. Doesn't realize what he isn't doing is part of the problem.

Although she did not have physical sex with him, I live with it every day. I am terrified that it will happen again. I was COMPLETELY devastated.

Thank you for your website. We came to understand, as the affair became part of both our lives, that withholding relevant information is not being honest. Whether that info is about an affair, a feeling, a desire, a fantasy. Separating out your inner life from your marriage and funneling off emotional energy from the marriage into an online affair is at core a dangerous thing, whether or not it becomes a sexual relationship.

He also had gotten her a job at his work, but she got fired.

The overriding comment from my wife was that she thought that it was "safe and innocent" because it was just chat on the Internet. It is a slippery slope because the email was next, then phone calls, then meeting.

I was absolutely shattered to find out that my wife had taken part in cybersex. It has resulted in me losing all respect for her. We are actively attempting to get our marriage back on track but it is extremely difficult and I need counseling. Hopefully all will work out in the end but I remain skeptical. The more advertising that is done to warn persons of this filth, the better.

In this instance we feel that my wife may have been searching for a replacement for the lover that she had been involved with for over 25 of our 36-year marriage. He died 6 years ago. I was unaware of this affair (which resulted in our second child's birth and he was the biological father) or at least in denial of it until I discovered this affair. We are trying to save the relationship and the marriage.

I believe with all my heart that online affairs are as devastating as real life affairs and the effect on the spouse is absolutely unbelievable. I have known now for almost a year and am still trying to get past it. I wish I knew of a way to keep this from ever happening to another person, but that is impossible.

It is from a lack of spiritual commitment to his Lord, wife and 4 kids. It's from not loving yourself and low self-esteem that makes a husband search elsewhere, and not make the spiritual commitment. Online porn is too easily accessible. But it's only through controlling the thoughts that infidelity will stop.

I truly believe his lack of self-confidence and confidence in me led to his search for a younger woman. I'm a professional woman with a powerful position and make more money than he does. I feel this affects him deeper than I ever thought it did. I'm trying to forgive him, but it is very difficult. I find myself mentally questioning his every move, and the images of them together haunt me.

Our sex life was not at fault; I was not a prude, so why you tell me my life is now incomplete. I feel used, I have feelings of mistrust, I don't trust this person now and I never will. Online sex is wrong to the other spouse; it is a betrayal of trust. Have it done on you and you will now know what it feels like. I am very angry, a long time after all this happened. The thing is you think you know the person, but you can't have, can you... To get this done on you is awful and cheating; it feels like cheating... talking to strangers about sex and forget about the spouse. This is selfish, nasty, mean, lying, cheating behavior of a no-good rat. This is how mad it makes you feel, and I have tried to be polite. Once a cheat always a cheat.

It has been three months since learning about my husband's despicable behavior of cyber-infidelity/adultery; and it still hurts like hell, even after counseling.....His sexual needs are now met and I believe that his emotional needs as well. Sexual need was what he said was one of the reasons that he did this..... as well as control and power over the other women. But my needs are still not met...one of conversation, honesty, trust, etc. I have written numerous congressmen/women about this cancerous and emotionally debilitating cultural addiction that is destroying many relationships (both nationally and internationally) and I have not had any response.....I feel that my efforts have all been in vain.....Thanks for your website, if I had not found it in early January, I am quite sure that my husband would not have told me nearly as much as he has.....remembered that 86% of those that go into detail, generally end up staying married.

I would get mad at my husband for talking to a woman too long and he would say, "I stopped talking to her." Then I finally caught on that she just changed names; then we would fight, but it was always my fault. Then he started getting pages on his beeper, but he said they were the wrong number. When I checked his phone, he had a block on it and of course it was because of the people at work. Then one day he was downstairs and I was upstairs, and I picked up the phone and he was checking his messages...I heard this lady say "hi honey, this is me; I am at home, give me a call." I asked him about it and he said wrong number and if I had proof, show him; but I had no numbers and he said he is not doing nothing. We will soon be married 30 years. I don't know how to make him stop. I do love him, but I wish I never got a computer. Tell all the young ladies in your book to never get one or never let their husband's go on. Because I never in a million years would think mine would, no thanks to someone at his work.

This has devastated 4 families and many friends. It has been a financial disaster because of the divorce. She still will not admit that that is why she left me even though she was with him shortly after leaving.

Once an individual makes the choice and goes down a path to open up an emotional and private course of conversation with another individual that isn't their spouse, the path has been laid for an affair. Every decision and action has consequences.

It was devastating, almost caused divorce. Loss of faith, but love remains. The trust factor will never be the same.

He had 6 or 7 girlfriends that he was lying to, told them I had been dead for 6 years. In fact, we've been married 38 years. I ended the affairs by sending messages to all of them to find a new friend. I caught him in sexual conversations with one, and others not quite so sexual several times. I finally had a screaming fit and told him it had to end. I was able to get into his email and that's how I found their names. I corresponded with 3 of them for a while and asked them questions and found that he had been lying to me for a long time. I was absolutely crushed, and very, very angry. It will be hard to trust him again.

My husband states the intimate/physical portion of the affair and infidelity is over, but they remain friends and work partners. Our marriage still remains a question.

I have always second-guessed the way I handled my husband's online affair. I never confronted the other women—instead I had my husband write them a goodbye letter and then had him stay off the computer. My husband has told me that he has never had any more contact with these women since—but I have no proof. It will soon be 2 years since I discovered his secret "friendships" (as he calls them), and I still have trust issues. I sometimes want to contact these women, but I was told by a counselor that I should not—not ever. So I have not, but the thought is always there. I also went to a counselor who really did not have much experience in online affairs and I don't think she understood the pain I was experiencing because it "wasn't a real affair." Sure it was, it just wasn't physical (I think). I still wonder about the pros and cons of whether or not the betrayed spouse should make contact with "other person."

They were never important for him and he always thought it was harmless as he was just using them to vent off. He never really understood that for me was as hurting as a real affair. I had to get a divorce lawyer and make him see I was determined to leave him to make him stop. But the trust is gone and I don't know if we will ever recover from it and really save our marriage.

This affair was between my husband and a married woman. She sought him out by playing the injured female. Her marriage was bad, according to her. They knew each other because of Scouts. They began to communicate over the Internet, and became intimate that way. Her husband found out and had copies of their emails along with other proof. He brought the data to me on the day he filed for divorce. The husband and I confronted them about it and they both lied very good. My husband even wanted the 4 of us to get together as friends. He lied constantly about the relationship that they shared. After the final discovery, her husband made her submit to a lie detector test to verify the depth of physical contact. My husband said it was very easy to view his relationship with her as anonymous due to the ability to hit the send button. They were only together 4 times, 3 of which were in public. The 4th he ended abruptly due to her desire to get physical. This data has also been confirmed by tape recordings.

The biggest evil online today is AOL. It is too easy to just chat at any point, plus they have way too much sexually available information to constantly tempt the online user. I hate the way our country has made it so easy and seem okay to cheat on the spouse. Sex is too overrated and used to sell everything these days. If you're not getting "x" amount of sex a week, then there must be something wrong. We are going to counseling now; I just don't know if it will work out in the end. There's no guarantee and it scares me. This is his second affair, and I don't know if I will make it through the recovery. He is an adult child of an alcoholic and they have no idea of a "normal" life--they create chaos where there is peace just so they can feel better like the chaotic home life they grew up in.

My husband's online affair began when an old high school girlfriend found his name and email address online. She wrote him and he was only too happy to forget our marriage of 25 years. I discovered the affair and he ended it 2 months ago, but he's still missing her and very cool and distant with me. I don't know if our marriage will survive, not just because of the affair itself, but because of his attitude and lack of interest in mending our marriage.

My husband has 2 online affairs that I know and says no. I found out by catching him while his son was at work with him online and she popped up and said something to him and I was there. Busted. Still devastated. He is in every adult site online!

My husband's online affair turned into a physical affair that has changed our lives in every way, including financially when he lost his job and we had to move to another state. I was able to read most of the email between him and the woman, who has met many other men through personal ads. It was shocking, but it was also good in a way through reading them to get the idea that the relationship was so artificial, not based on reality, and seemed like an escape from real life to sexual fantasy. It seemed to read like a game of some kind. However, some of the words I read are etched in my brain and come back to haunt me. In some ways, it is more information than I sometimes wish I had.

The person that my wife is having contact with lives 700 miles away. He has just in the last 6 months split up with his wife. He is using my wife and sends her emails that if it were real life would make anyone feel that he is working on her brain and brainwashing her to think that he is the best thing she has ever known. In reality he is a bore that stays all day on his computer and half the night keeping my wife up until 3.30am in the morning. My wife is addicted to the computer but won't admit it.

This has truly changed him—he has always been very proud, a good husband, father, and very compassionate, never tolerated lying, (which is what he does regularly now), acts very indifferent, and unfazed by important issues, acts and does the unthinkable things now, and unreachable.

I am certain that this is probably common for many relationships that have been written about... However, there has to be a happy turnout for some and I would sincerely want to hear about it. I have prayed and gone through many things including counseling for myself to do something for the salvation of not only my marriage, but also my husband.

I emailed the person I suspected. I really don't know the whole truth.

Having an extremely difficult time recovering because even after it ended she does not show me the passion that she showed him

I was accused of being a controlling and in need of counseling when her affair started affecting our marriage. She was online for 5-6 hours a night. It led to more and more problems until we stopped talking. Then she began having an affair with a married co-worker. She denied and rationalized everything.... It was all my fault, and she was totally innocent. We went to counseling, but she never told the whole truth. We are now divorced.

We were married 25 years when this affair became known to me in its full intensity. I have filed for divorce as he refuses to re-commit to our marriage. He also continues to deny that the affair was (and is) a sexual one, although I have nearly 2 years of correspondence between him and his lover with intimate details. He has made the choice of the "chatroom Lover" over a 25-year marriage. I am very saddened that he has refused any counseling on his addiction to cyber-sex, etc. I still love him deeply but I cannot live with a man I cannot trust. His choice is clear although I don't know how he expects to continue the affair since she lives out of town and is still married. My heart will always miss him, but I must look forward now

It is cheating. I feel betrayed that he is looking for other women. Swapping pictures and telling her how beautiful she is. I feel inadequate. I don't trust him at all.

Make sure you are able to review your spouses mail sent or saved. Never trust anyone who said they are just fooling around, it's nothing. If you suspect an affair, address it as soon as possible. You will never feel the same after you have been a victim of a cheating affair, you will never love that person again or trust them again. Try to salvage the marriage for the kids' sake. If no children, get out of that marriage as soon as possible. Never stay with someone you can't trust; there is no forgiveness for deceptions and lies.

As for "How did it end?"... it just sort of fizzled out.

This is such a destructive and insidious form of agony. The denial is the most painful.

My first marriage was ruined when I had an online affair myself. My current husband knows all about it. That is why it hurt so much that he put himself in the same position and now....he has hurt me. The relationship appears to have been going on about two weeks before I found out. He denied the account was his until I found info on things we had done on an email. He even gave this woman his daughter's real name and email account he had set up for her but she didn't know the password for it yet. I felt that this info was stupid and even more hurtful since he put her at risk. (She lives with us.) I am trying to recover since it never went "live," but I am having a hard time with trust. Wish me luck....I really love him.

I never suspected until the very few days right before I found the incriminating evidence. The sex talk was not the worst. The worst was the fact that she (my wife) was giving away what seemed to be emotional commitment, and even used our silly little pet names for each other on the other guy. I left the night I found everything and haven't been back. I filed for divorce about a week later. I may be Draconian in my reaction, but I told her from the very beginning that that is what would happen if I found her cheating on me in any way. I was devastated. I will have a hard time ever trusting a woman who owns a computer fully again. I even discarded my computer because they are rather repugnant to me now.

My significant other has engaged in hundreds of online affairs. He is untruthful about his relationship status and sets up meetings when he has to go out of town on business. He considers it a game. It boosts his ego. And, it has destroyed my trust in him.

My husband had an online affair and it ended although he keeps the friendship.

I hate to be spilling my guts here, but...I'm 29, my wife is 26. She is in love with a 16-year-old kid she met online playing a fantasy game. I found out the truth by sneaking into her laptop and finding dozens of love emails. This was one week ago. I hope this helps your research.

My wife left for a man on the Internet, I wonder whether these relationships last or not, and how long it usually lasts before reality hits.

We are having big problems now because I go in and out of extreme anxiety at least once a week when anything triggers the idea that he might be doing something now. I discovered highly sexual phone messages from 5 women on the phone line we usually used only for the computers. He says it's all over and is upset with me for not trusting him. I had known he was into the porn sites and chat rooms; that didn't bother me because he told me it was a goof and he would never talk to anyone on the phone personally. Now I wonder what he does and doesn't tell me. There had been some email contacts he had made before that I discovered in weird ways but he said it was just a game to him, just entertainment. I think all of it is that to him, but it is such a shock to discover these things. I am always afraid I am going to discover something else.

The scariest part of it all was that my husband maintained that he became involved with these women because he was sure that "by that time our marriage was over"!!! No inkling on my part, no mention or indication from him in any way that he even thought there was a problem for us. He was even still carrying on with all the "normal" things while he maintained full-on (6 hours per day, minimum) "relationships" online. The cruel, intentional, hurtful, uncaring and purely sinister deception hurt so very, very much.

My wife had multiple online affairs that were also extended to actual physical meetings/sex.

When you get the Internet, there should be an agreement on where each couple can go. If you agree to chatting, then there should be no hiding what either party is chatting about.

I ran across your online affairs article. I could only shake my head in knowing that everything that was said is so true. I couldn't believe how he fit it to a tee. He has not talked to me about it and I think he never will. I just need to know who she is and how long this has been going on. I couldn't believe how cold he had become and now he acts like nothing has happened.

I just wanted to say, your write-up of how this develops was right on the money... the feelings, the soul-mate crap and the way the spouse in real life can't compete. I don't think I will ever lose the pain of the betrayal and the sound of all those months of lies.

This is actually a cell-phone affair. In the last 5 months she went from a couple of hours of phone calls per month to over 40 hours last month! She even calls when the kids and I are just out of earshot, for instance at the park today—on MOTHER'S day no less.

My husband had more than one online affair...no emotional attachments...just sex....but over a period of 8 months he "met" 4 women on 7 occasions for sex. He chatted online with 25 or 30 women during the 8 months....the first woman that he had physical sex with called me at our home to "tell on him"....when she found out that he had been having sex with 3 other women...and she wasn't the only one. She was jealous....when he confessed to all....he contacted each of them and told them to never contact him again...he had no trouble ending any of it....after he got caught. I really needed to talk to someone. I have read "The Monogamy Myth" and it is the first book I've read that offered me any relief....I know that I need help....I am not in an area where I can easily get "counseling"....so I have been trying to counsel myself with books.

My husband had an affair with his secretary (18 years younger than he is). It is now over, but he has switched his attention to porn (viewing young girls) on the Internet. I told him to choose porn or his marriage. He left! I feel the porn viewing (it is up to 20 hours per week) is like having numerous affairs. I feel betrayed all over again. I feel the trust is once gone and this time he doesn't see a need to try to regain it. I don't know what to do.

I feel online affairs can be just as painful to the marriage as any other affair. It needs to be addressed and handled just as any other affair. My husband thinks that it is not harmful to the marriage. I disagree. Since his online affair, we've had numerous fights, and he now lives somewhere else. When confronted and given a choice of marriage or the online affair, he chose the computer. It has been 3 months and I feel just as much pain as ever. I still love him, but I can't live knowing he'd rather be online than holding me. I feel worthless!

