

The Crisis Survival Guide

Surviving the First Days and Weeks Without Destroying What Remains

PURPOSE

The decisions made in the first days and weeks after discovery are the most consequential of the entire recovery process. This tool gives both partners a structured framework for navigating the immediate crisis without making permanent decisions from the most painful and disorienting moment of their lives.

INSTRUCTIONS

Complete Parts 1 and 2 privately. Complete Parts 3 and 4 together — ideally with a counselor present or immediately after a session. Do not use this tool as a substitute for professional support.

PART 1 — WHERE I AM RIGHT NOW (Complete Privately)

My current level of stability:

- I am in acute crisis — I need immediate support
- I am unstable but functioning day to day
- I am grieving but managing
- I am more stable than I expected

The decision I am most tempted to make right now that I should wait on:

The person I most need support from right now:

The one thing I need to hold onto today to get through it:

PART 2 — THE NON-NEGOTIABLES (For the Unfaithful Spouse)

Check every item that has been fully completed. If any box is unchecked, recovery cannot genuinely begin.

Every item on this list is required. None of these are optional.

- The affair has ended — completely, immediately, and without a goodbye
- All contact with the other person has been permanently severed
- I have been completely honest about what happened — no partial disclosure
- I have agreed to full transparency — phone, accounts, location — without being asked
- I have not asked my spouse to keep what happened private for my sake
- I am in individual counseling or have made an appointment
- I have taken full responsibility without deflecting or minimizing

The item above I have most struggled to complete — and why:

What completing every item on this list would require of me:

PART 3 — OUR IMMEDIATE AGREEMENTS (Complete Together)

Complete each agreement together. Both partners must genuinely agree — not simply comply under pressure.

We agree that no permanent decision about this marriage will be made before:

We agree on the following living arrangement for now:

We agree that the following people will be told about this situation:

We agree on the following counseling plan starting this week:

We agree that the following behaviors are off limits during this crisis period:

The agreement we both feel most strongly about keeping:

PART 4 — THE CRISIS COMMITMENTS

Each partner checks what they are willing to commit to right now:

Betrayed Spouse:

- I will not make a permanent decision before the agreed date
- I will pursue individual counseling this week
- I will allow myself to feel what I feel without directing it destructively
- I will not make unilateral decisions about children, finances, or housing

Unfaithful Spouse:

- I will maintain complete transparency without being asked
- I will pursue individual counseling this week
- I will not pressure my spouse about the pace of recovery
- I will not use my guilt or shame to redirect the focus from my spouse's pain

"We are in the worst of it right now. We are not making lifetime decisions today. We are only committing to the next right step — and to showing up for this process with honesty and the best we have."

Partner A: _____

Date: _____

Partner B: _____

Date: _____