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Am I To Blame For His/Her Affair?

LIVE SEARCH:



By Robert Jameson

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A powerful question that most people ask if their partner has been involved in an affair. This is one of those situations where an old adage comes into play. "Next to every truth stands a lie." In order to answer this question, we have to walk on a razor's edge. It's easy to fall off on either side. It would be easy to say, "Yes, you were to blame." And it would be just as easy to say, "No, it wasn't your fault. You're not to be blamed." If you're feeling confused and a little upset right about now, then you're in the right place. You're on the razor's edge.

Create, Promote or Allow

To gain some clarity here, and to get on more secure ground, I would like to define three words: Create, Promote and Allow. From my point of view, we create, promote and/or allow everything that happens to

us. So what does that mean?

Let's say we're in a restaurant, having a good time, and I turn to a guy at the table next to us and I say, "Hey Dude, you're really ugly!" He hears this and smashes me in the face. Ouch! It's clear that I **"created"** that fight. We're in that restaurant again, enjoying our meal, and I say to you in a loud voice, "That guy next to us is really ugly!" He hears me and smashes me in the face. Now I could say, "It wasn't my fault. I was just talking to my friend." However, I did **"promote"** that fight.

We're back in that same restaurant, and I'm being really good. I'm not talking bad about any one. We're laughing and just enjoying the evening. All of a sudden two guys get in a fight. I stay and watch. Pretty soon a chair flies through the air and hits me in the head. I'm innocent. I was being good. It wasn't my fault. I **"allowed"** myself to get hurt in this situation. Because I know when people get in fights, people get hurt and by my choosing to stay and watch, I put myself in a situation where hurt could occur.

Just to be clear. Whenever we're in an intimate relationship with someone outside of ourselves, we're putting our selves into a situation where human behavior can occur. Some human behavior can be all-inspiring, while some human behavior can be very hurtful. By the very nature of being in a relationship we're **allowing** ourselves to be hurt, we're **allowing** someone to have an affair.

So, we could say, "You created, promoted or allowed this affair to occur." There, I said it.

Now what are you going to do with that? Are you going to beat yourself up? Are you going to obsess over the past to figure out what you did wrong? I hope not. Are you going to learn and grow from your experience? I hope so.



A Learning Opportunity

Relationships are like classrooms. We enter into a class to learn something. When we learn what we need to learn then we get to graduate. Sometimes we get to repeat the same class over and over. We all make mistakes in our relationships. It's okay.

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They didn't teach us how to have a healthy, loving, long-term relationship in high school. Most of us learn how to have a loving relationship through the process of trial and error. We learn from our pain.



Did you do anything “wrong” in your relationship?

I avoid seeing things in “right/wrong” terms. Seeing things as “right/wrong” is **not** an effective way to create positive change or transformation. “The right/wrong” game is only good for creating guilt and shame. I prefer to view behavior in terms of “effective/ineffective.” Does this behavior create more loving and intimacy in my relationship? If it does, and if that’s what I want, then I’m going to do more of that behavior. If the behavior creates fear, resentment, anger, hurt and separation, then I’m going to do less of that behavior.

Effectively Creating Intimacy

If you knew how to effectively create more intimacy and loving in your relationship you would be doing it. It’s been said, “*If you knew better, you would do better.*” As I ask around, I have never found anyone say, “I’m going to do this behavior because I know it’s the wrong thing to do.” Everyone I have asked has told me that they did what they did because it was what they thought would give them the results they wanted. They yelled at their partner, hoping they would “knock” some sense into them, so they would be more loving. I know that sounds crazy – I’m yelling at you because I want you to get close to me – but that’s what most of us do.

You know yelling doesn’t create intimacy and loving, but I know you’ve done it. Me too! That’s what we were taught. That’s what we saw. That’s what we heard in all those love songs. **Don’t do that.** Don’t yell at your partner. Talk to him/her. Listen to their words, their wants, their boundaries, their dreams, their fears, and their confusion. Hold them. Create a space where they feel safe and secure. Create time to explore each other’s thoughts.

Ask them what they want more of in the relationship. If they say they want more touching, or talking, or playing and you feel you have been doing a lot of touching, talking and playing, don’t defend your position. Ask them what more touching, talking and playing would look like. There are certain things we always seem to want more of. It doesn’t mean you’re not doing it, it just means your partner wants more.



Ask them what they want less of in the relationship. If they want less nagging, or less sports, or less drinking, or less mess, then do less of those things.

We Don’t Have Any Control Over Others

You might be saying, I did all of that. I asked, we talked, we touched, we laughed, we played, and we dreamed together. And, he/she still had an affair. Why wasn’t I effective in creating a healthy, loving relationship? How did I create, promote or allow that?

One thing I keep learning over and over is: I can’t control anyone or anything outside of myself. All I can do is control how I react to those things that happen outside of myself.

For some people, having affairs is an addictive pattern, like drugs or alcohol. If you’re in a relationship with a person who has this addictive pattern, then what you do in the relationship has little to no affect on your partner’s behavior. If this is the situation you feel you’re in, then I would strongly recommend you attend some 12-step program like Alanon or Coda to help you deal with your partner’s addictive pattern.

So, are you to blame for your partner having an affair? No. Blaming puts us in the “right/wrong” paradigm and that’s a “loss/loss” situation. Are there things you did in the relationship that created, promoted or allowed the affair? Yes. If you can learn from the experience, then a blessing of change and transformation can emerge. When we use everything for our upliftment, advancement and growth, then joy, peace and loving will be our companions.

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About the Author of this Article: As a licensed marriage and family therapist, Robert C. Jameson focuses on helping clients understand and overcome issues, such as anger, hurt, depression, anxiety, love, relationships, boundaries and limiting beliefs, to name a few. During his years of private practice, Mr. Jameson found it useful to give many of his clients "homework" in the form of handouts to support their work while in session. The

Keys to Joy-Filled Living was born from his handouts of tried and true exercises and techniques.

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This was the most helpful article, I have ever read on this subject. We should teach all this in school. Brilliant piece!



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