



Her Journey: Getting Support and Talking With Your Husband

The most important thing that has demonstrated healing for a family is if both husband and wife will engage together on this journey.

Our goal is to give you a healthy perspective and some practical tips for the journey ahead of you. Often women struggle in isolation during this time which leaves them poorly equipped for the painful experiences and emotions that characterize sexual betrayal. We want you to know there is a better way...and it is not an easier way. Many women before you have known your pain. Many women after you will know your sense of panic and despair. Reading this document will not change the reality of your difficult life, but it may give you some hope for the future. Our prayers are with you.

Getting Support

God offers us community with others for critical reasons. It is not wise for our relational support to be restricted to just one or two people. Nor is it a good plan to be completely dependent on our immediate family for emotional, spiritual and relational health.

When a man enters a purity group he has become a part of a community of peers. He must be able to share openly in this group. This group is a training ground for him. It gives him the environment to explore what he may believe is risky and provides a place to explore vulnerability. As he risks more he explores a greater grace. Once he has fully shared and continues to share authentically he discovers this group is like no other place in his life. A place where he can be fully known and yet fully accepted.

You are reading this, it is likely because your significant other has found this kind of community. It will take time, but you will begin to see how this environment can mature him into a man you are able to love and trust.

As you continue into this next phase of your marriage keep the following truths in mind. They will help you stay on a healthy path. They will give you support and perspective when you need it. At times of discouragement, they may even strengthen your resolve to stay engaged on the journey the Lord has for you.

1. It's not your fault.

It is an easy lie for women to believe. Regardless of what you may tell yourself, none of this is your fault. His issues with sexual sin started well before he met you. How could you be the cause of his addiction? We can't make anyone do anything. That is to say, your husband is responsible for his own sin—you are in no way to blame for his sexual choices.

You may have been advised by "well intentioned but ill-informed" people who have offered unwise bits of counsel. They may have suggested you somehow pushed him toward his sexual addiction or that you should take risks—whether emotional or sexual—to help your husband make better choices. This type of troubleshooting reduces your husband's responsibility and points to an unjust perspective that you bear some responsibility for his sin. Not true...it's not your fault!

Every professional we know who serves people in this area of struggle believes this truth: it's not your fault! Please hold onto this truth by not accepting the blame or responsibility for your husband's wrong choices.

2. You have your own journey.

The pain will not truly subside and life will not get better without embarking on a journey—your own. It is not a journey of "I can make him well", but instead a journey to learn:

- What is sexual addiction?
- Can he stop?
- What does this issue mean for me?
- Are there things I should or shouldn't do today?

There will be no going back to your old life before you knew. This path before you is remarkably different. In the same way your husband has been welcomed into the journey of sexual wholeness, you have been invited by God to live authentically on your own journey.

Part of walking your own journey is that what you experience needs to be shared with your husband. He needs to hear about your anger, your fear, your sense of insecurity, your frustration, your disillusionment, your panic...he needs to hear it all.

But what is the best way to now relate with your husband? This is all new to you. You likely do not know your next steps. Why would you? This is all foreign territory for both of you. For this reason, the next point is very important.

3. *Get support.*

Choosing to join a safe community is the most healing decision. In this kind of setting, you will find women with whom you can share your hurt, questions and fears. The ideal is to be a part of a weekly in-person group. Interaction with other women keeps your heart and mind centered on truth and it allows you to process out loud and in realtime the struggles you are experiencing. Face to face community is invaluable since it provides such a personal connection with others. One such program in the Portland, Oregon area is the Pure Life Alliance Hidden Hurt ministry. You can explore this option at purelifealliance.org.

If you do not have an option in your area, online or phone groups can also fill this need. A Christian therapist who is knowledgeable on sexual addiction and its impact can be a good resource for you. Their office offers another safe, truth-based environment to work through this experience which can be overwhelming. It is a setting that allows you to be the main focus and this gives you more time to deeply process your pain and next steps on your journey. Counseling makes an excellent companion for the work you are doing in your small group. It is for this reason we strongly encourage women to add a counselor to their support structure.

You should always be thoughtful and prayerful about who hears your story. Not everyone can manage hearing about sexual brokenness in a mature, healthy way. In the worst case, it may even negatively affect their relationship with you. Even spiritually mature people—or those closest to you—may have things in their background that cause them to respond in an unhealthy way. So rather than being supported you experience additional wounding. Pray for wisdom to find those the Lord will provide for your journey.

4. *Get informed.*

If for some reason you can not participate in a group—or must wait for a while before entering a group—get informed. Neither you nor your marriage will get well if you view this as only “his issue.” You did not choose this path, but you are living this reality. Understanding the issues and its impact on you is essential for your recovery and well being.

Groups are best as they teach information and provide a support community. But when that is not an option due to schedule or geography we would encourage you to at least read a book or two on this topic. The truth and stories they contain will give words and shape to your feelings and thoughts. You will find a helpful list of books for wives at purelifealliance.org/hhbooks.

Talking With Your Husband

You now experience your husband as someone who has not told the truth. He has misled you and many times lied outright to your face. How should you proceed in interacting with him? Here are some strategies to help you safely engage with him.

Believe the behavior. Your assessment of your husband's journey should be based on behaviors you are able to see and measure. His behavior needs to speak for itself. Is it evident that he is now a "truth teller" who wants to save his marriage and get well? Is he taking actions that follow through on his stated intent? Joining a group, reading his book, meeting with his mentor and beginning to share emotions, feelings and his overall journey openly with you—these are good behavioral signs of being on a healthy journey.

Weekly Check-in. It would be wise for you and your husband to have a weekly time to discuss how your journeys are going. A preset time, each week, when you each agree to talk openly about how you both are doing. This weekly checkin is not a setting for you to be his accountability partner. Getting his program filter reports is also not a wise plan for you. An ideal situation is to know who is playing these roles in his life. Are the men in his life holding him accountable and are those men trustworthy to look out for his best interest?

The weekly check-in is a short 15-30 minute conversation about how each of you are doing. The goal is for the conversation to be as specific as possible within the broad categories he has disclosed that are a concern—no specific details! It helps immensely to have 3–5 standard questions that are asked and answered each week. These questions are just for this weekly check-in and should not be asked everyday. The weekly check-in will reduce stress and turmoil about how often you should ask him how he is doing. A benefit for him is knowing what he will answer and when he will answer the preset questions.

There are helpful question and unhelpful questions. Questions that are unhelpful are ones that are too general. They can leave you feeling like he is being evasive. An example of this type of question would be "How did you do this week?" See some questions below that will provide a healthy level of vulnerability and provide you with an increasing environment of trust.

- Did you go to group this week?
- Are you sharing everything with your group?
- Did you _____? (fill in the specific broad behavior here)
- Did you look at any website that I or your group members would be uncomfortable with?
- Did you receive or send any texts with someone you've been involved with?

Ultimately, you want a husband that is willing to say, "I'm telling you everything. But if you need to ask me again about anything, you are welcome to ask me. You don't have to trust me yet, but I've told you everything." It is this humble attitude of an engaged heart that a man—truly on the journey—can offer his wife.

Be patient, pray and wait for the Lord to begin crafting change in your husband, believing He will make the difference in your husband and marriage.