

Why Do Men Cheat?

By Robert Weiss

Both men and women engage in infidelity, but they tend to do so for different reasons. And they often have very different ways of justifying their behavior. For instance, it is quite common for men to say that their behavior doesn't really count as cheating.

Other times, they find ways to blame other people—usually their significant other—for their actions. They can minimize, rationalize, and justify their cheating without ever touching on their true motivations.

Generally, a man's decision to engage in infidelity is driven by one or more of the following factors:

1. **Sex/Porn/Love Addiction:** Some men compulsively use sexual and/or romantic fantasies and behaviors to numb out and avoid life. [They may be self-medicating unrecognized depression or anxiety or trauma.] For these men, sexual behavior is not about having fun and feeling good, it's about numbing out and feeling less.
2. **Alcohol/Drug Abuse:** Alcohol and intoxicating drugs affect decision-making, sometimes resulting in regrettable sexual decisions (including infidelity).
3. **Insecurity:** A lack of self-confidence can underlie a man's decision to cheat. He feels that he is not attractive, or too old, or not smart enough, or not rich enough, or whatever, and he seeks extramarital validation to bolster his flagging ego.
4. **Unrealistic Expectations:** A man may think his partner should fulfill his every desire, 24/7/365. He does not understand that this is an impossible standard. So he is constantly disappointed in his relationship. When his expectations are not met, he seeks external fulfillment.
5. **Unresolved Early-Life Trauma:** Some men who cheat are re-enacting or latently responding to childhood trauma—everything from neglect to overt sexual abuse. Sometimes this is a way of trying to control or master issues they couldn't control or master as a child.
6. **It's Over (Version 1):** A man may want to end his current relationship. But instead of simply stating that he's unhappy and wants to break

things off, he cheats, gets caught, and forces his spouse to do the dirty work.

7. **It's Over (Version 2):** Sometimes a man wants out of his current relationship, but not until he's got another one lined up, so he cheats, hoping to find his next partner before he leaves his current partner.
8. **Misunderstanding Love:** Some men think the rush of first romance (technically referred to as limerence) is what true love feels like. These men fail to understand that in healthy long-term relationships, the neurochemical rush of limerence is replaced over time with less intense but ultimately more meaningful forms of intimacy and connection.
9. **Impulsivity:** Some men struggle with impulsivity. They don't intend to cheat, but then an opportunity arises, and they go for it without even thinking about what infidelity might do to their relationship.
10. **Terminal Uniqueness:** A man may feel like he is different and deserves something special that other men don't. He thinks the usual rules don't apply to him.
11. **Selfishness:** Some guys are selfish jerks. They lie and manipulate and keep secrets with reckless abandon, as long as it gets them what they want in the moment. Often, they never intended to be faithful. They seem to view relationship commitments as something to be worked around rather than honored.

Most of the time, there is no single factor driving a man's decision to cheat. Usually, multiple factors are in play—and the reasons may change over time as the man's life circumstances change. Whatever his reasons, he DID NOT HAVE TO CHEAT. A man always has choices that don't degrade his integrity or his relationship.

Questions to Consider

Write out answers to these questions to discuss in session:

1. What are your thoughts and feelings after reading this list?
2. What reasons above do you think might apply to you? Any other reason not given above?