I have read a lot of books since this happened and now believe I understand why...even though that still makes it hard to accept. But basically we had grown apart. I was not giving him the attention he needed and he became lonely, as was I. I turned to books; I read fantasy novels all the time looking for that perfect man in my head, while he found the perfect woman on line... someone who was centered on him and encouraged his ego. A man going through a midlife crisis needs attention... tell him he's sexy, touch him, etc. I want my marriage to work and I want to save my marriage, therefore I'm not willing to walk away because of an online romance with an Internet bimbo. I was able to find out and stop this before it had gone too far. I'm sure not everyone does. Now I'm focusing on how to make my relationship with my husband work and survive. Wish me luck

My husband was relocated out of town during the week and home on the weekends. He was dealing with a lot of self-esteem issues at the time and very depressed (and resentful) about being away from his family all week. I think the Internet gave him easy access to find someone who would make him feel needed and better about himself. I have been and still am in counseling and I wish you would speak more to the issue of people who have affairs as a reaction to anxiety. They have no intention of leaving their spouse or family and love them very much. This is so incredibly hard to understand, but really does make sense after you start to analyze what was missing in the relationship for both of us. I think the Internet fosters affairs that otherwise would never take place. I know that our needs weren't being met, how could they be with all of the distance and baggage, but when there are people out there online just looking for an affair it makes it so easy to fall into this fantasy world and escape dealing with why you are feeling the way you are and what you should truly do about it. People are never completely honest about themselves online; they tell you what they want you to know and make up things too. I think the Internet is very tempting and can be comforting to people with a lot of time on their hands and are feeling very lonely.

My husband asked me for a separation in December and he still has not gone to see a lawyer yet. He wants me to do it. We also have 2 boys, and the other woman has 1 girl. It is a long-distance relationship, but so is our marriage of 16 years. He only gets home on the weekend.

We're still dealing with the aftereffects and in counseling now, both as a couple and separately.

My own ignorance of how to use a computer made this discovery even more devastating, I am now computer savvy! In addition I feel that some if not all pages like Excite, Yahoo actually encourage this behavior.

I think that online affairs are in the "fairy tale" realm. "She is easy to talk to," "She doesn't criticize me," "I can't believe a 25-year-old was interested in me." (Duh, her husband was 56). Hello, where is your brain? Plus, she isn't married to you, she doesn't have to make ends meet, or ask you to do the yard work, or watch you stare at the T.V. all weekend long. It is a dream world, one we would all enjoy for awhile, but one where reality has to raise its little head. I was not leaving this marriage of 32 years; I earned every entitlement. And when my husband dies, I get the insurance money, not some young bimbo looking for a new daddy for her two kids. (Her husband was dying of cancer.) Of course, the affair just about destroyed me. I feel like I aged 10 years and I believe I look like I have. It blindsided me at a time when my life was great and I was feeling grand about myself. It has been 2 1/2 years and I still am not who I use to be and my health is showing that, but I have decided I have to get the person back that I was before all of this happened. I have to be the winner in this situation, all the way around. I have to live.

It has almost ended our marriage; children no longer respect her.

I feel that the key to whether or not online affairs would be considered infidelity lies within the knowledge of the spouse or significant other. If the person having the online relationship, whether it be chatting, emails or cybering, is hiding their online activity from their spouse, then it is cheating. The secrecy of this hidden world shatters trust in the relationship and can take months or years to rebuild. I feel my whole marriage was a lie as my husband was involved in this activity without my knowledge long before he ever met me. What I thought was a perfect relationship became a mere illusion to me after my discoveries. What makes matters worse is that there is no way to find out everything that happened, especially if it had been going on for years! Online infidelity can be just as devastating as a physical affair.

The pc is the ruin of our marriage.

My wife engaged in a BDSM encounter (Bondage, Dominance/Submission, SadoMasochism) which also involved sex.

There are zillions of very lonely, unhappy people out there just looking for someone to fulfill their needs—online or in person...doesn't seem to matter. Honesty is the only way to begin to handle the situation. Secrecy makes it more exciting for the participants, so honesty can make it more realistic. My husband still sees this woman at least once a month—and it's expensive. I hope that it will run its course soon. He claims to have no real feelings for her except to have sex with her (even though our sex life is good, too). I'm in a holding pattern, recognizing that it is a serious problem for both of us, but one that he is unwilling to stop right now. Your articles have been the one thing to get me this far. Thank you.

In answer to the question: "Did they meet in person," it was when they were making plans to meet that my spouse came to me with the details of their meeting plans. (He was from Canada, she from

Australia, so they couldn't meet clandestinely). A question on did they even plan to meet may yield more information on the intended direction.

The Internet is the 3rd leading cause of divorce today. Yes, we are still married—20 years this year, but it's been 2 years since the affair and I still am having a problem forgiving.

My husband doesn't look at this as having an affair because there was no physical contact. I, however, feel the hurt and betrayal just as much as if it had been physical. The lying and covering up were as hurtful to me as anything could possibly be.

I can only hope that he doesn't return to this. I had no idea--I questioned him about work one day and he was basically on his knees spilling his guts out. I wasn't interrogating him--I just asked him a question. But then all the pieces fell together and I insisted he see a shrink to determine first if he wanted to stay married, and then how to overcome this addiction. All has been well--it's been over two years now. I am sure that it is over...but then I never knew it existed in the first place. Scary thing to go through. I guess though, that's it's better than actual contact with this other person. I don't think I could have been as forgiving.

There were many affairs. I do not expect him to stop; he's addicted and won't see that.

Online Affairs or "Wanna Be" Affairs, as I call them, are very dangerous—even more so sometimes than "non-cyber" affairs because people give out so much family information to a person who may not even be who they say they are. It endangers the whole family in so many ways. I have experienced both types of affairs with my husband—he has a sexual addiction and if he doesn't get it under control soon he will no longer be my husband. I am very frightened for my 10-year-old son.

My wife claimed to have ended the affair 2 weeks ago but I know she still shares EMAIL and cell phone text messages. I don't know whether they meet and share a physical relationship still.

My wife's online affair began when our neighbors moved away. I knew that my wife found the man attractive but I had no idea how much. My wife and the man corresponded by email for a while after they moved away. After a couple months of innocent emails my wife revealed to the man that she had had a huge crush on him and she just wanted to let him know. Well things got hot and heavy almost immediately. They never had physical contact but had discussed plans to meet. I discovered the affair about 1.5 months after it started.

What is so painful for me is that my husband introduced me to his chat friend and we became couple friends and visited each other's homes in different parts of the country. I was a visitor in her home when she was having this affair with my husband!

All the affection went out of our relationship. Sex still ok. Wife's relationship with children very poor due to time and secrecy on line. I found out she was seeing someone about 4 months after she ended it. Damage to relationship had already been done.

He knows I know he talks to her; he does it in the same room as I am in sometimes. He used to complain she was a pain, but now he hasn't talked about her to me at all in more than a month. She thought he was single at first. Three weeks later he admitted he was living with someone and had kids. A month later he had to admit he lived in a different state than he had told her. He had to because she was flying to see him. Finally, two weeks ago she flew here to meet him and he told her he couldn't see her by email. He didn't see her and after she went back he admitted he was married. None of these admissions seem to bother her for long. She continues to talk to him online and keeps telling him to call her from work. He doesn't know I know any of the details from the last month and a half. I always read his emails because he has made phone calls in the past from home. He doesn't know I do this. He also doesn't know I've installed Spector in the computer now to protect myself. I'm not sure what I want to do about it yet. He is 40 and having an extended mid-life crisis and I haven't decided what to do. If I confront him, he'll be more careful and just talk to her on the phone or somewhere else online. I'm still shocked. I never thought he would meet her. He chickened out 3 days before the meeting because he said he was afraid of getting caught. He also told her twice that he wanted to attempt an affair with her. Well, that's my story so far. I am monitoring their chats to see what he's going to do. She still wants to see him and tells him that every day. Good luck with the book.

My husband and I have never had the perfect marriage...but I feel since we got our computer...it has been a thorn in our marriage. I am sticking it out... praying that God restore our marriage. My husband feels I haven't given him unconditional love thru our marriage. I have been asking God to show me how to love my husband. I have the love there for him, but I've never been able to give it the way I know I should. With him preoccupied with chatting with the other woman, he is blind to my change that God is giving me. We need your prayers!!! I believe God wants our marriage to be restored; it's just so hard at night...the sound of the typing on the keyboard is like a knife in my heart.

The personality of the individuals involved should be identified. Usually someone with a personality disorder or very poor character get involved in such affairs. It is usually a senseless rebound yet exciting as any initial infatuation is.

I completely, 100% trusted my husband before this. I never thought this would happen in a million years. Since, I have found other things in his email where he was actively seeking a woman to have an affair with. He went as far to say that he wanted more than a one-night stand. I don't know if I would have found out about this if the other (online) woman hadn't called me, then he admitted it. He still doesn't know that I know about the other thing I found out, and I don't know whether to confront him? He said some pretty shocking things. I am so devastated; I don't know what to do. He is my second husband. I had a very bad first marriage in which all my husband did while we were married was have affairs. I am 43, my husband now is 42. I had a baby with him when I was 39. I have two grown sons and hadn't planned on starting another family in this time of life, but my new husband didn't have any kids and practically begged me to. I don't regret having my daughter at all, I can't imagine life without her. I just don't know what to do about my husband now.

It hurts!

Having this happen was one of the most devastating issues I have ever dealt with. Some people say it is harmless if it is done online, but one has to consider the lives one disrupts and the fact that you share your most intimate thoughts, secrets and dreams with someone other than the person you made a lifelong promise to them. Afterwards, that person has to learn how to discover the person that the unfaithful person has created.

Our relationship grew through the extensive Internet communication via email. Through this medium we shared our innermost thoughts and dreams—creating an intimacy between us that surpassed anything that I had known with my husband. I find that email is a very easy way to spill your guts – and become vulnerable.

My husband had an online affair which turned real life. They talked on the phone, emailed, IM'ed each other, and then met in real life. They developed an emotional attachment to each other.

I began chatting with the Sys-Ops and other local people. I met several of them in person. I quickly got caught up in the excitement of talking to these people and learning things about them that they wouldn't have told me in person. We probably wouldn't have said two words to each other had we met in person and not on the BBS. The anonymity of the computer should not be underestimated. I also began to confide in my online friends about things in my life that bothered me. One of the women immediately introduced me to an Internet chat program and taught me how to use it. I thought it was amazing to be able to chat with people all over the world on the computer. I began coming home from work and going online. I'd had a dedicated line for the computer for years even though I didn't need it. Well now I needed it. I would stay online chatting for hours.

My wife suffers from depression and Internet addiction, both of which she is in denial. She recently left to be alone with her addiction. We have 3 great kids, a brand new home and all love her very much. Nobody can reach her...she is happy... with her denial and addiction. It is truly very sad. We pray for her daily. I am still trying to save her, but the future seems very bleak. She is a great person, just most seriously confused due to depression. I begged her to go to the Dr., but of course she refused, as she would then have to admit that she did have problems. Pray for us all. Thanks... a very sad husband of 24 years.

It is a heartbreaking experience; my trust in a man I loved more than life itself has been shattered. I don't know if I will ever be able to trust him again and the worst part was he tried to make out I was imagining everything and told me I needed mental help. I began to think I was going mad until I learned how to use history. He then deleted all chat programs and reformatted, screaming at me that it was still all in my head. It has caused us tremendous heartache. I still check and I hate myself for doing it. He had 4 different names and each time I caught him he would go to a different chat program and tell her to change her name. I found 7 different names for her. What do they find so exciting? Its so, so sad.

My wife's cyberaffair was based on the need for romance and emotional support. She tried to meet him, but he lived too far away. I really hope its over.

Online relationship is no different than a physical one. The spouse's thoughts are elsewhere. Focus should be on the husband or wife to make their lives better.

I just found out about this on Thursday, so I'm still in shock.

The online affairs scenario could have fit us exactly, except that my husband was the one having the online affairs. It's not just housewives who do these things. He has ruined my life as well as my children's over some women that he has never met. Some of them he has met and had affairs with, but others still exist only in cyberland. It is a very scary concept that someone would sacrifice their family's happiness for something that could all be a lie. Cyberspace is scary!! I truly believe that his addiction to the online services were the beginning of the end of our marriage.

It may be useful to point out that the person my husband saw was met online. After finding out about his seeing her, I contacted her through email. She claimed that he never told her he was married; she was under the impression that I was dead and that he was raising our son. That's what he told her.

The "affairs" were over the Internet. I don't know if this is considered an affair, but to me it is still a threat to my marriage.

My husband's relationship started out in an Internet chat room. He later gave the woman his cell phone number. Several times he'd sit for several minutes in his van after he got home from work. He told me he was listening to songs he liked, but I could see from the living room window that he was on the phone. That's when I suspected something was wrong. One night I decided to ask him about it, and I went into the computer room. He did something on the computer and a logging off message was on the screen. I asked my son who is a computer programmer what AOL chat was and he told me what his father was doing. He then discovered the emails on my husband's computer, and also in several AOL, and Yahoo email accounts. He used the same password for everything so my son was able to get into his accounts for weeks without my husband expecting anything. We are currently getting divorced. We have 5 kids. One I brought into the marriage (29), 2 he brought into the marriage (23,19), and 2 we had together (13,10). We have both been divorced previously.

When I confront my spouse with anything I have found, such as strange phone numbers on his cell phone bill belonging to females (some of which belong to ex-girlfriends), swapping pictures and emails to females (some females pictures are naked), etc. he denies and continues to deny it all, telling me I am paranoid, even though I have the proof. He lies about everything. When found out he sweeps it under the carpet and expects me to forget it and it continues to go unresolved, as far as my feelings about the issues. This, as far as I know, has been going on for at least 3 years, maybe longer. He is usually on the Internet from the moment he wakes up in the morning (6am) until he goes to bed at night (10pm) on weekends. One weekend morning I woke up, walked out of the bedroom and there he sat looking at a naked picture of a female. I was so hurt especially after he promised me he would never do it again. The excuse was that someone, a male friend of his emailed it to him, which may be true as he was not on the Internet at that time, but he could have downloaded it, then logged off the Internet. He accuses me of being a snoop and to stay out of his personal stuff, computer included. He said he has stopped but I continue to suspect he has not.

All the affection went out of our relationship. Sex still ok. Wife's relationship with children very poor due to time and secrecy on line. I found out she was seeing someone about 4 months after she ended it. Damage to relationship had already been done.

My husband met this woman through a music-swapping site and then they started chatting and then they started using the phone and email. We live in Canada and she lives in Australia. My husband just left to meet her a week ago. He's spending a month in Australia and when he comes home he'll tell me if it's her or me. This has been the strangest most heartbreaking experience of my life. I truly, deeply love my husband with all my heart—but I do have to admit that I made some mistakes. I won't take responsibility for my husband choosing to have this affair but I will admit that I wasn't paying enough attention to him. Since he left I've been doing a lot of reading on marriages and I understand much better now the mistakes I've made. I only hope with all my heart that I get a chance to show him that our marriage can be a good one. He told me that if this woman didn't turn out to be the "love of his life"—he'd try to make our marriage work. He's 44 this year and I'm 42. This is both our second marriage and we've been together almost seven years (married only 3). Sometimes I think he's having a mid-life crisis. I can forgive an affair—I honestly can. The hardest part, however, if he gives me the opportunity to save our marriage, will be trusting him again. When he told me about the affair, I had no idea whatsoever that he was so unhappy. I had no warning. It was like someone had severed one of my limbs, I was in a total state of shock and total despair. It's been 3 weeks or so since I found out—I'm much better now but I've confirmed in my own mind that I sincerely love him—there is no question about it. Any mistakes I've made that have hurt him were unintentional—not that that means I'm excused for my behavior—but this affair—as I told him—hurt me to my very soul. I could never hurt him like he's hurt me. But I can forgive, as I said. He'll come home in two weeks, and then after he's been home two weeks—he says he'll give me his final decision. The next month will be the hardest month of my life.

Stories Posted by Others who had Online Affairs

These stories (and the responses from others) were posted on my website in response to my invitation for anyone to share their personal experience if they were willing for their sharing to be included in this book.

One Woman's Story of her own Online Affair

I had/am having an online affair. It has stayed online though, and my husband does not know about it

At first, when it was just fun and games, I felt it was ok. But then along the way I let myself fall in love with the guy, and it has become a very emotionally involved thing for me—so I do not think that it is ok. It is not fair of me to share myself so emotionally with someone other than my husband.

