

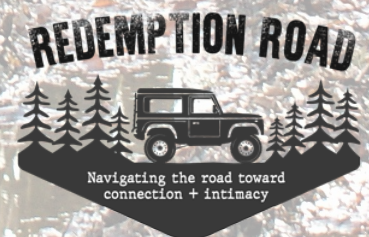
# Stuck In The Mud



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# Road Map

**Hey friends,**

**I hope the Betrayal Healing Conference brought you some encouragement and hope.**

**What an honor it's been to be a part of this event with so many amazing speakers.**

I created this field guide in hopes you might gain a little more clarity on this difficult journey.

Navigating seasons of suffering with an unknown future, while dealing with betrayal trauma is no easy task.

I hope you are gentle with yourself.

YOU are the only one who gets to decide what you do or don't do, whether you stay, wait or move toward an exit plan.

Many of us have spent years fighting for our relationships before our world was turned upside down and now after.

It can feel like the struggle never ends and can be exhausting.

Every couple-ship healing process is unique, as are the issues that arise so it's up to you to get an understanding of what's standing in the way.

One thing I've noticed is, once there's some sobriety and recovery under the belt, old patterns and mindsets of unhealthy coping mechanisms tend to resurface.

Sometimes worse than before, creating more disconnection in the relationship, which inhibits connection and emotional intimacy.

If you feel like your relational healing is **“stuck in the mud “** Even though there's been some time in recovery, you're not alone and there are most likely other factors that need to **be addressed.**



If your partner doesn't have the tools to express or process emotions, and fears intimacy (closeness) emotional honesty and healthy relating will be a problem.

If there's no longer "acting out" to manage the stress, the internal emotional turmoil will typically be exhibited from maladaptive behaviors that cause a lot of hurt and a lack of safety.

Hence "Acting in"

Betrayal undermines your safety, and so does emotional neglect.

In order for authentic growth and healthy coping to create lasting change, the addict must be fully committed to this ongoing journey of exploration and take a deeper look at the underlying factors.

"Where  
secrecy lies  
intimacy  
dies"

Heart transformation, new self-awareness, and full responsibility is taken for the harm and disconnection they have caused.

As you probably know, sometimes people aren't willing to do the deeper work and resist change.

It's a difficult reality to accept and moving forward is that much harder, but an important truth, if this is your situation.

You have the right to use your voice, share your concerns, have emotional safety and ask for what you need.

As you read through this guide,

My hope is that you will gain some clarity and insight to help point you in the right direction for YOU.

There's lots of  
bumps on this road,  
so proceed with  
Caution and move at  
your own pace.

You deserve to  
live a life with:

- ♥ Safety
- ♥ Fidelity
- ♥ Mutuality
- ♥ Respect
- ♥ Nourishment
- ♥ Connection
- ♥ Intimacy
- ♥ Peace
- ♥ Wellbeing



# Roadblocks

Let's look at some of the roadblocks you might be experiencing.

What would you say is the biggest areas of struggle?

Write down the harmful behaviors you've witnessed and any information about where things are right now.

Your reality:

His reality:

You don't need to make decisions until you feel you're ready.

Write down the reasons you're thinking of staying or going:

What are the danger signs for you?

What happens when you share your pain?

Your needs?

**Sobriety does  
NOT equal =  
Emotional maturity  
Intimacy  
Safety  
Connection  
Trust  
Recovery  
Healthy responses  
Regulation  
Mindfulness**

**“When trauma is  
ignored or  
invalidated there's  
also internal war  
within our souls  
screaming for  
attention “**



You have the right to ask questions and verify when you don't feel safe.

How long have these patterns been present?

Are you safe to have difficult conversations?  
Explain.

### **Addiction = Distortion**

- **Shaped over time**
- **Gender roles**
- **Family systems**
- **Society**
- **Culture**
- **Peers**

### **Here are a few examples of distorted mindsets and behaviors:**

- Emotionally immature
- Lacks development
- Distortions
- Patterns
- Perceptions
- Hiding / Lying
- Hardened heart
- Lack of intimacy skills
- Lack of introspection
- Lack of intimacy with self
- Lacks of healthy masculine development
- Lack of ability to be vulnerable
- Systems of meaning related to gender (objectifying women)

