

## LL12- Can Love Survive Infidelity?

I'm Alvean Lyons,  
and I'm Doug Weiss, and welcome to Love Life.

So, Douglas, we have another topic connected to something that our audience is very interested in because it is fundamental to all of us: relationship and connection. There come some realities, the tough things that can take place, and one of those tough things happens to be infidelity. So the question that was posed to us this week is, can love survive infidelity? So tell us what do you think Douglas.

Wow. Well yes it can, but I would like to slightly rephrase the question, if that's OK. Not so much can love survive infidelity but can a relationship survive infidelity?

So, I think it can, but it takes extraordinary people to make that possible, because what's happened in the case of infidelity is the violation of one of the most fundamental things in human life. That, is the subject of trust.

Absolutely, when our trust is violated, and this is something we learned in infancy, trust is a basic condition of every relationship without trust there is no relationship.

When our expectations of trust are violated, it takes enormous effort to rebuild.

So let me tell you a quick story. I have a friend who given the nature of his position unfortunately has on a number of occasions found himself in awkward situations with people with whom he worked. He's an attractive guy and his is a position of significant authority, responsibility and means.

On a number of occasions women have, I want to say, made a pass. This probably sounds old fashioned, but they made it very clear to him that they found him desirable and, on one occasion he was tempted. Nothing happened. But he did what he thought was the right thing, he came home from the business trip and told his wife, and told her that nothing had happened but that there had been this interchange, and he was feeling bad about it.

And he said to me, do you think I did the right thing? So my first reaction was, I admire your honesty. I'm not sure I would have brought this up in this particular case because nothing did happen. But that was your call. But what I found so disturbing, and I think really goes to the heart of this topic, was that it's become a weapon in the relationship. In this case, the wife wields that weapon anytime things are not going well. You remember that time... ? And that is carried around in her gunnysack she's got that and she trots it out at times.

I don't know this for sure but I've got to believe, in fact I sort of know that there were instances in her life, before they were a dedicated couple, where things happened that could have been construed in much the same way, at a time when they were just dating.

I find this business of carrying around this weapon, if you will, to be trotted out instead of having a meaningful conversation with each other, truly counterproductive. Using this as a way to shut down the conversation, the dialogue. We should probably talk about that in some future show, but it goes to the heart of the matter. I'm not trying to cast aspersions on her, or forgive him. Or suggest that he did the right or the wrong thing here. What I am saying is it points out how fundamental this issue is, the subject of trust. Once someone has reason to fear that their trust has been violated, it becomes a refrain, kind of a back drop to the relationship that's very hard to get past.

I always find this conversation so interesting when it comes up, and I have admitted before, publicly, that I may not be your typical, air quote girl, when it comes to these issues because I tend to lean towards most male perspectives on these particular issues. And that is to say that the emotion that is associated with the possibility of infidelity is one I don't experience. As in, I'm not fazed by that. I'm not bothered by the fact that my husband is a beautiful man. I expect other women to think so too, quite frankly. I'm insulted if you don't. As a result, I would imagine that other women would appreciate that also, I don't even mind that he flirts.

Maybe it's a generational personal thing. I don't mind the flirtation either as long as we both have a line that we

mutually agree upon that is not crossed, because we love each other too much to create intentional hurt for one another. So being friendly, and I'm in the business of people all day long, with men all day long, beautiful, intelligent, capable men, and he's not fazed by that. But I think that on some level it goes back to what Douglas said and our previous show in terms of the conditions. If they aren't there for the infidelity for the cheating for the violation, people tend not to be walking on eggshells in their relationship. So, we're not worried about the other person doing something to hurt us. And that trust factor that he also referenced previously, when you're really friends inside of a relationship, you talk about things before they become things you deal with at the seed level. So that you don't have to deal with them at the tree level.

When people don't address it at the seed level, the violation often comes from the fact that you never told me that you were struggling with these issues, or that you needed more of my attention, or my time, or my affection or whatever, and you let it turn into a tree to fall on me. Then, I'm unexpectedly hurt by the decision that you might have made in allowing something to go too far or actually going too far. A relationship survives those experiences, I agree with Douglas, yes it can, but there's a difference between surviving a situation in which your partner cheated versus surviving being in a relationship with a cheat. Term one is a singular experience, a bad decision we can learn from and move past, the other is a character issue. If I'm a cheater, this is my chemistry. This is how I'm wired. I fulfill my needs with total and utter disregard for the pain that it creates for somebody else. I am so self-absorbed in my needs, that I am not thoughtful about the other person and what this may mean for them. So I think that there is a significant difference between those two in terms of where we can go after there has been an incident.

I think there's a set of cases too that I've come across in life where people engage in what I would call revenge infidelity. Where they're punishing the other person in the relationship, either because they don't feel fulfilled... they don't feel that they're getting what they want out of the relationship, or they're angry at that person for something that they have done and this is how their evening up the score.

What you say, both of those are inexcusable.

Absolutely, but it happens and realistically the question is if there's real remorse, if there's real desire, if there is the seed of something that still works with these two people... that brings them back to each other and they genuinely desire to continue, then it's possible for the relationship to survive. But only under those circumstances, and no one should kid themselves that this is easy. It's going to take enormous forgiveness, and it's going to take the kind of forgiveness we ask of God. It's going to take complete absolution, if you will, the willingness on the part of the injured party to say: "There but for the grace of God go I", and you are forgiven. It was wrong. I'm not tolerant of this, but you are forgiven. I'm not going to hold this up. I'm not going to bring it up to you at every possible moment. It's done. Let's put it past us, and let's talk about what we need to do to rebuild trust, to have transparency between us, and most importantly how we..... as you so beautifully put it...in our last podcast...how you keep the grass wet?

How do you foster that kind of relationship, where we're both able to talk openly and honestly with each other about the things that are going on, so that anything that might lead us, whether it's this kind of revenge situation or just the dry grass that you alluded to, in a relationship don't exist. So that we get past those issues and we keep this a fertile relationship.

I totally agree. And we have to... as you referenced previously, we have to remember that trust is fundamental to vulnerability and vulnerability is fundamental to love. If we cannot trust one another then the next two stages that take us to love are not even possible. It is possible to get through difficult things, but it requires very strong people who are mutually committed to being better than they were yesterday.

So if you want to be part of this conversation with us, if you want to share your stories with us so that we can be part of your life journey helping you to love life we would love it if you would reach out to us at: [doug@lovelife.digital](mailto:doug@lovelife.digital), or [alvean@lovelife.digital](mailto:alvean@lovelife.digital).

And we want to thank Barbara Hamm Lee, our producer and Todd Washburn our wonderful engineer, who are part of the love life family and we will be back with you next week with another provocative topic. Until then thanks for listening.