I've been blaming myself because I must not be giving my husband what he needs. My problem is that my attraction to this guy is like an addiction, and I can't bring myself to stop it. My husband is wonderful—we have a great relationship—he is very caring, very responsive to my needs—yet somehow this has happened anyway

We have not met—I don't believe we ever will—we don't want to end our marriages. We are both otherwise good people—good spouses, good parents—but somehow this has happened. I didn't INTEND for this to happen.

Here's a bit of background

I go into a chat room—I meet a guy—his first time in a chat room—we talk—we have a few laughs. For some crazy reason I go back the next night and he is there again—hoping I would be. We chat again. And before you know it we are chatting regularly. Then one day we are chatting and begin to talk about our feelings and we realize we are probably falling in love, as odd as that sounds. And by that time we were hooked—it really feels like an addiction. I think about him all the time—it drives me insane.

I have a good marriage—and I don't want it to end—and I don't know why I am involved in this thing—but I can't bring myself to stop. I wrestle with the guilt all the time.

Another Woman's Story of her Online Affair

I would like to share my story – in the hope that IT will help someone else avoid this. As I reflect on the events of the past year, it is hard to believe how I was capable of such lying and betrayal, and how easy it was to get caught up in online experiences, and lose my perspective, my morals and my sense of good judgment.

There is one question that will always trouble me...and that is, had I not been caught at my deceptions, how long would it have continued? It is a question I am unable to answer.

(continued from previous page)

I felt the article "Online Affairs" so accurately described my feelings and experiences...from the "typical scenario," sharing hopes and dreams, losing touch with the real world, getting so caught up, and eventually having my real life turned upside down. I have caused so much pain to so many people; it is something I am deeply ashamed of.

As you may have guessed by now, I have had online affairs...not one...not two, but three. Even as I sit here typing, I begin to shake, just remembering my betrayals. It is difficult for me to retell, because of how deeply I hurt others, all of whom had trusted me.

I have been married for 17 years, not all of which have been happy. My husband and I had been growing more and more distant, and we had some deep-rooted problems concerning communication and child rearing. We did not see eye to eye on many issues. I guess I had a need for attention, and to reach out, and chatting was the way I chose to do it.

As with all online affairs, mine began innocently. I began chatting in chat rooms, just to pass the time, and meet interesting people. You might say I was a bit naive. It didn't take long before I met someone who was witty and fun to talk to. Our chats eventually turned into emails and phone calls. There were the common feelings of being so connected. This continued until the early summer of 1999, at which time, this person told me he wanted to end our relationship because he was trying to work things out with his wife. Of course, I felt a huge loss, but respected his wishes, and made no further attempt to contact him.

I was feeling lonely without him, so again went back into chat and met another man. The difference here was that this person lived relatively close by. We shared dreams and fantasies. This person was going through a separation, and eventually moved out of his house. Towards the end of the summer, we didn't have regular contact, although I still fantasized about him a great deal.

I went back to the chat room one day in September, after my kids had gone back to school, and I found myself with some free time. I chatted very innocently with a couple of people, one of whom asked me to email him...which I did. I was intrigued by this person. He was insightful and intelligent, as well as witty and fun to "be" with. He was always challenging me in ways no one else had. From the beginning, he told me he knew the dangers of online relationships, and said that the foundation of our relationship had to be based on trust. I told him about my past relationships, and how I no longer had contact with either of those men.

This is where my story becomes more twisted. As I became increasingly caught up in this third relationship (I will call the man C), I received an email from the man who lived close by (who I will refer to as B.) I wasn't ready to give up that fantasy, so I maintained contact with him, without telling C. A couple of weeks later, after not hearing from him for months, I got an email from the first man (who I will call A.) He said that as hard as he tried, he couldn't get me out of his mind, and wanted to resume contact. At first, I told him no, but when he contacted me again, a month or two later, I couldn't resist the temptation to want to know how he was doing.

Meanwhile, I didn't want to lose C, and knew that he would be gone if he knew about my contact with A and B. What C and I had was different. I felt like he knew me so well; we discussed issues I had never talked about before with anyone, and helped me in my personal life a great deal. He gave so much of his time and effort to me. He deserved so much more than what I gave him.

It was eventually C who discovered my relationships with A and B. I was terrified at the consequences...so I continued to lie until there were no avenues left open to me, something I now deeply regret. C finally found out the truth about everything, and I had to pay for all the hurt I caused.

Meanwhile, my husband still had no idea at all that anything was going on. He knew I had become withdrawn from him and the family, our relationship had deteriorated tremendously, but he never suspected the cause.

I had no choice but to confront him with a letter C had written to him, revealing all of my indiscretions. I will never forget the look of pain, and then hate on my husband's face when I told him of all I had done. For the first time, I saw my husband in a different light; not as a controlling, demeaning person, but as a trusting spouse who had just been crushed by what I had done.

I know he will never think of me in the same way again, although he is willing to work at the marriage. We are currently going to counseling, but I now realize that even with counseling, the majority of the "work" needs to be done at home. We are the ones that have to help ourselves...the counselor can only mediate.

There are many, many details I have left out of this story, because if I included everything, it would take up pages and pages. But one of the difficult things about online affairs is that I found I couldn't talk to anyone about what I was going through. I had so many feelings inside me when it all came crashing down. I was trying to deal with the pain I caused the three men I had relationships with, as well as the hurt I caused my husband and family. I struggle with many conflicting feelings. As strange as it may sound, I also felt a great loss in not having that special person out there to comfort me, confide in, or to give my attention to.

I have been trying to focus my attention on my husband and family. I know I have to let go of the ideas of fantasy, and concentrate on what matters in the world that surrounds me. This is not an easy thing to do, but I am trying.

I know how difficult it can be for someone who has never had an online relationship to understand just how powerful feelings can become. You can get so caught up in an online relationship, that everything else in your life seems secondary. It's as if you can't get enough of being with the other person. You lose sight of reality, and get completely immersed in your own world. I felt like I lost my sense of judgment, and nothing else other than my Internet relationships mattered, and yes ... my feelings were so powerful, I imagined myself leaving the marriage at one point. (I don't think I actually would have done it, though...in hindsight, it's hard to say.) For me, it was like living out a fantasy. It was a way to escape the problems of the real world, and be with someone who understood me, and was there to "make things better." I hope this helps you to understand...

After I told my husband about my online affairs, all my contact with any of the men I knew ceased. It was not possible to continue any of my relationships, which is not to say that I still don't think about them.... But, I do know that I will never do anything like that again.

I am uncertain what will happen in my marriage. All of the problems which led me to have online affairs for the most part, still remain. However, now, because of what I have done, I am at risk of losing the respect of my children, and that would be devastating.

My life has changed in ways I never would have imagined two years ago when I first began chatting. It will be a slow process to rebuild what I have destroyed.

Some Postings Responding to above Stories

*Including ongoing exchanges following the initial responses
(also posted with agreement that all comments would be included in this book)*

Thanks for sharing your experiences with online affairs and the consequences of them. I'm also struggling with the issues you've both raised, and I can see similarities in what you both have said with what my husband and I are currently trying to deal with.

In your posting you refer primarily to online affairs, but you also seem to suggest the affairs went beyond the computer and telephone, but this remains unclear. Several previous postings address the distinction (or lack thereof) between the emotional aspect of online affairs versus "real-world" affairs. This has been a topic my husband and I have argued about at great length (is it an affair if you never meet in person?) Were your affairs limited exclusively to online?

Given your experiences what is your view on the distinction drawn by many between online and real-world affairs?

I'm having a tough time with this so any insight you can offer would be appreciated.

You bring up an interesting point. You say that your instincts tell you that your husband is afraid to disclose everything because he fears that you would leave. I also felt the same way. There is certain information that I have withheld, because I felt that if he knew, there would be no chance of reconciliation. What I had confessed to him in itself was so hurtful and destructive ... I can only imagine what would have happened had I told him every last detail. There would have been no chance to salvage my marriage. Do you think you would feel the same way?

In a way, I wish I could tell him everything, so I would no longer have any secrets from him. It all would be out in the open. But I sincerely believe that this wouldn't be for the best.

I know that the most important element of our marriage has been destroyed, and that is the issue of trust. My husband had always trusted me, without question, before all this happened. I know now that he will never fully trust me again. This is something we both must live with. Whenever I go out by myself, or with friends, I always feel I must justify my actions, because I know he still has his doubts about me. Do you feel the same way with your husband?

There is one thing I can say for sure, though, and that is that I know I will never have another affair again. If our marriage does not work out, it will end on it's own merits, not because I have found another man. I would never want to subject my husband, my family, the other man, or myself to the enormous pain that goes along with the emotions of an affair.

I can't speak for your husband, but I suspect he would feel the same way. I have been told that it is difficult for people to change, and that once someone has had an affair, it's just a matter of time before they do it again. That wouldn't be the case with me. I know I would never get a second chance.

I apologize if I have drifted from the subject ... Yes, I do miss not still being in touch with the other man, because I truly miss his friendship. There are many reasons why I can never contact him again, even though I feel this way. It is unrealistic to think that I can still maintain a friendship with the man I had an affair with. I know I can't have my cake and eat it too.

The other man made it perfectly clear that we are to have no further contact. I also told my husband that I would end all contact with the other men. (The other man that I speak of so often is not married...he is single.) How would I be able to focus on my marriage, if I were still in contact with the other man? It wouldn't be fair to anyone involved.

You must also remember that my affair was more complex and deceitful than any other I have read here. I was involved with three separate men online, two of whom I met in person. I not only betrayed my husband, but I also betrayed the other men. Now that time has passed, and I reflect on it all, I realize that there was only one man who I felt an intimate connection to, and this is the man I speak of when I refer to the "other man." The other two were more superficial. I guess I just enjoyed the attention, which is a difficult thing to admit. Every time I think of what I have done, I feel such a sense of shame...how could I have been so wrapped up at not to realize what I was doing? What was I thinking?? What was wrong with me?? Your husband and I probably have many of the same feelings still lingering. I would be surprised if he does not honestly miss the woman he had the affair with, but if he is committed to making your marriage work, he will let those memories fade, and focus on the present. It takes time, but that is what I am trying to do. Like anything else, there are good days and bad days. He is probably afraid to admit this to you, because he's afraid of further hurting you.

You mentioned that understanding him does not help in terms of forgiving him. What steps would he need to take in order for you to begin forgiving him? Can you ever forgive him for what he's done to you? Is it true that you may be able to forgive, but never forget? I would like to be able to be worthy someday of my husband's forgiveness. I don't know if it will be possible. As strange as this may sound, I often think how I would also like to be forgiven by the other man, for the pain I had caused him. But, this is one thing I will never know....

I am glad I can help you to understand much of what your husband is going through. In the same way, you are helping me very much to understand my husband's feelings. I look forward to hearing from you again.

I cannot tell you how much I have appreciated reading your posts. There is comfort in knowing that there is someone out there who can relate to what I am going through. While, I am the person who cheated, I cannot get over the pain of breaking it off with the OM. My husband never found out and for that I am relieved. But, I miss the OM so much. We were together for over 2 years. We went away together on more than 10 trips. We talked almost every day. We were best friends. If anyone ever tries to say that an online romance is not an affair ... then they are lying. That is how mine started and I wasn't even looking. I wasn't even "unhappy" at home. I met the OM online and we just hit it off. Just like that ... and before you knew it, we were talking about meeting. Now, I am suffering the pain of losing him. There would have been pain either way. Either by walking out on my marriage or by ending it with the other man. I just wish I knew how to get through this. How do

you just stop talking after sharing everything? I really would like to know how you did that? How you just stopped speaking with the other man. Time heals all ... or does it?

I can relate to so much of what you wrote. I, too, was not looking to have an online affair, or anything like that. It just "happened." But, in order for it to have happened, I know that there must have been a void in my life. One of the many things my husband has a hard time understanding is this....why didn't I approach him with my problems instead of turning to people on the Internet?

I agree that no matter what the outcome, there is pain involved. It is something we don't think about when we enter into an affair. I feel that, for me, the decision to remain with my family is the right one.

How long ago did you break off the affair? I believe that time does heal; every week you will feel a little better. There will be good days and bad days, and many temptations to contact the other man. For me, I tried, and am still trying, to redirect my energy into other areas...specifically, my husband, my kids, myself, and my job. But, I wasn't able to do this right away. I went through a period of feeling depressed, and of feeling "is this all there is to life?" I think part of it was letting go of the fantasy I had built with the other man, and realizing the reality of it all, and how much I had at stake to lose.

I hope that time begins to ease the pain for you, and you will begin to realize that you made the right decision. Good luck, and be strong.

In my opinion, there IS a difference between an exclusively online affair, and one that goes the next step, and enters into the realm of the real world. When I admitted my affairs to my husband, he felt the same way. He didn't have as much of a problem with my relationship with a man who lived over twenty hours away, as he did with the fact that I lied to him in order to meet with another man in person.

By not meeting in the real world, it is still possible to maintain a certain ideal in your mind. Meeting brings it into reality. Although, I do agree that when you are in an exclusively online relationship, you feel a very strong emotional attachment. This attachment caused me to become withdrawn from the real world and from my husband. I think that when all your emotions are going to another man, it is a betrayal of trust between husband and wife. My husband couldn't figure out how I found it so easy to pour out my emotions to a "stranger" I met on the Internet, instead of turning to him.

But, in sum, I believe there IS a distinction between an exclusively online affair, and one that goes into the real world.

I did meet (in person) with two of the men I had online affairs with. One person, I met with four or five times, for short periods of time. The other man, I met once, but it was for almost the entire day.

The first thing that struck me, when we met, was the strangeness of it all. I was very close, emotionally, to the man I met with just one time. Even to this day, I feel that no one will ever know me the way he did. But, when I met him in person, it was odd, because I almost got the feeling that he was a stranger, that I didn't really know him, his mannerisms, his habits...so much of him was still foreign to me. It scared me. This may sound strange, but it helped me if I closed my eyes, and just listened to his voice, because that is what I was comfortable with.

A problem arose with him when he wanted (needed) more regular real world meetings, in order to maintain the relationship. This was more than I was ready to give at the time. He felt there couldn't be a real relationship without in-person meetings; and he had a valid point. In order for a meaningful relationship to flourish, there needs to be physical contact.

An exclusively online affair can be destructive, because the emotions are so powerful. This did lead me to wanting to arrange an in-person meeting...and I felt like I wanted it so badly, I was willing to risk my homelife.

I hope this helps you and gives you a little more insight. Please let me know if I can offer you any more help, from someone who's been there.

I've been online since the beginning and had my share of experiences online and IRL (in real life) with people I met online. Some were good, but not always. When I settled down with a real-life girlfriend I still found myself drawn back online for some "innocent play time" thinking "what would it hurt?"

I found myself drawn in deeper and deeper and it wasn't until she found some evidence on our computer that it all came out in the open.

Now we're both trying to cope with the damage it caused to our relationship and I really hope my "innocent" play doesn't destroy the best thing that has happened to my "real" life.

It's not hurting anybody is it?guess again, it is.

I've been online since the beginning and had my share of experiences online and IRL (in real life) with people I met online. Some were good, but not always. When I settled down with a real-life girlfriend I still found myself drawn back online for some "innocent play time" thinking "what would it hurt?"

Everything stayed "online" never leaving the relative safety of cyberspace. My thoughts and fantasies wandered as I found myself wandering from chat room to chat room, looking for.... I don't know what, exploring things I'd never do in real life, including the overabundance of rooms tagged M4M.

I found myself drawn in deeper and deeper. Then two things happened just days apart. I found myself exchanging emails and instant messages as usual with people but they weren't satisfied to stay online. They wanted to meet me! As I was digging this hole for myself I thought I'd never get

out of, my girlfriend found some browser logs identifying various web sites I visited that included online and local personal ads.

Now we're both trying to cope with the damage all this caused to our relationship and I really hope my "innocent" play doesn't destroy the best thing that has happened to my "real" life.

It's been almost a week since this came out. The silence is deafening. I love her, and always will. I really didn't think I was hurting anybody.

I was wrong.

