BETRAYAL TRAUMA CRISIS AND RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL: FOR BETRAYED PARTNERS
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BETRAYAL CHANGES YOUR LIFE. In a quick moment, everything is altered as your relationship becomes a source of threat and danger instead of a source of safety and connection. This injury to your ability to feel safely attached to your partner brings with it a host of trauma symptoms that deeply affect your ability to function normally, and to feel emotionally and physically stable.

As a betrayed partner, you know that you’ve been traumatized. What you probably don’t yet fully grasp is how severely you’ve been traumatized, and the many areas of your life that are being affected. In addition, because sexual betrayal so thoroughly destroys the trust in a relationship, the impact is felt in every area of your life with your partner. The parenting, the finances, the sexual relationship, your physical health, relationships with friends and family, all these areas and more are negatively impacted by the experience of betrayal trauma.

The Betrayal Trauma Crisis and Risk Assessment Tool is designed to walk you through various areas of your life, helping you see and understand the full impact of your partner’s betrayal. In the immediate overwhelm that follows the discovery of cheating behaviors, it can be hard to sort out the kaleidoscope of feelings and the tangible effects of infidelity. This tool has been created to help you examine your emotions and the different parts of your life that have been impacted by the betrayal, and to help you identify steps and actions you may need to take to protect and care for yourself. It may bring to your attention things you had not previously thought about, but that, upon reflection, very much need your energy and focus. Hopefully, it will help you move forward in ways that feel empowering.

Inventorying the impact of betrayal on your life in this way is a difficult and sometimes painful process. It brings an unbearable reality into even sharper focus. However, seeing, naming, and owning your new post-betrayal reality is a
foundational step in moving forward toward healing. After all, if you don’t know what you’re facing, you can’t deal with it.

**HOW TO USE THIS TOOL**

There are seven areas of inquiry that are explored in *The Betrayal Trauma Crisis and Risk Assessment Tool*. They are:

1. Your support system
2. Your legal situation
3. Your financial wellbeing
4. Your emotional wellbeing
5. Your physical wellbeing
6. Your children’s wellbeing
7. Your sexual wellbeing

You can use this tool in several different ways.

- **As a journaling and processing tool.** There is a lot of information in this document. One way to use this tool is to take it section by section, giving yourself time and space to stop and think through how betrayal has impacted the different areas of your life. Answering each question and taking some time to write about and reflect on your feelings will help you process and sort through the many feelings that you have been experiencing.

- **As an action plan.** After each of the seven areas of inquiry, a section called *Steps Toward Safety and Healing* has been included. This is where you can write down the specific steps and actions you need to take to protect yourself in that specific area of your life. This section is intended to empower you to do whatever you need to do to help yourself to function better, feel more safety, and get the help and support you need. It is not intended to overwhelm you. So, do an ‘easy does it’ with this section. Don’t expect yourself to take every action you have listed immediately. You can work your way through the process as you are able.

- **As a therapeutic tool.** If you are working with a therapist, taking this tool into therapy, showing it to your therapist, and working through it with your therapist’s help and support is a great option. There is a version of this tool available for therapists at www.partnerhope.com. You can make your therapist aware of its availability and ask your therapist to use it to help assess your level of risk, and to create a treatment plan designed to support and help you as
you move toward increased safety and stability both individually and in your relationship.

**As an outline for your Partner Impact Letter.** If you are working with a therapist trained to address sexual addiction, infidelity, and betrayal trauma, your therapist will help you and your partner to go through a process called Disclosure. Disclosure is where the cheating partner provides a full account of the infidelity, eliminating all the secrets and lies in the relationship. A few weeks after Disclosure, the betrayed partner is often given an opportunity to write what is called a Partner Impact Letter. This letter, written and read out loud to the cheating partner, tells how the betrayal has impacted you and your life. The Betrayal Trauma Crisis and Risk Assessment Tool can provide a valuable outline for you to refer back to as you write that letter. It will help you include all the ways in which the cheating and dishonesty have affected and impacted you.