### *Reminders:*

**“Your experience is valid even if you spouse isn't willing to hear or understand you”**

**“you can accept and acknowledge your thoughts and feelings without anyone controlling you”**

**“Your feelings are NOT up for debate”**



# Integrity Abuse

## Mask-ularity -

### Wearing a mask to hide the wounded self

- Lack of empathy
- Blame-shifting
- Lying / hiding
- Withholds love
- Lack of self awareness
- Defensiveness
- Invalidation
- Lack of consistency
- Lack of priority
- Incongruence
- Duplicity
- Ongoing deception
- Endangerment
- Minimizing
- Disempowering partner
- Power over
- I "don't want" to stop
- Unwillingness
- "I deserve" mentality
- Shaming
- Fault Finding
- No ownership
- Threats
- Reactive
- Selfishness
- No accountability
- Playing dumb
- Callous attitudes
- Unconscious to their patterns
- Non Verbal cues of Threat
- Partner not safe to express feelings
- Treats partners hurt, as hostile or judgmental
- Not commitment to trust-building
- Lack of investment or intentionality
- Cause confusion for partner
- Unwilling to look at the harm
- Withholding life altering information
- Broken relational agreements
- Refusal to honor boundaries
- Bully or Intimidation
- Dismissive
- Secrets
- No time for partner
- No vulnerability
- Refusal to have difficult conversations
- Telling partner to "get over it"
- Doesn't treat relationship mutual
- Victim blaming
- Not present or regulated
- Manipulating the outcomes

**“The key to taking responsibility is deciding what your life is about and prioritizing it around what’s most important to you. “**



- Darvo
- Justifying
- Rationalizing
- Perceived judgement
- Can't or won't hold partners heart
- Gas Lighting
- Lack of honesty and transparency
- Disregard, denial and deception
- Not willing to look at pain
- Harmful words spoken

**Sex addiction is a relational problem - it needs to heal in a relationship**

*Identify*

and describe abusive behaviors

**Distorted systems of meanings    Not feeling or sharing emotions**  
**Denying reality**

Actions:

Lack of actions:

Rebuilding trust:

Safe to share:

What is not safe?

*The Truth is...*  
**( Write out your truths )**

**“Truths freely given,  
is trust building.  
Truths forcefully  
taken, is trust  
breaking”**



Callous attitudes:

Distorted thinking:

Perception:

Self-focused:

The relationship priority:

Integrity:

**Wounded messages  
of masculinity leads  
to unhealthy  
masculinity**

*Safety*

**The betrayed needs to honor concerns and establish what safety will look like.**

**Write a list of what you need for safety:**

**It's easier to be  
angry - than hurt  
and scared.**

**Sexual acting out:**  
Ego inflation  
Soothing masculine  
shame  
Masculine conquest,  
Identity, or  
Acceptance



Have you reached out to safe people and asked for help?

How will you know when you're safe?

Who are your Safe people?

Who is Not Safe?

In what areas is your safety at risk?

- Relationally
- Sexually
- Financially
- Emotionally
- Spiritually

What's the cost of not changing?

Describe what has created a lack of safety:

Where do you need to restore safety?

**We are responsible  
for creating our  
safety,  
especially if your  
partner isn't  
honoring you.**

**“What we don't  
change— we  
choose”**



# Change

**is hard and uncomfortable**

I can establish safety by making these changes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I am ready to change \_\_\_\_\_

Where do YOU feel Stuck?

What would you say are the issues that are keeping you stuck?

You won't stay stuck if you commit to showing up for yourself, reflecting and taking baby steps forward.

- One step
- One breathe
- One decision at a time

**Commitment to your healing journey from betrayal trauma is very important, regardless of how things turn out.**

**I know you didn't cause this mess but you're here and you are worth the time and effort.**

**You CAN move forward with, or without your partner in the waiting.**

**“What's swept under the rug never dies”**

**This time of YOUR healing is not wasted.**



# Roadblocks To Intimacy

Look at the list below and circle which ones apply to your partner.

These behaviors will keep couples stuck.

What harmful behaviors can you identify with?

- Lack of accountability
- Lack of empathy
- Fear of being known
- Defenses
- Excusing or explaining
- Don't know blindspots
- Lack of insight
- No humility
- Lying by omission or commission
- Not reliable
- Withholding love
- intimacy disorder
- Self-protection
- Workaholism
- Integrity abuse disorder
- Don't express
- Disconnected
- Alone
- Builds resentment
- Buried shame
- Abandonment wounds
- Push away
- Systems of meaning
- Habitual ways of thinking feeling behaving abs relating
- Lack of healthy communication skills
- Lack of honesty
- Me system
- False intimacy
- Creating distance, moving away or against ---not toward partner
- Compartmentalization
- Walls
- Rigidity
- Black and white thinking
- No boundaries
- No emotional connection
- Walls around heart
- perfectionism
- Don't cry, it's weak
- Internal emotional states
- When life stressors happen they struggle coping
- Extreme ways of dealing with things
- Beliefs in the world
- Entitlement
- Distorted ways
- Hyper independence
- False promises

Ongoing Patterns of harm = Integrity abuse

Shame Messages were given which fostered a “shut down” of emotions, fears, and pain.