I was a part of an online affair and it went on for almost a year. For a long time we were not online lovers but very good friends. I knew he was unhappy with his marriage but as a friend we talked it out, he did his thing and I did mine. Our chatting went to phone calls and to finally meeting and seeing each other whenever it was possible. I ended the relationship I had been in once I had fallen for this man. I knew it was an insane thing to do but I did. I thought it was wrong because he was married but he and his wife resided in separate states. His job placed him in that situation but she was happy with things the way they were...I didn't understand that especially is she was as clinging and jealous and he says she tended to be. After awhile I met some of his friends who only said what he said about his family life. They rarely called, when she wanted to talk she would page and was only on the phone minutes at a time. She could get online. His whole family got online to communicate with those in other states. She'd chat longer with them than him. Father's day his kids didn't bother to call until it was majorly late. She didn't even take time off from her vacation to go to the family reunion. Luckily it was in her city or she wouldn't have gone. I saw a message from a family member upset that everyone took time off their schedules to take part but her. Through all of this I held my tongue. Last month he proposed to me and announced it to my family. He told her he wanted a divorce when asked was there someone else he told her about me. She was fine until they told their children ranges in age from 28 to 16. He related everything to me. Not a day went by of not knowing what happened. Anyway, he was upset cause of how his sons reacted and that the eldest said I was a mistake and a result of a mid life crisis and implies that my racial difference was a big mistake as well. This whole situation took place over the course of nearly a year so it's not anything I rushed and jumped into. He told me about that the lawyers told him and her and that they would have to file for bankruptcy, more or less because of bills incurred in her house where she had one son and his fiancée and the sons best friend and his new bride plus the teenager staying there. The bankruptcy thing wasn't new cause he mentioned it this summer when he went down there. I constantly spoke to him about concerns that regarded us but he constantly reassured me. Last Monday suddenly he said he was going to try and work things out with her cause he couldn't do it. He emailed me yesterday and as much said he doesn't know what he want to do but that he's staying out of responsibility to her cause of how things looked for her once the lawyer broke things down. My family was just as hurt and confused and devastated as his was cause over the course of time he was incorporated in our family and accepted. Online affairs hurt everyone on all sides.

Here is my story. I have had AOL for a long time now and first started getting into the chat rooms for cybersex and all sorts of chat stuff. We were having a difficult time in our marriage and had

arguments constantly. However, our marriage took a turn for the better after much sought after counseling and medication. Things became wonderful. Which is why it is so strange, this thing that I did. I discovered a man whose wife wanted to be in a "home movie". He arranged the when and where and I showed up and participated. He later offered me a copy of the movie and pictures, which I flatly denied. I had emailed them a "thank you" letter the day after and never contacted them again. I immediately thereafter realized the mistake I had made. By this time, my wife and I were having a wonderful time. I didn't want to ruin the time we had, so I put this behind me, vowed never to do it again and continued with my life and my marriage.

Now, I'm overseas with the military with 4 months to go before returning home. Last Friday, she inadvertently discovers the "thank you" letter I had not deleted. She confronted me about it and I accepted full responsibility. She is in a state of shock and numbness right now. At first, she refused to see me in Germany for our leave, but I convinced her that we needed to see each other in order to talk about this face to face. We have agreed that counseling would be good while we're there too, even if for a short time. I have written her many emails apologizing for what I have done and trying to ensure her that what I did was my decision and had nothing to do with her or our marriage. She keeps asking me what was wrong with her to which I respond, nothing. I am seeking counseling here and going to Church now to seek forgiveness. I thought that she was interested in counseling, but then she suggests "legal separation" and the fact that she will never have my baby (we planned to get pregnant in Germany.) She has scheduled a meeting with the Chaplain (who I plan to seek telephone counseling as well while I'm still here.) I have ordered four books (one by Peggy) and offered to buy them for her as well. She asked me to send them to her as I finish them.

We are in so much pain and anguish right now. She has lost all trust in me, which I fully understand. In time, I hope that I may prove my trustworthiness. Though we may be feeling different kinds of pain (hurt and shock for her and guilt and remorse for me), our pain is great nonetheless. I don't know what to do next. When I ask her what I should be doing, she answers "leaving me alone." There is so much hate for me in her voice, it kills me to hear it. I don't want to throw away 6 years of marriage over a mistake I made. I am trying so hard to convince her to give our marriage another chance. I have asked her to not make any decisions about our future until we get counseling and I return. I hear so many different emotions all coming out from one time to the next. Some reflect a glimmer or hope, some tell me that it is pointless and she is ready to cut all ties with me, which would absolutely devastate me. I am at my wits end.

I remain hopeful that things will improve and that we can work through this. She asked me in a letter if I wanted to make our marriage work. She said that it had to be better than before. I wholeheartedly agree, but haven't told her that yet. I think she knows, but will still tell her.

I am just like your wife, feeling the same feelings. My husband is in the navy and came back from a 8 1/2 month cruise with two affairs under his belt one with a girl on the ship and one online, both continued till way after he got home, you can have no idea how it felt to have your husband gone then return to find out two affairs took place and that 4 years ago while in 41 another took place. My advice to you is to ask your wife what she wants. Does she really want this marriage to end or does she think it is worth saving; then work toward what she wants. See I want out of my marriage too, but my husband will not accept that. He has been the best now of showing how much he loves me now, but lacked it when he returned, when it really count.

Paul, just hold her if she will let you, it will not be easy. I know it will be hard to break threw all this pain she is feeling, but maybe in time and you showing how much you really need her. She will come around. I wish you luck and I wish you both very much happiness, with or without each other. Good luck and please read my post in the other room.

This is my first post to any type of forum where I air out my personal life. Otherwise, I keep interests in reading and wondering if I have the most fascinating story of all. I don't consider myself a person that accepts criticism very well, but I have learned that everybody is entitled to his or her own words.

As my story begins, I had just ended a six-year marriage to a woman that threw the last straw that broke the camels back. My wife was a drug addict that I had tried to help for years. She found out about a one-time affair I had overseas three years earlier and she turned her drug addiction on harder and was arrested for her use.

During the time of my divorce, I was going through the emotions of losing my family life and the decisions that had to be made were taxing to my lifestyle. My only escape was being online and looking for a penpal to just correspond with. I found a few women in my age group (over forty). I wrote to many and received replies. There was only one that really caught my interests and was the only one worth of any value. She lived a thousand miles away, and had kids living with her, and oh yeah, she also mentioned something about a husband. As she put it, she hadn't had sex in years with him, there was no love for him in the past 10 years. The marriage there had been such an abusive strain and she was just staying for the sake of the children.

I thought it was harmless to be writing a married woman online knowing there was no love there. I found her to be so fascinating and her advice to me was so refreshing. I could hardly wait for the next email from her. Our emails eventually led to nightly long distance phone calls and meeting in person, discreetly.

The most wonderful thing that has come of this relationship is she has opened my eyes to a new world of love that I had never known. She has said that she has never felt the same about someone in her whole life. Needless to say, we have fallen deeper in love as time went by. Her divorce, as she puts it, is not because of me, it's a self evaluation of the facts that have come to light. Why stay in a marriage when there is no love at all? Why not let love into your heart when it is there knocking?

Her husband has become aware of my existence since she had left undisclosed items out for his eyes to see. He has since called my home looking for her and left a message on my answering machine asking if I have seen her. I was left agape listening to that announcement!

My feelings for her are real and I feel that if I hadn't made that first contact with her, I would have never have learned of this woman and would have never learned that love is so much better when two people are really compassionate, caring and understanding for each other. As for him, I feel sorry for someone that is holding onto something that has been lost for the past ten years, and has never known what true love really is all about. I recall a phrase from the 70's... "If you love something, set it free. If it comes back to you, then it is yours to keep."

I really didn't intend on having an online love affair from the beginning, it was just through truthful communications about each other. We had found so many interests and actually cared about each other. So, two and a half years have given us an insight about each other that is respectful and tolerant until her divorce is over. But when the first introductions to her family of me disclose the truth, that is when it will become hurtful to many. Why? Should I become an undisclosed affair? Or someone that has just come into her life?

I am responding to your letter. I WISH I knew why people stayed in unfulfilling marriages.....myself included to this point. I am in a similar situation as your "OW," though my "OM" hasn't offered any stability as you seem to have offered THIS woman. I don't "really" care about that aspect...the fact is.....I have requested a divorce....whether I end up with the "OM" or not. Yes, I love the OM...I do NOT love my husband anymore and choose to not even try. I cannot even "try" to imagine sleeping with him again (and ALSO haven't for several years). How bad is that? We DID have a few counseling sessions...YEARS ago....fruitless. I NEED to move on. I have 4 kids.....and it has always been the "excuse" to stay for the kids and financial reasons....well, the "kids" know SOMETHING isn't right....separate bedrooms.....separate vacations.....two ships passing in the night. I will NOT use kids as an excuse anymore.....myself. Married "families" may be more dysfunctional than divorced families...is my point. I, for one, believe there has to be some passion and hope to begin with. Maybe... PERHAPS....if the PARENTS are happy.....maybe the kids will have less problems too???? JUST a guess!! If your heart and her heart are in this...Go for it...."dance like no-one is watching, love like you have never been hurt".....just my opinion. Good luck!

I am really not a bad person. I hope that no one will look at me as a jerk, so here goes.

Coming from a marriage of 11 years destroyed by an affair, having an affair was one thing that I swore that I would never do to another. I remember those feelings of mistrust, betrayal, self-worthlessness all too well. Now here I am involved with a woman I met online that, of course, is married. I had a major dilemma about seeing or getting involved with her. Her personality was so intriguing that I just could not resist. I was seeing other women, but now just her. I ended other relationships that I had. Now we see and talk to each other as much as we can get away with. I have read some material about online affairs and where they lead... Nowhere typically. I am becoming so consumed by her. The more time we spend together the more I want to. She has stated that is what she wants, me to take her away from him. I'm really lost and don't want to get hurt or hurt anyone else like when my marriage ended. Finding out your spouse is having an affair is, in my opinion, one of the worst things that can happen to you. I think of the feelings that I had when I found out about my Ex's affair and how "He" would/will feel about the affair if discovered. But there is no way that I can stop seeing her. Needing guidance and opinions.

I can only relay my personal experience in all of this. I was deceived by my husband who had an online affair that turned into a real life attraction for both of them. I am devastated and am hoping that I can recover. The worst part of all of this was the deception, then the lies, dishonesty, and the heartbreak of knowing his heart was elsewhere. I know that honesty does not come easy but it sure

would have saved me the loss of my self worth and dignity. It also would have provided me with a choice. I was offered none of this from a man I have known for 25 years and been married to 18. You are now at the point where you feel an emotional attachment and her husband has a right to know. If you really want to protect his feelings tell her you can't see her again until she is honest with herself, him, and you, in that order. I have no idea if your affair will lead anywhere, but I do know in my case had I not confronted my husband that it would have lead somewhere. Good luck.

I suppose I can understand how one gets involved online, though I have never done it. I don't go into chat rooms nor have I signed up for pen pals etc. I do know how it feels to be left by my husband for someone he met online. I know the emotional devastation that I have endured, the lack of self esteem, the constant questioning of how he could have done this, etc, etc. It has been a little over a year since the divorce and I am doing better, but I still have a long way to go. I still question what happened and long to understand why, but know I will probably never have those answers. If this woman wants out of her marriage, she needs to make that decision on her own. She can't have someone else to come in and save her. Divorce is very difficult and it is lonely. It sounds as if she is just moving from one relationship to another without trying to understand what the problems in her present relationship are. Since she is involved with you online she really can't concentrate on her own marriage. Since you know what it is like to have been betrayed by a spouse who was involved in an affair, why would you want to put some other person through that same agony. As much as you may care about this person, I think you really should look elsewhere.

I am a woman married for 11 years--at least 8 or 9 of those years have not been good...and the last 4 have been downright "nonexistent".

I went on the Internet in October. In February I met a "friend" online that I got along with fabulously. He claimed to be single, and knew I was unhappily married. We did NOT have an online affair, but did "flirt" some for several months. A couple of months later, I took a trip to meet him and some other Internet friends. We were meeting as "friends", but after spending the first day or two getting to know each other....we ended up starting the "affair." I really never felt guilty--I had not slept with my husband at ALL in more than 2 or 3 years, and rarely before that.

We met again several months later, but I found out a few weeks later that I was pregnant. "He" convinced me the only thing to do was to have an abortion--"the child deserves to have two parents to provide a stable environment, and we cannot do that right now." Well....we continued to talk via the computer, and he did offer "some" emotional support. I again went on a trip to see him....about 2-1/2 months later (around New Years). He spent the first night with me....and it was very emotional, we both felt very connected. After that, I did not hear from him. I tried his work number, home number, and cell phone number. I left messages. Nothing. I flew back home in disbelief, very hurt.

I did a paid search on him and found several "interesting" things, including the name of a woman listed at the same address. I then did more research, and FINALLY got ahold of "him"--and confronted him. What he told me was... that he felt SO connected the night we were last together, that his conscience got the best of him. He felt too guilty for having those feelings, but didn't know

what to do. That is when he told me his marriage was not good....that they did not sleep together either, and also, that he had a daughter. I was--flabbergasted.

Here I thought I was intelligent, but I had avoided all the "flags." (I might also mention I have asked my husband for a divorce several times, he is refusing to fill out the paperwork I got from an attorney--and ignores me). I am concerned about the kids, but I feel there is a better life out there also, and one I would like to one day enjoy. I KNOW that what I did was selfish and wrong. Still, I fell in love with this other "man," and not sure what to do at this point. "He" is seeking individual (not marital) counseling. I went to a counselor once, who listened and then said to "come back if I needed to talk more," but that she thought I have been "emotionally divorced" for years, and that I was on the right road by seeking a divorce. Meanwhile....here I am in limbo.

Stories Posted by Spouses

One Man's Story Of His Wife's Online Affair

I am curious to how much this goes on, although it will have no bearing on my current situation. My "stay-at-home" mom wife already made the decision and our divorce was final a week ago. Pretty bad when 20 years of marriage goes away without so much as a whisper. She started the online chatting 6 months ago and filed for divorce 3 months ago. She to this day claims that the Internet had nothing to do with her decision but.....

It is amazing how what happened to me and my wife seemed to come right out of a textbook.

In a nut shell, my wife started chatting in November or December and the first few weeks she would call me back when someone had sent something funny or was being "sexual" online to tell me that it was disgusting and I would watch her get rid of them. She also let me read some of her mail and even forwarded a lot of it to me. Then the secrecy started, new password, staying up until 1 or 2AM chatting even when I would protest, saying I was being childish, that there was nothing going on. Then I started seeing emails that were very personal with phone numbers and such. That is when she started talking about a separation. I came into the computer room one night and just as I did the guy she was chatting with type in "if you don't mind my asking why are you getting separated?", I was furious because I only was told a day or two before and she was talking online about our problems.

Then one Tuesday, I am coming in from out of town about the time for school to let out, and I get home and my wife is not there. Not knowing if she is picking up my daughter or not I decide to go to the school just in case. NO, she was not there, so I got my daughter. When we got home she was there and was nonchalant about being late and was acting weird in general. She told me that she had an appointment with an attorney to get the papers to make the separation "legal". That evening I found an email from her to another woman that said, "Can't wait to talk to you tonight, had the most wonderful conversation with a special someone today! It REALLY made my day!"

Confronted her about it and she sloughed it off, said I was making something out of nothing that she wasn't having sex with anyone! I told her that I didn't doubt that right now but that what she was doing was wrong and I actually used the term that was in your article and told her she was having an emotional affair and it was having the same affect on me as a real one would have. She told me that was stupid that you can't have an affair without having sex, and for me to just "get over her having online friends, because she wasn't getting rid of them!" I told her to call me at the hotel the next night and tell me about the paper work for the separation. She did and was just very matter of factly reading it to me and I knew that it wasn't separation papers so I stopped her and asked what these were, and she replied this was the divorce worksheet, that there was no reason to stop at a separation. So we went from separating to divorce overnight and I'm sure it was because of her online friend that she needed to get it over quickly to move on. So.....as few weeks later we agreed on everything, signed the papers and 30 days later I was single.