Complete this assessment over time. Do not try to do it in one sitting as it will be too much to emotionally process. As you work on it, please be aware of your feelings. If you slip into overwhelm, stop working and take a break. Usually, taking a short break where you have a snack or a nap will help you regain your equilibrium. If you need it, seek support from your therapist or an empathetic friend. You are not going through this process alone. Let yourself be supported.
YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Whom do you feel comfortable turning to for support in this time of crisis? Consider as possibilities your family, friends, therapist, church, etc.

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Do you feel able to ask for help when you need it? Do you feel that you’ll receive effective support when you ask for it? Why or why not?

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What are you currently doing for your self-care? Consider things like therapy, support groups, eating right, exercising, etc.

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Do you belong to a church or some other place of worship? If so, do you feel spiritually connected to that place? Why or why not?

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Do you feel that your current struggles have impacted your spiritual life or your view of your Higher Power? If so, in what ways?

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Steps Toward Safety and Healing
What are the specific steps or actions that you want to take over the coming days and weeks to build up and increase your support system?

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YOUR LEGAL SITUATION

Do you or your partner have outstanding legal issues? If so, what are they, and how are they likely to be resolved? Do you feel that you have the resources and support you need to resolve these issues?

Are you familiar with laws in your state regarding legal separation and divorce? If not, are you willing to investigate this as a way of protecting yourself? Why or why not?

Do you already have or feel that you might need to consult with a lawyer about your current situation? Why or why not?

Steps Toward Safety and Healing

In the space below, list specific legal issues that you or your partner are facing. Now make a list of the specific actions you can take to resolve the legal issues or to protect yourself from the impact of the legal issues. Be careful not to resolve or act on things that your partner needs to address. (You don't want to interfere with consequences that he/she may need to experience.) However, do think about what is in your best
interest, and how to best take care of yourself and anyone else you are responsible for. Include in your list any information that you need, and ideas of where you can go to get that information.

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YOUR FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Do you have full knowledge of your and your family’s current financial status?
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Do you have full access to all information about your partner’s and your family’s bank accounts, investments, property, etc.?
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Are your bank accounts, investments, property, and other assets joint, individual, TOD (transferable on death), or POD (payable on death)?
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Do you know if there are retirement accounts, pensions, IRAs, etc.? Do you have access to information about these accounts?
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Are your credit cards jointly held? If so, how do you feel about that?

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Do you know your credit score? Your partner’s credit score? Your credit score as a couple?

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Do you have financial resources of your own? What is the availability of these resources to you? To your partner?

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Do you have a personal, individually held safe deposit box?

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Do you feel as if you know and can protect your personal financial rights?

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Do you feel financially trapped in your relationship?

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Has your partner moved money, spent money, or hidden money without your knowledge, consent, or participation?

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After answering these questions, do you feel that you may need to consult with a lawyer and/or an accountant or financial advisor about your current situation? Why or why not?

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Steps Toward Safety and Healing
If you have not been the one in your relationship taking the lead on the finances, this category may feel daunting. You may feel like there is so much you don’t know, and this ‘not knowing’ may increase your fear of being further lied to or taken advantage of. Nevertheless, becoming financially aware is vital to increasing your sense of safety and stability. In the space below, make a list of the actions you need to take to become aware of your entire financial situation. Include requests that you need to make of your partner around financial transparency and accountability. You may end up with quite an action list, so once are you finished you should take a few minutes to remind yourself that you don’t have to do it all today. Just knowing what you need to do is a huge step forward. When you’ve got your list, it’s wise to pause and give yourself credit for what you’ve accomplished. You can tackle the items on your list when you are ready.

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YOUR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING
Place a checkmark next to any of the items that you are experiencing:

☐ Forgetting things
☐ Clumsiness, accidents
☐ Sleeplessness, a desire to sleep all the time, nightmares or fitful sleep
☐ Difficulty concentrating
☐ Mixing up words when talking
☐ Inability to complete small tasks
☐ Wanting to isolate
☐ Anxiety, panic attacks, overwhelming fear
☐ Unstoppable crying or the inability to cry
☐ Anger, rage, or frustration
☐ Depression

continued
☐ Racing thoughts or an inability to ‘turn your mind off’
☐ Intrusive thoughts of real or imagined scenes of your partner’s sexual behavior
☐ Twitching eyes, legs, arms
☐ Loss of appetite or increase in appetite
☐ Headaches/migraines
☐ Body aches
☐ Feeling numb, robotic, or disconnected
☐ Sour or churning stomach
☐ Guilt or shame
☐ Thoughts of suicide or self-harm
☐ Frequent illness

Are you taking proper care of your grooming and hygiene needs?