- Won't tolerate uncomfortable emotions
- Runs from intimacy and Vulnerability
- Extreme pressure to conform, adds to shaping mentalities toward sexual entitlement
- Family of origin never faced or talked about pain.
- Busyness is also a wall to flee from feeling, dealing healing
- It Protects you but it doesn't actually serve you
- Prevents feeling disappointment shame
- Shut down
- Stonewalling
- Anger aggression
- Verbal outbursts
- Refusal to listen and validate your feelings
- Moves away or against - not toward
- Avoidant
- Numbing emotions
- Dissociation
- Ignores cues of safety - no self awareness or integration
- Insecure - self-focused
- Avoidance of connection
- "I" land ( self focused)
- Assumptions
- negative scripts about partner
- Reactive, doesn't pause before responding
- Puts spouse in the bad box — he becomes the victim
- No concept of talking/listening/internal boundaries
- Rigidity/ black and white thinking
- Not flexible or easily adaptable
- Sensitive to being exposed
- Sensitive to criticism
- Requires little interaction
- Bad box good box

**(Others don't see these behaviors)**

**THESE types of Strategies were established early on to self-protect from harm in order to manage thoughts and feelings when there was no safety for them to express.**

**“Men don't cry or get vulnerable”**

**“Close-mindedness, verses connected and vulnerable”**

**“Without true remorse, real change will be difficult.”**

**“We are ALL neurologically wired for connection. We need a WE system” Brené Brown**



# Emotional Maturity

**The ability to hold space and actively listen to your partner express needs without judgment or defensiveness.**

Lack of emotional maturity/sobriety.

These issues are most often connected to childhood, the trauma and neglect they've experienced and the ways they didn't get what they needed.

They weren't taught relational skills necessary for healthy secure development and growth.

No excuses, just facts.

**Distortion—  
thinking, feeling,  
relating and  
behaving**

- Deception of partner, self and others
- Negative internal messages
- Entitled or negative scripts
- attachment injuries
- Mother/father wounds
- family system dysfunction
- What he didn't get that he needed
- Sexual abuse
- Childhood neglect
- Dysregulated in body
- Never faced pain
- Learned to run and numb
- Put on a mask
- Physical emotional or sexual abuse
- Childhood neglect
- Not taught to express feelings or be heard
- What he got, that he didn't need
- How they experienced conflict resolution
- How they saw vulnerability, or not
- Low integrity
- Man Card
- Women devalued
- Sexualized
- Implicit memories

**Demonstrating a desire to work through circumstances struggles, triggers, and issues creates a feeling of authentic connection.**

**“Defensiveness is the arch enemy of listening”**



- Lacks capacity
- selfagency
- Unhealthy coping
- Withholding of self
- Build walls to prevent overwhelm
- Lacks a sense of self
- Not self aware
- Can't or won't feel
- Too boundaried like a wall of steel
- Disconnected from body and heart

## Motivations + Values

### “Can't stop? Or won't stop?”

- Creates a mask to live behind
- Lacks motivation
- Low sense of self and Identity
- Unknown values
- Perfectionist
- Stonewalls
- Aggressive
- Passive aggressive
- Lacks goals and vision
- Lacks joy
- Callous attitudes
- Reactivity
- Prosody
- Expressions
- Tone
- Sounds
- Withdraws
- Distancing behaviors

If any of these behaviors are present, causing disconnect and ongoing relational struggles it might be time to look at some of the options below for consideration and the journal prompts to gain more awareness for where you are and what you need.

1. Therapeutic/ Restorative Separation
2. Watch and wait with caution
3. Exit plan B
4. Stay for now

**Entitlement =  
Problem**

**“Reactivity always  
leads to regret “**

**“Love is nothing  
without action and  
sorry, is nothing  
without true  
change”**



What would be the goal of a therapeutic separation?

Are you ready to take this step?

Biggest concerns:

What needs immediate change?

Do you have a coach or therapist to help you both and individually?

Time apart might be considered to create more safety and stability.

Some thoughts to consider while taking this time apart from each other:

This could be a good Opportunity for your partner to take a good look at himself while you create safety.