I almost came apart over this but have, I hope, pieced myself back together enough to get my job done. I work for a great company that gave me some room to breath and did not apply any pressure while I dealt with this.

Everybody that knows us says that in 6-8 months she will call wanting to come back. I took care of her for 20 years, she always had the choice on whether or not to work.....now she doesn't! I will not ever consider going back but it would be great to be able to tell her that sometime in the near future. I've met some nice women, been out a few times with some of them. They are all scared of me being so new to the divorce scene and are very leery which is exasperating. I told one of them that I can see why guys lie, because when I tell the truth they run for the hills!! But that's OK, I don't intend on starting to tell lies just to get a date, it will come around soon enough.

Oh yeah, my ex has already spent weekends with two of these guys, one in a hotel and one at his apartment from Friday through Monday. Our divorce was final on the 28th of June, she doesn't see anything wrong with what she is doing at all, and doesn't think she is sending any kind of signals to these guys by doing this.....go figure.

Bottom line to all of this is the Internet is a fabulous source of information and opportunities when handled properly, but in the wrong hands can cause immense pain and destroy the lives of spouses and the children who are a part of the union that is being dismantled right before their eyes!

One Woman's Story of her Husband's Online Affair

The amount of pain caused was unbelievable. Affairs of the heart hurt far more than a random act of sex. When someone's spouse gets involved in such a highly charged, fantasy driven relationship it becomes more of an addiction than a reality. Lying becomes so easy to keep the addiction alive, all the while telling themselves that they're really not doing anything wrong because there is no physical contact involved.

After having found out about my husbands affair, nothing is the same. Part of you wants to believe that it's not that bad because there was no physical contact involved, but on the other hand, it is simply devastating to realize that your spouse of more than 20 years could think so little of you, and lie to your face, and jeopardize the marriage for someone who only exists via words on a screen.

Do people online really believe everything that they read? Are they that desperate or lonely that they will accept the false reality being typed to them? When people get involved in such situations they are assuming that the other party is not falsely representing who or what they are, when people can't look each other face to face and talk, they can't see the other person's eyes, or hear inflections in the voice, what about sarcasm? All of these can hardly be conveyed using a computer.

Modern technology has made it possible to communicate with people all over the globe with the stroke of a button, yet, never have couples been so far apart living under the same roof. Everything in life has a price, it appears that online communicating has got people chatting with each other as a distraction of our real lives, the real price that is paid here are the families of these chatters. The fallout after an online affair is so far reaching. how do you explain to your child that daddy is in love with a person on the computer screen? What kind of example is this setting/ after 8 months of harrowing pain and suffering the conclusion I have come to is that there is no way to make sense of such foolish behavior.

My pain and my child's pain are still with us each day, though I stayed with my husband, the innocence of us was lost. Online cheaters are very, very selfish people. The fact that they choose to use this method over really having a genuine real time person shows the lack of backbone. These

selfish people want to have their cake and eat it too. These selfish people also believe and create only what they want to hear from the online affair.

My husband foolishly pinned away for this childhood sweetheart and thought that years ago because of a lost or unresponded-to letter that his life might have been different and that maybe he would have at least dated her. Upon looking her up online and reminiscing old times he fell for her all over again, after a few weeks he told her that he had feelings for her that he never felt for me after 20 years. He was head over heels for her and believing they were soul mates.

Upon finding out by finding an email copy of an instant message she sent him, I called her, I asked her why my husband? Is this really the fate of two star-crossed lovers? She laughed and replied: I'm not having an affair with your husband; I've just been emailing him, for god's sake. When he looked me up after all these years I didn't even remember him or who he was from my past. She then went on to say that she even called her dad up and asked if he ever remembered such a person or was my husband some kind of cyber stalker?

After talking to this other online woman she revealed that she had been divorced once and was currently splitting up a live-in relationship and that she proudly had been with far more than 150 sex partners and that my husband was nothing more than words on a screen for amusement. I hung up the phone and looked at my 40 year old husband who was face down on the floor crying and wondered who was the bigger fool, me for believing the daily lies he told me, or him for believing the lies he created in his head and acted out online?

Other Postings by Spouses

(AND responses from people on both sides of the situation)

I am amazed at how accurate this information on online affairs is! I guess I have been pretty dumb so far and have gotten informed a lot lately. I am currently going through this nightmare! I have been married 25.5 years and do not know how to deal with all this pain. I am working on trying to deal with it. My husband met someone over the Internet about 6months ago, has progressed to where they have met and have a "Fantasy" relationship on going. This has really torn into my values and what I thought were our values and character of people. She makes life so wonderful for him, and I am so everyday real life, that it makes the fantasy seem so much like what life should be I guess. He tells me that he loves me very much and does not want a divorce, but continues to carry on with her. She is in the process of a divorce and is almost final, I think she is looking for a meal ticket for when this marriage she is in now is over. My husband does not see the "real" big picture and it is tearing our family up. Our two children (grown 26 & 23) are so rocked by his actions and how he is conducting himself that they do not know how to deal with him. He has changed so over that last 6 months or so, that he is no longer the person we have all known and loved for so long. He is confused about what he really wants and what is important to him. Maybe wanting his cake and eating it too. He wants her to tell him to get lost, but he won't tell her to. Any help would be appreciated!!!! I am trying to hang on but this emotional and physical roller coaster is about to bottom out.

You got to treat this online affair that he is having just like a real person affair, because it is just that, an affair. It really hurts. It is really devastating just like any other affair.

Read everything you can about affairs to help with your recovery. Read books about affairs, read this message board, and read Peggy's articles and questions of the week.

Your husband "maybe wanting his cake and eating it too." That is exactly what my husband wanted too, but our marriage could not even start to rebuild or even survive until he severed ALL contact with the other woman. Start setting boundaries for your husband. Get both of you into counseling.

"He wants her to tell him to get lost, but he won't tell her to." That is because HE doesn't want to make the decision. He wants either you or the other woman to make the decision for him. Your husband needs to choose either you or his lover, but NOT BOTH.

I hope this helps. Keep posting. This is a great place to vent and to sort your thoughts.

I've said this once on this site and I'll say it again, "If this Online Affair isn't just like a real one, how come I feel as if I got hit by a Mack truck?"

Needless to say, I can relate with EVERY WORD that has been written. How ironic that we found solace on the same damn machine that brought so much grief.

Thanks for your reply; you're in my thoughts.

Thanks so much for your words of encouragement. I only ended the affair less than two weeks ago. It's killing me inside. When you mentioned that you felt as if "this is all there is" ... that really hit home. I look at my child and know that I made the right choice ... but cannot help but wonder "what about me"? Selfish, huh! But, I have a lot of years left on this planet and I just cannot imagine having them feel so empty, so meaningless. I want to make things right with my husband (although he doesn't know about the affair), but my heart just isn't in it. My affair was intense ... over two solid years of talking every day, seeing one another usually a couple of times a week, going away on several trips together, etc. We had a real whirlwind romance. Everywhere I look, I see him ... just everywhere. I keep hoping that somehow the void I feel will slowly start to go away ... but everything really seems so blah now. How did you do it??? I am in agony here.

Thanks for these posts they get me through the rough times!

I have talked to a lot of people about online affair. Some of them have a hard time believing that online affair can really happen. They would ask "How can someone fall in love if you have never met?" Well, it does happen. It is this "head" feeling. They really do believe that they are in love. It involves similar thinking and emotions just like the real affair. There is secrecy, fantasy, excitement, adventure and passion just like the real affair. I couldn't get over my partner's denial and rationalization.

They had such an incredible desire to want to meet in person and carry out their affair to a physical thing. They felt they were meant for each other.

What really hurts the most is his emotional attachment to her like he needs her more than he needs me. He couldn't let go of her. It was so hard to deal with his deception so he could keep in contact with her. He would find a way to contact her (all done in secrecy). He would have her call him at work or he would call her at work. He would chat with her when I was gone or when I was asleep. They would send love letters and e-cards to each other. He would spend all of his energy with her instead of with me in his marriage.

Cybersex is cheating if it is done behind someone's back. SEX is just that.....SEX. If it is done on phone lines it is SEX, if it is done in the front of a computer, it is sex. Just because there isn't bodily contact doesn't mean they aren't sharing sexual pleasures.

Anytime you share the emotions and intimate things with someone else other than your spouse it is wrong.

Some things are personal and private and should stay that way. Yes, sharing with a friend or counselor when one is having problems is okay but they are shared in confidence.

It has been 1 year since I discovered my husband's online affair. Actually, my 11-year-old daughter discovered it through his email. What started as casual online chat, turned into a full-blown affair. Oddly enough they ended chatting online and developed a serious telephone and mail relationship. They met in September of last year in a State about 3 hours from my State.

If the affair had stayed online with no sexual involvement I could have rationalized it only as his big time fantasy. However, because they did have sex (unprotected at that) I feel deep betrayal far more so than just a fantasy online. We are currently in counseling together and making a slow recovery. You are right when you say the deception is the hardest fact to recover from. I became suspicious of his every move. I constantly checked up on him in ways I never did before. I hate myself for this, but swore I would never be deceived this way again. It is a terrible way to live, but I am hopeful this too will pass. Thank you for your website. It has been a great source of comfort to me at a very low point in my life.

I too discovered my husband's Online Affair, and I can certainly relate to your feelings. Simply put, the trust has been broken. My husband's affair lasted for 6 months, and he says that while they talked about meeting, he wouldn't be able to look me in the eye if anything had happened sexually.

I want to believe this, and because he promises me they never met, I still have trouble with the emotional affair he had with this woman. It's that sharing with her what he felt he couldn't share with me. It's the deceit and secrecy that gets to me.

We've been married for 29 years, and he had an real life affair 12 years ago, and I have to tell you, the feelings are the same as when I clicked on the history icon and discovered his "secret email" and other things he forgot to delete, or didn't think I'd find.

It took a long time to recover from the first affair, probably because I knew the third party, but this Online stuff, along with Cybersex just blows my mind. I understand the intrigue, and the temptation of it all. Online you can be anyone you want to be. I also think they don't think it really hurts anyone, but it does.

This website and books I purchased here have helped me more than I could ever imagine. I only wished I had them all those years ago, because I would have read the signs, or possibly our marriage would have been stronger and this 2nd affair would have never happened. Who is to know?

I don't believe my husband went Online to have an affair, anymore than he planned the "real life" affair 14 years ago. However, at some point, he made the decision to deceive me.

Because there was no sex involved and he didn't meet this person (although they planned to) doesn't take away from my feelings of being betrayed. And although cybersex doesn't involve real "touching," his involvement in it certainly "touched" our relationship. (It almost destroyed it.)

The situation this time is different, grant it, but the fact that he was sharing his intimate thoughts (plus other things) with another woman, their planning to meet, the eventual phone calls, all of this

hurts like hell. If real live sex had been involved, it would just be another part of the affair I would be dealing with now.

I told my husband, if this ever happens again we are done. Have you stayed in the marriage because they did not have intercourse? The hard part for me (as you) is that he shared his personal thoughts with this woman. I always wonder how personal. The other fact is I can visualize them having sex. This blows my mind. I will never truly feel the same way about him. He has destroyed a certain intimacy between us. I will never, never trust him again completely.

My only hope is that he realizes the pain he has caused me and our children. My children knew long before me and kept it from me for many months. I suppose that as time goes by and he proves himself to me, I will let go of the pain. He has answered all my questions so far, even though the answers many times are painful to hear. The computer chat rooms have opened up a wealth of information, but also a wealth of pain. Good luck to you and thanks for your reply.

I just now read your reply and to answer your question about staying in my marriage, I have to tell you that it was iffy there for a few weeks.

While the betrayal the 2nd time through the Internet certainly was a different experience than the first "actual affair," like I said before, the devastation was the same. Maybe worse. After all I felt duped.

So why the resolve to stay? Last time I had two small children; I was a "stay-at-home Mom" with no means of support. I didn't feel trapped, but I certainly didn't feel real secure about leaving. (And we both know how we women feel about security) Some women might say I wimped out, that I could have made in on my own, and frankly, I know I could have... But, my sons deserved a full-time father, and my husband tried very hard to make it up to me.

So why am I staying this time? My sons are grown and on their own. I have a very good job and could support myself. Leaving was certainly an option I considered, however although I take no responsibility for his actions on the Internet, a troubled relationship is never one sided.

The passt year has been very stressful and I had to admit to my part in the breakdown of our marriage. This doesn't excuse the avenue he chose. That was wrong and he knows it. He made a conscious decision to deceive me, instead of open and honest communication.

I could have walked away from my investment of 29 years, but I had to consider the vows I took before God. "For better or worse." The better has been great, and this "the worse" has been pure hell.

However, I made the decision to stay based on my husband's willingness to end the online relationship immediately, answer all of my questions, and seek counseling. I would not have stayed if one of those conditions had not been agreed to.

And then, I had to take self-inventory. Nothing I did deserved his dishonesty and ultimate betrayal of our vows, however I have to admit that even though I suspected something was wrong, I looked

the other way, I chose to deny what was right in front of my face. I didn't want to "rock the boat", because I liked things "status quo".

As far as your visions of them being together, can I relate. It's a depressing, heartbreaking, gut wrenching thought. But, I have to tell you, the only way to resolve this is to remember that thinking about that "scene" will only make you more depressed, and unable to work through this.

I have to remember that this building back of our relationship is a process. I've accepted the fact that I'll have some good and bad days. These feelings won't go away real soon, and we shouldn't rush it.

I thank God for this forum and knowing there are people like the Vaughans who offer hope to the broken dreams of our lives very comforting.

I can't help but think of a line from the movie "Steel Magnolias". "That which does not kill us, can only make us stronger."

And while I know your and I both feel as if something in our lives has died, our only hope now is that we will become stronger because of it.

Will we ever be able to trust again? In time I know these wounds will heal. Am I gun-shy considering I was "duped" twice? YOU BETCHA!

I hope I didn't ramble, and my explanation for staying made sense.

My husband had an online affair that went from pure fantasy to reality. It was with a bisexual female that he was planning on having meet me. I had no idea and had previously stated disinterest in this topic when he suggested it. He pursued it anyway, alone, and deceived not only me but her. He told her that I was interested. Any way it went from online to phone line to him meeting her in real life. They discussed me meeting her...and various other fantasies. An attraction developed between the two of them and they continued to meet. I, by this time, knew by intuition that something was going on with him. I never imagined what he disclosed. My life is a mess. I am hurt, and angry and confused.

Online affairs are not just fantasy. They can be devastating and I am a model of their destructive forces. We are trying to rebuild our marriage but everyday I continue to struggle with this overwhelming situation. I don't have any control over myself or my emotions, and I have very little faith that I can ever heal myself completely.

When I first arrived at your site I saw the ONLINE Topic. It was of no interest and no importance to me and I thought it was a joke in comparison to what I imagined my situation to be. But that joke soon became a reality for me and no longer seemed so insignificant...it became my lifeline in the progression of my totally real life situation. I now can look at other people's situations with a more open mind. I really am comforted by knowing my husband's progression in this behavior is not so different from so many others' experiences.

I have made contact with the OW, via email. How ironic? I wanted/needed to see things from her perspective. She was very forthcoming with all my questions. She confirmed exactly what my husband had disclosed to me. I was very relieved to find out that although she continued to email him he did not respond. I very much needed to know the truth and I believe both of them. It was very important for me to relate to my situation from each of our points of view. I have that now and I feel like it is one of the last pieces I need to put my life back together.

It took me over three weeks to get up the courage to contact her. I took a risk and it was definitely worth it. I also let him know that I did contact her because I want no more secrets in my marriage. He understood and feels that whatever I need to do to heal myself he is willing to help. I now feel like I have complete disclosure, a more complete picture of these events, and am at last ready to move forward. The fact that she was willing to be sensitive and honest with me really helped. She is still attracted to him and so I realize it was not easy for her to attempt to help me...and I am truly grateful to her. As much as I wish I could hate her I find myself understanding just how easy it was for her to grow to care for my husband, and I also understand his connection to her. She is not the reason he was there with her and not with me. I now understand that I was not there for him or he would have never been where he found himself.