Are you exercising, meditating, doing yoga, or engaging in some other form of self-care to center yourself? If so, what are you doing, and how often?

Do you feel socially or emotionally isolated?

Do you feel emotionally detached from your life and/or the people around you?

Are you finding it difficult to trust your partner and/or others in your life?

Are you unable to feel joy or other forms of pleasure?
Did you experience any childhood trauma? If so, in what ways? Consider neglect, abuse, inconsistent parenting, addiction or mental illness in the family, serious illness, accidents, natural disasters, etc.

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Are you currently using alcohol or other drugs (including cigarettes)? If so, which substances are you using and how often? Has your usage increased since you learned about the betrayal?

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Are you currently using food, shopping, reading, TV watching, or any other escapist behaviors in excess? If so, which ones are you using and how often? Has your usage increased since you learned about the betrayal?

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After answering these questions, what kinds of support do you feel like you need? Would a therapist or support group be helpful? Why or why not?

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**Steps Toward Safety and Healing**

Assessing your emotional wellbeing is like looking directly into the eye of the storm. The trauma symptoms that you are experiencing affect each of the other six areas outlined in this assessment tool, and they often feel like the most challenging part of the entire experience. Be compassionate and kind to yourself as you think about the steps and actions that will help you with the emotional effects of betrayal. This
section may also stump you, making you aware that you truly aren’t sure how to help yourself with your trauma symptoms. If that is the case, shift back up to the support system section to see if there are any new supports that might help you get the emotional assistance you need.

YOUR PHYSICAL WELLBEING

Have you had thoughts of self-harm or suicide?

Have you had thoughts of harming your partner or others?

Are there weapons in your home? If so, what precautions are being taken? If so, are you comfortable with the weapons being in your home?
Are you or your partner exhibiting anger in inappropriate ways (throwing things, shoving, hitting someone, punching inanimate objects, etc.)? If so, who, and in what ways?

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Is there a history of physical abuse in your relationship (by either partner)?

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Is there currently physical abuse in your relationship (by either partner)?

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Do you feel safe in your home and with your partner? Why or why not?

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If you do not feel safe in your home or with your partner, are you willing to explore alternatives?

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Steps Toward Safety and Healing

This area of life can be particularly painful to look at. It can be hard to acknowledge that you are perhaps so depressed that you have thought of taking your own life, which may be something you never even thought you would consider. It can be awful to admit that your anger and rage at your cheating partner have caused you to lose control of yourself and to throw things or strike out in anger. Again, this may be something you never imagined you were capable of. It can also be hard to acknowledge that you no longer feel physically safe with your partner. As you look at this area, be as honest as possible, even though it is painful. In the space below, list out the steps that you need to take to increase your physical safety. Let compassion accompany your honesty as you recognize how deeply the betrayal has impacted you.

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YOUR CHILDREN’S WELLBEING

How well are you functioning in your role as a parent? How well is your partner functioning in his or her role as a parent?

Are your children aware of, witness to, or involved in your relationship discord? Have they seen you arguing and fighting? If so, do they know the cause of this conflict?

Were your children in any way involved in or witness to your partner’s infidelity, such as meeting an affair partner, walking in on sexual activity, finding evidence on a phone or computer, etc.?
Do you and your partner have a “parenting plan” in place?

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What external support is available for childcare?

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Is there somewhere outside the home where your children can stay if the need arises?

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Have your children been part of a formal or informal disclosure? If not, is a well-planned, therapeutically supported disclosure with the children in the works?

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Are any of your children exhibiting behavior changes, or symptoms of distress, depression, or anxiety? Consider their general behavior, sleep quality, appetite, schoolwork, attention span, tantrums and other “acting out” behaviors.

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To your knowledge, are any of your children using or abusing alcohol or drugs (including cigarettes)? If so, which kid(s) and which substance(s)?

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Have any of your children been diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder? If so, which kid(s) and which disorder(s)?

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Are any of your children currently in therapy? If not, do you think that any of your children might benefit from therapy?

