



FAQs

1) What is infidelity?

- Infidelity occurs when someone pursues deep physical and/or emotional connection beyond the boundaries of his/her primary partnership. Infidelity is a betrayal of trust. Infidelity usually happens in secret.
- Infidelity can happen within a marriage, a dating relationship, a same-sex partnership, an open relationship, or any relationship.

2) Why does infidelity cause trauma?

- “The symptoms of many betrayed [women] are strikingly similar to the post-traumatic stress reactions of the victims of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.”^[1]
- Infidelity is a life-altering trauma. It shatters a woman’s trust, and she may feel that her entire life’s foundation has been ripped out from beneath her. Women have described their reactions as ranging from total despair to unspeakable rage to suicidal thoughts.

3) How common is infidelity?

- “An estimated 26%-50% of men and 21%-38% of women have reported at least 1 lifetime occurrence of extramarital sex.”^[2]
- Infidelity cuts across all lines of culture, race, class, socioeconomic status, religion, and ethnicity.
- It can happen in any relationship, even “good” ones.

4) Why does infidelity happen?

- Decades of research confirm that people [choose to commit infidelity](#) in response to, or in escape from, their own unaddressed emotional issues.
- **It is not the fault of the betrayed spouse. It is not the fault of the relationship.**

5) What is Infidelity Counseling Network (ICN)?

- We help women heal from infidelity through confidential, one-to-one, telephone peer counseling.
- Our trained volunteer peer counselors are women who have survived infidelity, and they help each client in her [personal recovery](#) from this trauma regardless of whether her relationship end or mends.
- Founded in 2011, we’re a 501(c)3 nonprofit GuideStar Gold Level organization run entirely by women.
- We are the only nonprofit of its kind, anywhere!

6) Who are ICN’s clients?

- We support women of all ages and backgrounds across the U.S. and Canada.
- We work with each client for approximately 2-8 months, providing ongoing telephone peer support for her personal journey.

7) Where is ICN located?

- We’re incorporated in the San Francisco Bay Area with volunteers and clients across the U.S. and Canada. We all work remotely.

8) Why peer counseling?

- Research shows that support from peers who have undergone similar experiences is a key component of recovery.
- The realization that “I’m not alone – I can do this!” is very empowering in a woman’s journey toward healing and strength.
- Since our founding we’ve provided over 2,100 free or low-cost peer counseling hours to transform women’s lives.

9) Why phone counseling?

- Telephone counseling protects the privacy and confidentiality of our clients and our volunteer peer counselors.
- Telephone counseling allows clients to cry, rage, vent, curse, and talk about intimate topics. A face-to-face meeting or video call may inhibit these personal and vulnerable expressions.

^[1] Glass, S.P. & Wright, T.L. (1997). *Reconstructing marriages after the trauma of infidelity*. In W. K. Halford & H.J. Markman (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of marriage and couples interventions* (pp. 471-507). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, p. 473.

^[2] Choi, Kyung-Hee, Joseph A. Catania, and M. Margaret Dolcini. 1994. “Extramarital Sex and HIV Risk Behavior among U. S. Adults: Results from the National AIDS Behavioral Survey.” *American Journal of Public Health* 84, no. 12, p. 2003.