We are both working on us now. I finally believe for the first time since this occurred that we can build a stronger future together. I honestly don't believe that this would have occurred for us with any less significant impact to our marriage. So while I am still devastated by these events I am going to look at them as building blocks to a better future and not as a wrecking crane to our marriage.

First I must thank you for this sharing. It has given me great strength to know I am not alone in this. My story is this. I received a large envelope in the mail addressed to me from the OW. It contained copies of emails of my husband's and her correspondence. Many very sexual and some just talk. On top of this was a hand-written letter from her. She stated I did not know her but she knew me. She had been having an affair with my H for a year. She included dates and places my husband was and that she was also with him there. They began as friends just talking online. He informs me that she was the one that pushed for them meeting face to face. He was away for two weeks when I got this package. She also timed that well for she knew he would not be home to intercept it. She wrote how she felt she was married to him...soul mates. She was in love with my husband. He admits that it was just for the sex, he wasn't thinking.

Reading the words hurt like nothing I have ever known. He had ended it with her about three weeks prior to my getting her mail. He also did not offer any info about it for he thought he would not get caught. He left me wide open to get this while he was away, I home taking care of his children and home. She said she spared me the graphic details....of what I'd love to know. She is nasty enough to do this what else is in her head. Thank God she lives many states away. But this did not stop her from driving all over to meet with my husband. She even rented a car because she didn't want to drive such a distance in her car. She has contacted him once that I know of, she instant messaged him at work to recover some disks she had let him use. She said she was not through with him after he asked for no more contact. What does that mean? Pretty scary... just watch the news, what's next? I have not contacted her, and I would like to....Thank-you, Peggy, for giving me the strength not to get in touch with her.

MY husband started fooling around in chat rooms about five years ago. I tried with him but it I wasn't comfortable. A few years later I realized I was jealous of his time online. We spoke about it but it continued. Then it was work he had to do with a part time extra job. He told me he needed his room with computer to do his work. He would then invite me to come to bed with him. I felt a stranger in my own room, my own bed. I knew something was up. This online stuff is crazy and scary to think where it may be in ten years. It's trouble.....

I have been in and out of this website for the past several months and have gained a lot from it. Only recently have I read the postings. I am stuck. I don't think I ever fully recovered from my husband's affair of several years ago. We did counseling but I think we quit because we were exhausted and hoped it would just resolve itself.

Several months ago my husband was caught responding to cyber message boards of women looking for someone to engage in cyber sex. Then I stumbled across an actual cyber conversation that ended up on the hard drive somehow. These all took place within one week's time and my husband claims he was experimenting and would have stopped. Guess we will never know, will we? I could really relate to earlier postings since her situation seems similar to mine in that we are both in long term marriages with grown children and have same experiences, etc.

I have been in therapy for the past several months but can't seem to sort this all out. The deception, of course, is the hardest part, not to mention the loss of respect for my husband. It doesn't feel good to know that your spouse is willing to sacrifice his relationship for a few minutes of a cheap sexual thrill. I don't think he is so naive to think that he was going to stop at just a few fantasy moments. I'm really ready to move on and start my own life because I don't even feel like working this out any longer. I don't think he is committed to complete honesty in our relationship or with himself. He just blows it off as a "brain fart" or an irresponsible moment. I appreciate the support of the people on this website. I am just in awe at times.

My husband had an online affair in July of last year that went on for three weeks before I found out about it. He stopped all contact with her after that. I can honestly say that the pain was just as intense as it was ten years ago when he had an actual physical affair with a co-worker. To make matters worse this time, the person he was having the online affair with was his brother's wife. His brother and sister-in-law were having problems and she decided he would be a good sounding board to help her through it and one thing led to another, etc. I think the fact that I knew the online partner made the pain a lot worse that it might have been if it were a stranger. Thank God that I found out about it before they were able to meet because I am sure they would have eventually since they both travel for their jobs. Do I consider online affairs cheating? You betcha! And the pain is very real. Betrayal is betrayal no matter what form it takes. Thank you for these message boards. They have helped me so much.....

My email story is a little different than an anonymous person on the Internet. My husband started an email flirtation with a co-worker of both of ours. This woman had major professional differences with me and befriended him (we think) to get back at me. The emails were numerous and eventually led to her seducing my husband and meeting with him in public places.

While this was going on she was constantly telling our employer that I was "out to get her". getting me called into the office a number of times. In the end, I found my husbands mail and we have been going through the process of reclaiming our marriage.

The story doesn't end there, instead it has turned into an ugly "fatal attraction" situation for both my husband and myself. She has spread gossip about me, told me she was pregnant and is trying to get me to lose my job. She has already gotten rid of my husband by agreeing to change workplaces if he went too. He went to save my sanity and she went back on the deal.

She flaunts and threatens and accuses me and I can do nothing in return because she is friends with our boss, and because she has been arrested for aggravated assault and stalking I am afraid of her. I am in a living nightmare.

The message here: people should be careful about what starts out as a seemingly innocent flirtation--**ESPECIALLY IN THE WORKPLACE!!**. Just because there is no contact in the beginning doesn't mean it won't develop into something more.

Thanks for this site. I wish I had found it in the beginning, I thought I was crazy and all alone.

Now I am faced with the fact that he has had an online affair. He went so far as to send her calling cards that we had received free of charge so she could call him at our home while I was at work..

What exactly constitutes an online affair? My husband met a woman while flying from NY to Dallas and "they clicked." He never said he was married but communicated with her from then on for 9 months by email. Is this an online affair even though they met first? Since then they have met three times (she came here to France for about a week when he told her he was married but I guess by then she was hooked and he went to the US for two holidays of 10 days and 3 weeks) and they intend to meet for Christmas in Canada. So I guess this is one online affair that is working out. Also, there are a lot of discussions about getting over affairs while still remaining married, but are there many people out there like me who had no choice about staying married—he left whether I wanted him to or not. All advice greatly received.

I wonder if the inventors of this "information highway" called the Internet, could have even conceived "Online Affairs?" I know I certainly never entertained the thought until I discovered my husband's one night when I clicked on the "history" icon.

There I found out his secret and was just as devastated as I was with his last "real life" affair 14 years ago.

Why the same devastation? It's the deceit. The secret meeting place to express his most intimate thoughts with someone other than me. It's wondering why he could talk to her, and not to me. It's trying to imagine why "Cybersex" would be so tantalizing. It's as if he invited this faceless entity into my home, opened up all my personal things and said, "Here, take a look."

Affairs aren't about sex, they're about lying to the person you vowed to protect and love. And it hurts like hell on or off this "information highway"!

Ironic though, that the very thing that lead my husband to his Online Affair, took me to this website and has helped me work through this mess.

I know exactly what you mean! This medium where my husbands affair started culminating to a real life meeting/affair, is the same place I found help, and hope in getting over this. Its very ironic and almost makes me go hmmm...Not to get too tongue in cheek but every time I see those AOL commercials about how wonderful being online is, I just want to gag. I imagine Saturday Night Live, or Mad TV doing a spoof, showing all the crazy awful, devastating things that the Internet can be used for. I almost destroyed the computer the night I found out (Hubby wasn't home at the time)... I just about chucked the whole PC out the second story window. I have come a long way since then and I really do not blame the computer or the Internet. This has happened since time began, before we even had electricity. and people will, unfortunately, cheat on their spouses when we are long gone.

When I first saw the movie, "You've Got Mail" with Tom Hanks, I thought, how romantic, how cute, how funny. I was delighted when I found it on sale at Blockbuster. Needless to say, that was BEFORE I discovered my husbands Online "activities".

I don't know what I was thinking when a few weeks later, I popped that movie in the VCR. After about 15 minutes, I was ready to turn it off, but I didn't. You can imagine that after it was over, and I pushed the rewind button, I didn't view it as cute, funny or very romantic. I'm thinking about taking it back for a refund! And although the characters in the movie weren't married, they were in committed relationships. It was SO Hollywood. The couple walked away, living happily ever after, not to mention how they wrapped it up, so no one really got hurt because of the Online "romance". Not real life guys!

In cyberspace you can be anyone you want to be, say anything you want to say, which is fine. But like anything else, if it's too good to be true, it probably is!

I'm looking forward to reading Peggy's book on Online Affairs. I don't think the general public is aware of how this "information highway" is destroying marriages, and relationships.

Thanks for your reply, and my best to you.

Thank you for your reply also! I found out about my husband's affair by sheer stupidity... his! I started getting that gut feeling something was not quite right, and hubby was acting very strange and

distant. In fact, the night I found out about his online affair was the night he was actually consummating that affair in person. I decided to get on the computer, which I couldn't do without the help of the kids. I had Computer phobia, as if I could push the wrong key and blow it up or something. Anyway once I got it up and running and online, I started asking people online for help in searching files, and although he had covered his tracks pretty well, he left a backdoor wide open; bam, there was everything. I asked him how someone who writes programs and does data bases on a daily basis, could overlook the area that a total computer illiterate person like me was able to find. He said well maybe I wanted to get caught. I guess that could be a question to address to others out there. Do you think the cheating spouse really wants to get caught?

Did he really want to get caught? Curious. I know just enough about computers to make me dangerous, but my husband knew I wasn't afraid to "click" on anything. I am self-taught in many of the programs I use, but certainly didn't think I'd be playing Sherlock Holmes in Cyberspace.

I knew he was in chat rooms, and on occasion, he would tell me about some of the interesting people he talked to. I've now come to believe some of these chat rooms are like cyber singles bars.

Anyway, my husband instructs Windows and computer classes for the college here in town. You would think he'd be a little more careful, knowing I wasn't shy about this contraption. Like you, I found it wasn't difficult to find the "map" of his activities. When I asked him about this, he said, "I guess I got careless." However, when I asked if he possibly wanted to get caught, he said, "Hell no." At the same time, now that his "secret is out," he is relieved that it's out in the open.

You are smarter than I. I never thought of asking people online to help find a back door.

Let me ask you this. While you were discovering this information, did you ever feel guilty he'd find out about your "investigation?" That may sound like a stupid question, but I felt as if I was the one doing something wrong.

I guess getting careless in real life is leaving matchbooks with phone numbers in coat pockets. In cyberspace it's that back door that could just "hit you in the butt on the way out." If either is conscious on the part of the deceiver, I don't know, but a good question for this forum.

To answer your question about feeling guilty for spying on hubby and looking into his files, yes I did. In fact I was talking to my Aunt online right after finding all the proof and when she asked me what I was going to do with it, I really didn't have an answer. I never really confronted him with the stuff I found; I just came out and asked him if he was having an affair. He admitted to it right off. I guess if he would have denied it I may have shown him my "proof." It was a very weird experience for me, because for 13 years of marriage I totally trusted him and never acted the jealous wife. I never felt the need to question his faithfulness. I really believe your intuition proves you well. That month while my husband's affair was going on, things were just off... with us, w/him, etc... He always said he could never get away with an affair because I knew him too well. Guess we both proved him right.

Forgiveness = freedom for your soul.

I too didn't have a clue how I was going to confront my husband with the evidence I found Online. I was actually afraid he'd get mad for my snooping. Then I said to myself, what are you, and man or a mouse... I mean a woman or a wouse?! (bad joke)

Anyway, I started out by saying, "Are you happy? Is everything O.K. with us?" He thought for a moment (first clue) and he answered, "I'm not happy 24/7, but I'd say for the most part I am happy." I said, "All right, enough of the bulls***, would like to tell me how you REALLY feel? Or maybe you'd just like to tell me about your secret email account."

Needless to say, he confessed to having the online affair for almost a year. You would think after 29 years of marriage, and one other affair years ago, I would have been wise to the clues. Nope, I didn't really suspect anything until July, and I discovered his "special friend" in August.

A lesson learned I guess.

I agree with the forgiveness quote. I heard a Dr. on Oprah say "Forgiveness will set you free." Same for the truth, with one exception, truth like this hurts for a while.

My hats off to you that you were willing to snoop in the computer. I wish I had done that, but I was too afraid I would break something. I wasn't too computer savvy at the time, boy, have I made up for lost time. Still not that computer literate but I have been learning very quickly.

If I had been willing to snoop, I probably would have found out the truth instead of having him come saying he had filed for divorce and then putting the pieces together later. He did admit shortly before the divorce that he had met OW online, but I got the proverbial we were just friends. He was lonely and needed a friend and they were not having an affair. Funny thing she moved from Canada to the town in NY where we were living after we separated and he moved in with her since I was still living in the house. We did divorce and he married her several weeks after the divorce was final. All I can really say is that I have never known something to hurt so much. I thought I knew my husband and thought he really loved me. I never would have believed that he would have become involved with someone online. I still have a hard time believing it though I know beyond a doubt that it happened.

I guess that is why I will not get into chat rooms and things like that and why I could not see the movie "you've got mail." I don't care what anyone may say, online affairs are just as deadly as one in real life. The betrayal and hurt are just the same. I just wish to this day when I first had my suspicions, that I would have acted on them rather than telling myself I was just being silly. If there is ever a next time, I will not ignore my instincts.

Thank you for your post. If anyone out there is still having trouble believing Online Affairs are as destructive as "real life," I hope reading the posts on this topic has opened their eyes.

Like I had previously mentioned, chat rooms are like singles bars without the smoke and noise. I can understand the attraction and the lure of the it all. AND PSST—IT'S ALL DONE IN SECRET!

In dealing with my husband's Online Affair, I realized the secrecy bit was part of the "hook." I know they don't "go there" looking for it, and I don't think they realize how this cybersex effects "real lives" until it's almost too late. (Actually, I don't believe they stopped to "think" period, but that's another story, right?)

I re-read your post about ignoring your instincts and I have to say, that my "gut" was telling me something, and I ignored it for a while. NEVER AGAIN!

While you applauded me for the guts to get into this contraption and "find something", I must admit that I tried to justify what I had discovered. Stupid me.

Since that time, when my "gut" kicks in, I don't ignore it. I've learned a very valuable lesson about this gift called a "woman's instinct."

My heart goes out to you. I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers.

My husband looks under Yahoo under Entertainment in the city he wants to be entertained in. He arranges for prostitutes and strippers to come to his room or he looks up strip joints for his pleasures.

Recently, I found the Internet information with over \$500 in his briefcase. He arranged for a stripper to visit his room in Las Vegas. He was to call a number when he arrived at his room.

I know there is more Internet activity by him, but he hasn't disclosed this yet. All the online activity occurred at work and not at home.

Also, my husband would look at porn during lunch hour and at the end of the day. He would get himself excited and then the OW would call him or he would go out and cruise the streets. He would relieve himself with sex.

I have been married 28 years, had an affair, revealed the affair to my husband, entered counseling with him, and answered all his questions regarding my affair. I made every effort to reconcile our marriage, but we are now separated and he says it is over. In the meantime, he became involved in an online affair. The night before he was to leave on a trip to meet this person face to face, where she lives, I took an overdose of pills and ended up in the hospital for 7 days. When I first entered the hospital, he visited me and said he was "willing to try" to reconcile. Two days later while I was still in the hospital, he told me he had made a decision to end the marriage. He also told me he was going to go on the trip to meet this person. So, I asked him to be gone and out of the house before I got out of the hospital, as I could not emotionally handle the pain if he was there and continuing to go in that direction. I tried to explain to him that I was already suffering from guilt and pain from what I had done, and this was more than I could deal with at this time. I have kept an extensive journal of my feelings and the events during this very painful time. Any comments out there would be greatly appreciated. I continue in therapy, but went to visit my husband over the weekend (where he is living temporarily) but it did not go well and I ended up coming home early. I can't seem to accept the fact that our 28-year marriage could end so easily.

I hope you are doing better today. I know it sounds too simple, but you have to take a deep breath and realize that nothing you do will change the course of things. Much of what is going on in life is out of our control. There is life after all of this, and it could be a good life. It is up to you.

Thank you for your post and your concern. Sorry it has taken me so long to get back on the message board, but if you read my earlier response, it will bring you up to date on what has been going on in my life.