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Steps Toward Safety and Healing
This can be another disturbing part of your life to examine. Both you and your partner have likely gone to great lengths to protect your children from feeling the impact of the betrayal and relational disconnection. In the space below, make a list of the action steps you can take to increase your children’s wellbeing. Be careful not to use this list to shame or beat yourself up in any way. Instead, try to see it as a tool that is helping you handle a challenging parenting situation in the best way possible.

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YOUR SEXUAL WELLBEING
Have you or your partner violated sexual boundaries within your relationship? If so, in what ways, and how do you feel about that?

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Have either you or your partner ever contracted an STD? If so, which of you, when, and which STD(s)?
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Has your partner been tested for STDs recently? If so, when, and what were the results?
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Have you been tested for STDs recently? If so, when, and what were the results?
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What is the current sexual status in your relationship? Are you and your partner still being sexual with each other? If so, are you practicing safer sex (using condoms)?
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Do you and your partner have a clear understanding of your relationship boundaries regarding sexual behavior both in and out of the relationship? If so, what are the basic boundaries?
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Does your partner use pornography? If so, how do you feel about that?
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Do you use pornography? If so, how do you feel about that?
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Do you consider the use of pornography by either you or your partner to be a violation of your relationship boundaries?

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Do you think that you or your partner might be sexually addicted? If so, who, and why do you think that?

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Do you think that you or your partner might be sexually anorexic? If so, who, and why do you think that?

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Do you feel sexually empowered in your relationship, with the ability to say no to sex, to initiate sex, to openly and honestly discuss sexual issues, to ask for condoms to be used, to take a break from sex while relationship issues are being resolved, etc.?

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Do you feel you can trust your partner sexually? Why or why not?

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Steps Toward Safety and Healing
Your partner's cheating and dishonesty have likely profoundly impacted your sexual relationship. You may also feel that your sexuality and your sexual self have been negatively impacted. Review your answers to the questions above and then write down the steps and actions you want to take to protect yourself, to increase your sense of sexual wellbeing, and to move you toward wholeness. Sometimes, partners are afraid
to say what they need in their sexual relationship because they are afraid it will make their significant other cheat again or act out sexually. Here is a truth to tell yourself when this fear arises: “I have neither the power to make my partner cheat on me nor the power to make my partner stay faithful to me. I have only the power to stay true to myself, to operate from my integrity, and to honor my value system. The same is true of my partner.” With that truth held firmly in mind, make your action list.

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WHAT NOW?

As you have gone through the Betrayal Trauma Crisis and Risk Assessment Tool and made your lists of steps and actions, you have probably had things brought to your attention that you hadn’t thought of. And if you’ve compiled everything together, you probably have quite a lengthy list of steps and actions that you would like to take. It could be easy to feel overwhelmed at this point.

To help you limit the overwhelm and get some clarity regarding your situation, the section below asks you to go back through the tool and prioritize steps and actions. It may feel like everything that you have listed is urgent and must happen right away. However, the reality is that it can’t. You are only human, and, on top of that, your functioning and capacity have been temporarily reduced by the betrayal trauma you are experiencing.

Use the section below to gain clarity about what actions must truly be taken now versus what can come later. When this becomes clear, you can more easily place limits on what you expect of yourself.
**Top Priorities**
In the space below, go back through each of the seven areas and pick the five actions that feel most pressing in terms of safety and stability. Pick only five actions. Doing this will help you to sort through and identify what is truly imperative, and what can wait a bit. Think about these five things as actions that must be taken in the next one to two weeks.

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**Medium Priorities**
Now go back through the seven areas and pick the next five actions you need to take. Think of these as things that need to happen over the next two to six weeks. Again, pick only five, as this helps you identify what is truly important.

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**As I Am Able Priorities**
The rest of your compiled list goes here. These are actions that you are going to take over time as you get to them. Not all the actions you have listed may even be possible at this moment. Some of them may be things you have to wait a while to get to as you move through the healing process. List them out here, though, so you have the entire list in one place, and keep this list in your journal or some other place where you will not forget about it or lose it. You will want to use it as a guide during your process of healing—a reminder of the feelings you’ve experienced and the actions you can take to move from powerlessness to empowerment.

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