Yes, I feel I am doing better and getting a little stronger each day. And I totally agree with you that "nothing you do will change the course of things." I am a strong believer in not trying to have "control" in our lives and that when we are willing to let go of that "control" and trust and allow whatever higher being we chose to believe in, that the right things will happen for the right reasons. Sometimes, I forget that and get in my own way by trying to intellectualize or analyze things and come up with a solution, but I do believe that really isn't necessary or even the right thing to do. So I try to allow the pain to surface, allow myself to feel it, sometimes am able to express it to others, and find that helps in not carrying it with me into future relationships where it could have the potential to destroy my happiness with someone in the future. Thank you for reminding me of that. I need that kind of truthfulness and thoughtfulness.

And, yes, for the moment, I do know I am and will be strong enough to experience much joy and happiness in the future. I'm even able to appreciate what small joys I receive on a day-to-day basis in whatever forms they come my way. I am becoming more forgiving of myself and am returning to being happy with myself from the inside out and do not rely on the judgments or perceptions of others concerning my self-image. Hopefully I am headed in the right direction and will not "fall off track".

Your reminders were very helpful and I appreciate them so very much.

My heart goes out to you with this pain. You might say that I totally understand your husband and how he feels, I've been there myself. Please also understand that although you've tried to take the right steps for repairing your marriage, the real problem is that it will take time for him to heal as well.

Your affair may have gone on for a while and all the time, he sensed it and inside knew something was wrong, but didn't know enough, partly because he trusted you, to ask. On the other side, you had to mature during the ending of the affair to realize what you were doing to yourself and family, so your growth period is much longer than his. Hence, when you surfaced the affair and then went with him to counseling, he now has to go through a process too. It takes time to get into this and it will take time to get out of it as well and the ending is totally unknown.

If he has been faithful for all that time, I'm sure he won't find it that rewarding outside of your relationship. I never did and still don't. It's a real jungle out there and an angry guy could literally get involved each and every day in any given week. Sure I'm angry and hurt and not as much as

before, but trying to hurt your spouse does hurting you can be part of this too. There truly is something to say about someone "owning someone's heart." I know this to be true. However he sounds hurt inside and still very angry. That only means time is needed to resolve inner feelings until he finally can see things in a more realistic way. A good measure of his inner feelings is how angry he behaves as now.

I know a few other men who have experienced the same problem. They ended up in divorce too, although some didn't. One is now remarried and has talked me a few times asking what opportunities exist to repair the past and mend the "family". Hopefully your H is learning this as well, if not it would be a good idea to tell him or have someone at least tell him! When we talked about this, I saw his attitude about his ex-wife and family immediately spark with interest. His new wife seems to know this well and is feverishly working on destroying every bit of connection that relates to his ex-wife. By rights she needs to right? I don't know what will happen, but I will say that what I went through and what I've learned has taught me a great deal.

If my wife truly was contrite and confessed and would allow me to work with her at setting up proper consequences to protect my security with her, I'd most likely be back with her and my family today. Remember, she destroyed my trust in her and her family, so to me, it's up to her to make it right and not for me to ask for it. Family is everything (to me) and for some it takes them longer to realize it. After all isn't it "for better or for worse"? And don't we all make mistakes too?

My wife is a Sex Addict and full of self-appointed power and control. I think though things have changed a bit over time from what I've seen. However, she enjoys being really mean by trying to act secret and not wanting to talk like your husband. Although she hires detectives regularly to find out what I'm doing, so she can feel secure that she knows and I don't. I've become real strong to stand up against this and to me it's just another SA trait and characteristic. Believe me it's been a real trip through insanity lane here.

Reading your 2nd post, it sounds like your husband is enjoying a power position with you seeing how torn up you are. It's certainly very evident with what you wrote and perhaps it should stop, enough is enough. Certainly this can't go on forever, right? Somehow to me, you need to let him know that you made a terrible mistake and am paying the price for it. That you can and will forgive him for the same as well. We all make mistakes in life and need to be forgiven as well as be able to forgive others. Family is forever and the messages we leave our children are really what is spoken more by our behavior and actions. Tell him you can't allow him to torment you anymore since it affects your health, but that your heart is owned by him forever and if you need to let him go you will. Ask him if he feels comfortable enough with coming to terms with everything in his family to please sit down with you and resolve your differences as they truly should be.

If he can't come to terms with this now, he may not be ready and will continue until he perhaps does. Some never do and you should know that. Some take a very long time and you should know that too. For me it took learning what this was all about and YES it could be resolved to mend the family again, others have. If he doesn't learn about this it's anyone's guess when he might finally come to terms and come back.

First of all, thank you so much for being such a caring person to respond to my plea for help. In light of the fact that I was the one that originally had an affair, I get the impression that there is not as much support for people like me than there is for the person that was deceived by the affair. So I know it takes a lot of courage and understanding for someone to take the time to respond to me.

Yes, I agree with you that it will take time for my husband to heal from my affair, but he has already made it clear that there is no chance of reconciliation. In fact, he has not only pursued a relationship with his "online" friend, but in addition, he has also started a relationship with another woman as well. He was at least honest enough to admit to me that he has had sex and slept with them. But only after I asked direct questions. He does not volunteer any information unless I ask for it directly. He also attended his college reunion with one of these women.

He was away from our home and this state for two months on what he refers to as "his journey" to find out what he wants in life and what will make him happy. These things have been painful to me, but I have no desire to be vindictive or cause harm to the other women involved. I understand the pain he has gone through because of choices and decisions I made in the past, but I made myself available in every conceivable way to try to resolve the issues. He says he forgives me for "the affair", but has never really made himself available to discuss the issues in our marriage that led up to my making a decision to have an affair with another person. My affair did not go on for as long as he has represented to others, but that is not important. The pain of betrayal, no matter what the length of time is just as strong, I'm sure. And yes, I agree he is still angry and hurt, but his actions at this point will only cause him more pain in the future when he realizes the reasons behind his actions. He still accuses me of many things. But the one that I can't accept is his accusations that I am responsible for making him feel guilty. I've tried to explain to him that one's guilt comes from within them as a result of their deeds, actions, and responses to others. I'm at least strong enough to know that and not accept his transference of those feelings onto me. I've continued through therapy on a weekly and twice weekly basis and will not give up on myself until I've gained the skills and strength to be a better person and not an impulsive, reactionary. I have no desire to cause pain or inflict guilt on others and am just trying to deal with my own guilt and pain from my own actions. But it is hard when my husband chooses to take actions to blame me or cause me further pain. I've taken full responsibility for my affair and the pain it has caused so many other people and their families. But I'm a little disappointed that my husband has not reached that point. But I have to let that go and accept that he may never get to that point.

I have let my husband know that "I made a terrible mistake and am paying the price for it." He knows that I could forgive him too, but he is not interested in staying together. He is now back in town, only to work on the dissolution of our marriage.

I had not been on a vacation for a long time and he encouraged me to go on a boat trip with the group from a boat club we belong to. So I went along on another couple's boat (as a fifth wheel) and was enjoying the trip. While we were docked at a marina, I received a phone call from a neighbor that my husband had backed a U-haul up to our house and was removing furniture and seemed to be cleaning it out. Needless to say, I was devastated and never would have dreamed of him doing such a thing. His reasoning was that he had found a letter I had written to the OM (telling the OM that I would not contact him or be in his life in the future). I called my husband and he was very distraught. I called him again the next night to express my concern for his emotional wellbeing and to see what I could do to comfort him. (I did not mention the furniture or returning it). He agreed to

meet me the next day and I agreed to return to our home with him if he would agree to replace the furniture in the house. So we are both back in the house trying to enjoy each other's good qualities and the short time we will have together until the divorce papers are final.

He always took care of the finances and I am therefore very naive with regards to those things. Also, he is an attorney, so I am now dealing with three attorneys: his attorney, my attorney, and "him". But I am very thankful that he is making himself available to me at this point to help me get through the financial and legal division of property. It is not a fun thing to go through.

I have asked him for one consideration while he is in the house with me and while we are working on these matters. And that is that he not have any contact with either of these two new women in his life. That would be a painful distraction to me at this time. He has expressed that this makes him feel like a prisoner in the house, but he knows he has the option of staying elsewhere if his needs to be in contact with these people are that strong.

Thanks again for your thoughtful response and allowing me to express these things. I have a good support system, but as you know, our friends sometimes get tired of hearing our "soap opera" lives and events. I try to spare them the gory details.

If I can offer any help to you in your situation, I would be more than happy to. But it sounds like you have made much more progress than I have and I appreciate the input you have shared with me.

I've already taken up so much space on this site that I'm sorry, I probably should have made one reply to all of you, instead of individual ones, but I prefer to respond to each one and feel the time each of you took to respond to my plea for help deserves at least an individual reply.

I read your advice to me and agree whole-heartedly. Yes, I am selective as to what I believe from my H, but after 28 years of marriage, I am still vulnerable to "wanting" to believe him and "wanting" to trust him. He was all I had to fulfill those needs until I met and started a relationship with the OM.

You are very right. He is angry and on an unintentional level wants to make me feel the pain he felt. And yes, I do feel abandoned for someone else (or should I say TWO someone else's) like he did.

I am trying hard to be patient, but unfortunately that has not been one of my best virtues in the past. Guess this is a lesson that will force me to work on that one.

Also, I am very observant and learn more from actions than words. I also know how to read body language and can look into his eyes for a lot of the answers. And yes, I've already found clues he has left and have read them, printed them out, and have placed them in a secure place for my own protection in the future. As I've said before, I have no desire to include others in this painful situation that has already evolved to this point. He has left enough clues and information that I know for a fact the only reason he is here with me now is to speed up the divorce process and he has made indications to others with regards to financial security for them.

I appreciate your advice for help. I have a good attorney, a good therapist, a (fair) psychiatrist, and I still believe in my inner strength. (Although it gets tested on a daily basis at this point).

How could you be so observant with your advice regarding not making rash decisions or letting him goad me into reacting out of pain or anger. That has already been a mistake I have made, and I hope not to put myself in that same position again. But I take responsibility for allowing that to occur. And no, I did not handle myself well in that situation. Hopefully I've learned something from that and can prevent it from happening in the future.

The weekend event you are speaking of was a great disaster and I was placed in a situation that was very unfair to me where I was exposed to one of the other women and she was trying to establish rights and territory with regards to my H. And yes, she exists. Not only does she exist, but the "online" person is another person that really exists and my H admitted to sleeping and having sex with both of them. I have not met the "online" woman, but have read emails and other documents written to her by my H and from her to my H. These include financial discussions for the future.

I'm not sure what you mean by "ask for objective eyes to look for clues."

I will continue to try my hardest to stay cool and will try not to act without a lot of thought. And I can truly say that I have no desire for another overdose episode. Yes it was a plea for his attention. But one of the things that hurts me most about his response to that is he continues to say I was trying to "manipulate" him and stop him from going on his "trip to visit his online friend." (How can it be manipulative if I was dead and had no idea whether he ever took a trip or not)??!?

I am very thankful that I survived that ordeal, and am thankful everyday that I am still here to enjoy life and love, which I am still doing in small ways. And yes, it was even more painful that he left me in the hospital. I returned home alone, immediately had to prepare to evacuate for a hurricane, and fortunately had enough supportive friends to help me out during that lonely time.

How did you also know that "he just needed an excuse to get out." That has become so clear to me during this period of time. But that in itself is a painful realization.

Thanks for all your advice. It is very well received and very helpful. And I am proud and happy to let you know that for now I am ok. Thanks to all for your replies and I hope you all know how much that has meant to me.

I am new here and I could use some advice from any willing to help.

5 months ago I found several deleted (he thought) emails to another woman from my husband and yes they were very intimate, even discussing the meeting date. Well of course things got pretty bad, I let him and her both know that I knew. He swore he was sorry and it would never happen again. He had been so affectionate and caring since then and we are (I thought) talking so well again. I decided that since it was almost Christmas I would play secret Santa and send him cards etc, (nothing personal just fun). Well after a few of these he set up a secret email account and told secret Santa to start emailing him there and started the whole thing all over. I didn't know what to do so I played along, but I keep reminding him that he is married and has two children etc but this hasn't changed things one bit. Now he is asking to meet.....(secret Santa). And no there is no way he knows it is me. Should I accept the fact that he is an Internet junkie and decide to stay or leave or should I tell him everything and see what happens again?

Well, my husband was caring on a affair online and in real life with a girl on his ship, and in cyberspace with a old girlfriend he dated 11 years ago. I found out about them about 2 weeks apart. It was painful to handle the real life one then to find out about the online one drove me over the edge. He was even IM-ing us at the same time and got missed up with his words but always had a way to explain what he was doing, then the IM-ing turn to phone calls and them sending things to each other pictures, etc. then they planned on meeting. I found out while using the computer also, my husband was mad at first and denied it all, till I Imbed her with his IM password, then he changed his IM password so he could still talk to her without me knowing.

I tried to talk to her many times to find out what was going on, she is married with 2 kids, but she would always attack me, saying I was pathetic because I had to know my husbands every move. So, they both lied to me. Then they both started lying to me about each other.

Anyway, I had to get over two affairs one in real and one online. It has been hard and both are equal as much as equal can be, painful wise. I hope this never happens to anyone

My husband was the one to become involved with someone online. It did lead to the destruction of our marriage. He decided he wanted to be with the other woman. At the time he asked for the divorce, I really did not know about his online affair. I had some suspicions, which I was able to confirm after the fact. I must admit I have had a very difficult time understanding how this could happen. I still find it hard to believe that someone will fall in love with someone they have never met. I have found it very difficult to admit to people that my husband left for someone he met on the Internet.

I personally feel that an online affair is just as real as one in person. Also in so many cases that online affair leads to actually meeting in person. Obviously my ex told me about the OW because he married her. In fact I am almost positive that he met her one weekend in Toronto when he was supposed to be there on business. I often wonder if he really was there on business or whether that was an excuse to be able to meet and be with her.

I feel very betrayed by his actions. To me it does not matter where he met her, he was involved with someone other than his wife. To me, an affair is and affair. You can try and sugar coat it and try to make someone believe that one is not as bad as the other, but I am afraid you will never make a believer out of me. The bottom line is it hurts and it destroys the trust you had in your spouse that he/she would love and cherish you.

I can't say that we really had any more problems than the usual marriage. For the most part, I thought we had a very close relationship. This was a second marriage for both of us. His children were grown and we did not have children of our own. He did not really become interested in the Internet and chat rooms until he was downsized from his job. I have to honestly believe that the loss of his job was more devastating to him than he let on. He had a great job and was making a great salary. It was a shock and a tough time for both of us. I thought for the most part that we both handled the situation fairly well. He worked very hard at finding another job and did find something

else. We really started to run into problems when we had to move. I had a very difficult time with the move. Intellectually I knew we would have to move, but emotionally I did not want to move again. About a month after we moved the final phone bill came from the apartment that he lived in temporarily while we were house-hunting. On it were very lengthy long distance phone calls to Canada. They were also made late at night. My first reaction when I saw the calls were they were to another woman, but I could not figure out when he would have met someone. When I questioned him about the calls I was told they were business related. Later I found out they were to his online "friend." What I don't know is how long he had been chatting with her. Obviously long enough that he wanted to talk with her on the phone.

As I said I had a difficult time with the move. I was very lonely and depressed and we got into several arguments. He basically decided seven weeks after the move that he could not handle my "angry tantrums" about the move and how unhappy I was and filed for divorce. He put the blame on me for the cause of the divorce. Through all this I never confronted him about the fact that I thought there was someone else. After the divorce was in process I started to figure it all out and he did admit that the phone calls etc were to someone he had met online.

When I asked why he lied, he said he knew that I would be upset about it, which I would have been. I wish now I had gone with my instinct when I first saw the phone bill instead of believing his lies. It did not surprise me that he married so fast. He is not a man that can handle living on his own. I really don't believe he ever has. Anyway that is sort of the whole story in a nutshell.

I am slowly getting my life back together, but it has been difficult. I moved again after he asked for a divorce and went back to Virginia to live with my mother and to job hunt. I finally found a job and moved again. I hope for the last time. I bought a house in and am beginning to feel a little more at peace. Haven't really started dating again, and don't know if I am really ready. That is something that still scares me. I don't want to make another mistake. I could not handle it. Hopefully, things will continue to get better. All I can do is take one day at a time.

I am married and we live in different states and have a long distance marriage, spending long periods apart and very precious periods together. Although this is very different than an online affair, I want to comment on the level of intimacy and connected communication we can maintain via the net. I wouldn't have guessed it possible, but we both love to write and we email daily, often several times a day. Thus my comments. I would guess the very same thing that can make an online affair feel new and exciting may help us keep our relationship connected. I know that is no consolation for those injured by online affairs—it's just a comment that the very same thing that has been used for deception and secret relationships is what we use to stay connected. We plan to eventually live together when our kids finish school and we won't have to uproot them. And we have wondered aloud and online how our relationship may change and whether we'll still connect on all these levels once we're together. I'm sure we will. But when I was explaining to a friend how this whole 'long distance marriage thing' is working, I described us like being a blind person. We can't connect or communicate on a key level—in person for us; visually for the blind. So our other senses are much more keen. I write long emails about my day, activities, thoughts, fears, local news, what I've read, the changing seasons, communication and interaction with my friends and family. I actually communicate more with him than I did when I lived with my first husband. And I'm sure, based on what I've read at this site, that's what those conducting online affairs are doing as well.

As you already know, my husband is back in the house (only to finish the divorce agreement), and in the meantime is continuing to lie and deceive me. I am going to try to retrieve messages and information that he removes from the "history" part of the computer. What do you think?

Be careful of accepting too much of what he tells you. I think he's angry now and wants to make you feel the pain he felt. And now you feel abandoned for someone else like he did. Don't take everything at face value. There will come a time when you'll understand why I say these things. For now be patient. Observe and learn. He's left clues if you can see them. Ask for help if you need it. We've all needed it or we wouldn't be here. Don't make rash decisions or let him goad you into reacting out of pain or anger.

You only know what he's told you and you have to realize that he could be manipulating your emotions. If you question what he has told you in any way, ask for objective eyes to look for clues. Please be cool and don't act without lots of thought: "act in haste (or anger) and repent in leisure."

And NO MORE overdose episodes!!!!!!!!!!!!!! That was a plea for his attention. That he left you in the hospital says a lot to me. He's confused and hurt too. But even after your affair, he left you in the hospital in your time of need? After 28 years? Only one word fits there, COLD. It's hard to face, but isn't it possible he just needed an excuse to get out. Could he have set things up so you would reach out to another man because he left you emotionally alone?

Please be calm. Talk to a Dr. if you need help. It's hard to accept that you need to take medication for an emotional upset, but it really can get you through the tough spots without flailing wildly about.

Post back so we'll know you're ok

I think your decision to look further is the right one. I suspect from what you said that some (if not all) of the clues you have found are planted for you to find. I think that since he's a lawyer, he's probably orchestrating this whole thing to get the reactions from you HE wants. Either to drive you away or to give himself justification to do whatever it is that he wants to do.

Since he's a lawyer, you may want a second opinion on anything he works up. Do you know someone, a judge for example, that you trust to look over things and be on your side? DON'T DO ANYTHING IN HASTE!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He'll want you to react emotionally, whatever you might want to do, tell yourself that you must wait ... be cool .. be careful .

What knowledge do you really have now? Suspect everything HE'S telling you ... suspect anything that you find "too easily" ... Did he leave it for you to find? Can it be verified in any way?

He had sex with BOTH of them? (pretty busy guy, not to mention possible safety issues)

Does it make you angry?

YOU'RE NOT THINKING CLEARLY WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY.

Does it hurt you?

YOU'RE NOT THINKING CLEARLY WHEN YOU'RE EMOTIONALLY UPSET.

What proof do you have that he actually slept with both of them? His word??

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I never realized how MUCH CRAP is out there. Would the Internet survive if it wasn't for the porn? Do AOL and other online services REALLY believe that their rooms are harmless...that this whole phenomenon might have a far deeper impact on society than anyone imagined? When something is easily available, doesn't that make it more accessible for abuse? We're all human...and I believe that all of us have hidden desires (or if you subscribe to the ID theory...) that for some people who unwitting expose themselves to this trash that they start to believe in it? That it becomes "acceptable" and "normal" because it's out there in a somewhat public domain? Let me put it this way...when I get Xrays from the doctor or dentist...it certainly doesn't hurt me. I don't feel it affect me...but if they didn't keep track of the amount of rays I was getting or how often I got Xrays...then I could become very sick from it. The same with the Internet and all that it has...there isn't anyone out there making sure we don't get sick. I may be able to "turn it off" but some people don't see it coming until too late. I sure hope Peggy's research into online affairs helps bring a lot of this to light. Remember...a long time ago we didn't think cigarettes hurt...our government thought it was OK to take the land from the Indians...and people believed women didn't have the right to vote. What is taking people so long to fully understand the serious impacts the Internet has had on society and how to combat it? I think once again technology has progress faster than humans can adapt to it. I believe 100% in the wonderful capabilities of the net (take this board for example) but I also am never, ever going to fool myself into believing that it "can't get to me".

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My husband met the OW in was a sex chat room. We both went in there. To be honest, not a lot of sex goes on in this room. Mostly it happens in private chats. It's a small community of people all over the world who came together and in time became friends. You name it, it's in there. Drama, passion, compassion, backstabbing, fighting and even love. Some amazing stories I've heard in there. I've met some truly special people in that room too. **BUT** Internet relationships are a fantasy. I've seen people fall in and out of love in that room. I've seen people over come incredible odds in that room. The reality of it all is that it takes more for a relationship than a computer and a phone. This is something I know very well. I met my H in this chat room and we fell in love in there. We met and fell deeper in love. I moved 1200 miles to be with him. I moved 1200 miles to get the hell away from him. Then I moved 1200 miles again to marry him. Out of everyone I know and all of the stories I've heard. My H and I are the only ones that ever made it. People don't realize that chances of a Internet things becoming real are more slim than meeting someone in the supermarket. The chat rooms are a place to be someone you really aren't.(your husband included) I've seen it so many times. I never will understand it, because I am who I am no matter what I do. It breaks my heart to see people aching to be with someone thinking that someday they will be together. When in all reality it won't happen. When people meet in person, they aren't who they said they were. They don't look quite like their pictures. It's just not the same as meeting someone where you live. You have all these images in your mind of who this person is, and you find out that they aren't that person. The disappointment of it ruins it. Someone moves back home. Then there's the stories of Freaks of Nature out there that are predators. They seek out lonely men and woman and take

everything they have or worse they end up missing or dead. So yes, I do think something should be done about Chat rooms and even the Porn out there. But what can really be done? No one knows but the people who have been there and gotten out of it. Do I still chat? Ummm... Hell NO! This is my outlet right now. I come to this board and I read and I post. I'm healing more all the time. What I miss about being in chat was that I was a little terrorist of sorts. I was the one making jokes and just get everyone going. I was the one who would tell ya how it is and not stand down. I miss my friends, but I missed my husband more. So many people are out there looking for something and they don't realize they won't find it on here. They have to find it in themselves first. But that's hard to tell an extremely lonely person who is just looking for someone to love them for who they are. It's actually very sad if you really think about it. I was lucky in all of this. I wasn't looking for anything but a good time. I know who I am and I really like who I am. Plus I was the best looking woman in the room. So I didn't feel the need to be someone I wasn't like most people do in chat rooms. I'm the one who won't send their picture out because you know damn well men are going to want to get to know you because of the way you look

I could go on and on about how I feel about the Internet. I've seen so much and experience so much with it. How it touches and ruins people's lives. Maybe I'll write a book....

The Internet can be a wonderful thing especially with a site like this, but something does need to be done about the way it is used to destroy perfectly good marriages.

Real-Life Horror Stories – and a Warning

I am aware of some true horror stories that represent the worst that can happen as the result of Online Affairs. They don't represent what normally happens in affairs, but I decided that it's probably wise to be aware of what CAN happen in extreme circumstances.

I have been granted permission to share these stories if I thought it would help someone (especially if they're considering an affair).

So here are 5 horror stories: 2 stories told in first-person by the person experiencing it, followed by 3 more short, sad stories that should cause anyone to stop and think more seriously about the possible ramifications of embarking on an affair:

True Horror Story #1: I have no question here, only a horror story related to an online "affair." A married man began talking to me online and what started out as a friendship, ended up being sexual. He claimed to be addicted. I went along for awhile, but as time went on, I tried to discourage the sexual part and just be friends. He would disappear for several months, then come back. 3 weeks ago, his wife found out, confronted him. An hour later, he committed suicide. This is something I should have stopped.

True Horror Story #2: I'm not married. I had an Internet relationship with a married woman. Her spouse found out about it and sent me a computer virus to shut me down. I have sworn off chat rooms. Particularly ones where people can pretend to be someone they aren't I will never sign on to ICQ again.

True Horror Story #3: A man (an executive that traveled quite a bit) started an affair with a woman that he apparently planned to leave his wife for, and marry. When he confronted his wife, the resulting uproar convinced him to reconsider (plus, there were four young kids at home that he would have 'lost' in the resulting divorce). When he tried to break off the affair, his lover became so distraught that she shot him. He left a bitter widow and 4 fatherless kids. The youngest son has no memory of his father, except as a cheater who paid the ultimate price. Very sad for everyone, especially since it was the only legacy the man left.

(Note: This story about the father was shared with me by one of his children.)

True Horror Story #4: A man who was a prominent politician in a large Southern city had numerous affairs. His last lover was convinced that he would divorce his wife and marry her. When the lover finally realized he never intended to do that, she actually hired a distant relative to shoot the wife in her own home. The shock of the murder gave the husband a massive coronary. He lingered for 4 months, then died, bedridden and broken, leaving 3 children (one a young adult and the other 2 teens) orphaned.

True Horror Story #5: A police officer suspected his wife of having an online affair, which was correct. Her Internet lover was pressing her to meet him when the husband discovered the incriminating emails. She panicked, and fatally shot herself.

Finally, here's a final horror story reported in USA Today on March 13, 2000:

A young Brit named Trevor Tasker flew to South Carolina to meet and marry his online love. But his girlfriend was actually a 65-year-old woman who was jailed earlier this month after authorities found the body of a man in her freezer.

NOTE: While these stories sound too bizarre to be true, more like a movie (remember "Fatal Attraction"), they are real-life stories that are part of public record. I share them in case somewhere down the road they could help save a life.

If You Think this Doesn't Apply to You, Think Again!

Note: the addictive nature of the Internet is exemplified by this report in USA Today several years ago—and the situation is no doubt even worse today:

More than 71% of adults with Internet access say they log on when they get home from work, and a fourth "stay online all evening," according to a survey of 4,300 Web users by the Greenfield Online research firm.

Resources on the Internet

While the Internet is the host for the incidence of Online Affairs...
It also can serve as a resource for dealing with this and related issues.

Below is a list of a few Online Resources that may be helpful.

Sex Addicts Anonymous

<http://www.sexaa.org/>

Sexual Recovery Institute

www.sexualrecovery.com

Sex Addicts Anonymous

<http://www.sexaa.org/>

Sex Addiction Help

www.sexaddictionhelp.com

Center for Online Addiction

www.netaddiction.com

SpectorSoft

(a software program that records everything
done on the Internet with a specific computer)

www.spectorsoft.com

About the Author

Peggy Vaughan is an internationally recognized expert in the area of extramarital affairs. Beginning in 1980 with the publication of her personal story in *Beyond Affairs*, Peggy was thrust into a position of responding to the many people across the country who identified with her experience and sought her help. She formed a national support group in the early eighties, and used the learnings from that experience to present a “new understanding” of affairs in *The Monogamy Myth*.

Peggy’s “societal perspective” of affairs has catapulted her into the forefront of the growing public discussion of this issue, where she is called upon to comment on the constant stream of news stories related to affairs. But it’s her personal commitment to helping people recover from the emotional impact of a partner’s affair that has gained her a worldwide following.

The primary arena for her ongoing work with this issue is the Internet, where she maintains an extensive Website (www.dearpeggy.com) containing free information about extramarital affairs. She also responds to questions about affairs that are submitted for her Question of the Week column. And she continues her work with BAN (Beyond Affairs Network), an organization of support groups in communities throughout the U.S. (and several other countries) that she founded and coordinates through her Website.

Peggy has been married for forty-nine years, has two grown children and three grandchildren and makes her home in San Diego, California.

In addition to *The Monogamy Myth*, Peggy has written *Dear Peggy* and *Help for Therapists and their Clients (based on an earlier Survey on Affairs)*. She has also co-authored, with her husband James: *Beyond Affairs*, *Recovering from Affairs*, *Making Love Stay*, and the *Life-Design Workbook*.

Other Books by Peggy Vaughan

The Monogamy Myth: A Personal Handbook for Recovering from Affairs

This is Peggy's 'classic' (first published in 1989, now in its third edition) containing an overview of the entire issue of affairs. It provides personal help in dealing with affairs as well as offering a societal perspective aimed at relieving the personal devastation of this experience.

To Have and To Hold: A Personal Handbook for Building a Strong Marriage and Preventing Affairs

This book, based on survey responses of 755 men and women, analyzes the difference between people's assumptions about how to prevent affairs vs. the actions and behaviors that actually work.

Dear Peggy: Peggy Vaughan answers questions about extramarital affairs

This Q&A book is made up of 260 questions and Peggy's responses. It includes issues of concern to the man or woman who had an affair, to the spouse hurt by an affair, and to the third party.

Musings on Life

This book contains 107 of Peggy's personal reflections on a wide range of life issues, including: relationships, integrity, communication, health, education, making a difference and being a woman.

The following books were co-authored with her husband, James Vaughan, Ph.D.

Beyond Affairs

This book was initially published in 1980 (and republished in 2010 with a 30-year update), telling the story of their personal experience in dealing with affairs during an earlier period in their marriage

Recovering From Affairs: A Handbook for Couples

This is a 39-page handbook based on a course the Vaughans developed and conducted for people recovering from affairs.

Making Love Stay: Everything You Ever Knew About Love but Forgot

This book shows couples how to transform their romantic love into a more permanent lasting love—avoiding the gimmicks and sexual gymnastics so common in "how to" books about love.

Life-Design: Living Your Life by Choice Instead of Chance

This is a 106-page workbook based on a "life planning" course Peggy and James have conducted for the past 40 years.

Quotes about Peggy's Work

- Your information has been a constant source of comfort and knowledge.
- Your work has been a lifesaver for me at this difficult time.
- Your information has been a constant source of comfort and knowledge.
- Your work has been a lifesaver for me at this difficult time.
- Great information and perspectives! You are an incredible resource!
- It's such a relief to hear some "realistic" advice. It's just the kind of information I needed so desperately.
- Thank you so much for all your insight and information. You are a true source of comfort to me during this most difficult time.
- Your information has given me hope for the first time. Thanks!
- "Helpful" is not the word. You probably saved my marriage and my life.
- What can I say! Astonishing! I have learned lots of good points other "experts" never touched.
- Thanks for all your hard work and dedication to helping those of us who are hurting.
- Your efforts are systematically shedding more and more light on the topic of affairs. I am extremely appreciative of your efforts because I believe it is what is needed to get it out of the closet and into a place where it can be examined. It will make all the difference.
- There is such affinity between what you have expressed and what I have felt.
- You have a very nice treatment of an important subject—free from hyperbole and filled with understanding and compassion.
- I've found your approach to be such a relief. Thank you for your level-headed approach.
- I'm so glad to see so much good information, well outlined and well presented for those who find themselves so lost in pain!
- Thank you for dealing with this subject in a way that represents the way society really is, rather than just condemn everyone who is involved in an affair.
- I draw comfort from your work; I know I am not alone.
- I could not have survived the first very difficult year without your wonderful insight.
- Thank you for your work. The advice you have is exactly the kind of information I needed to hear.
- Your information has given me hope for the first time. Thanks!
- I applaud your work and feel fortunate to live in a time among people willing to tackle our important social problems, that in the long run affect the fabric of our society.
- I wish everyone could read your comments when we first get married, it would sure save a lot of grief.