- Keep a journal
- Take note
- Observe
- Patterns
- Challenge your thinking
- Your well being is a priority
- Engage from a place of worthiness
- build strength in uncertainty
- Determine best next steps
- Confront in truth when necessary (With support )

**Your  
well being  
is a  
priority**

**What agreements  
would be needed for  
a therapeutic  
separation:**

- **Conflict**
- **Living arrangements**
- **Recovery**
- **Boundaries**
- **Do you want to create a time limit ?**
- **3-6 months is common**
- **Connection**
- **Communication**
- **Space**
- **Clarity**
- **Responsibilities**



What would the common goal be?

What agreements need to be discussed?

What's the purpose?

How do you feel about it?

What insight are you hoping to get?

### **Establishing a safe environment looks like:**

- Goals you both agree upon
- Reduce toxicity
- Observe changes
- Repair ruptures
- Conflict resolution
- Focus on individual healing
- Areas to Consider:
  - financial agreement
  - sports
  - church
  - communication
  - counseling
  - child care
  - schedules

What will this time look like for you both?

What kind of plan Do you need to make?



What would be your Biggest fears about this time apart?

What's the biggest source of harm?

How is your partner showing you he's invested in the marriage and his recovery process?

Lots of unknowns - list some of them here:

- Waiting
- Uncertainty
- Give yourself permission to observe
- Gather information
- Grow

Commitment level to your safety 1<—————>10

Commitment level to your healing 1<—————>10



What difficult issues do you need to address?

What's causing the most toxicity?

What Evidence of change do you see?

What changes don't you see?

Who are your truth-tellers?

**Don't put pressure on yourself for:**

Staying for now.

Reasons to stay:

Redefine what's important:

What would healthy and safe behaviors look like to you?

What would a changed heart look like?

**STAY** in your truth  
and reality, while  
letting go of what's  
not within your  
control.



What can you do to make changes, regardless of where he's at?

What is your biggest fear?

Where do YOU feel resistant toward making changes?

Describe Why you feel staying is best for today?

WHAT'S the cost of staying?

How is this situation impacting your kids?

How do you feel about putting the outcome of the marriage on hold?

*Waiting*

**Accept the choice of "waiting" if that's what you decide what's best for now.**

Reasons to wait -

**You can always  
change your mind.**

**Let go of pressure on  
yourself.**

**Step back  
Take note  
Observe  
Go slow**



What does waiting look like for you right now?

Why is it best to wait for now?

What decisions are you NOT ready to make?

What are you resisting? (if anything)  
(It's ok if people don't understand)

Is there anything you might need to prepare for?

*Exit Plan*

### How will you know when enough is enough?

Creating an exit plan is wise to have set aside, even if you stay in your relationship.

It helps create less stress in the event any serious issues arise in the future.

You will have established a general plan for yourself which in turn, fosters more peace of mind.

- [SecondSaturday.com](http://SecondSaturday.com)
- Divorce Care Groups
- Divorce Coach
- Journal
- Limit communication
- Gather documents
- Gather information
- Create individual:
  - Emails
  - Bank accounts
  - Credit cards
  - Safety deposit box

**Honor your  
decision, if it's best  
for you right now**

**Explore your  
options, find good  
support and  
resources.**



- Create a budget for the future
- Awareness of debt
- Increase self-reliance
- Future goals and vision
- Look at healthcare

What do you want for your future?

What are the reasons the relationship couldn't survive?

How do you feel about leaving the relationship?

What losses are you feeling?

What hurts the most?

What do you wish was different?

How do you know it's time to say "enough is enough?"

What are your next steps?

## Some examples of Reasons to Leave:

- No sobriety
- Ongoing lying
- Integrity Abuse
- Contempt
- Not safe
- Not in good recovery
- Won't get vulnerable
- No trust rebuilt
- No repair
- Other addictions
- You know in your gut something isn't right.
- Your safety and sanity are suffering



What's your goal for the next 3 months?

What boundaries are in place?

What are your biggest concerns?

Will you be contacting a lawyer? If so, when?

What questions do you have for the lawyer?

Explain here:

Where else do you need support?

What's off-limit?

What about the children?



What will you tell them, and when?

Concerns?

Do you have a job or need to focus on finding one?

Where do you need more strength?

How will you manage financially?

What about jointly held debt?

How will you manage to maintain the children's school activities?

Sports?

Where will you live?

Where will your partner live?



Animals?

What access will your partner have to your jointly owned spaces?

How will you manage your finances?

How will you inform the family?

What would custody look like if you had a choice?

What else do you need to consider?



# Remember

**Be gentle with yourself as you navigate this difficult road.**

You can change your mind!

You can go at your own pace!

You are worth fighting for!

You are stronger than you know!

You are going to get "through" this!

You are taking one step at a time!

You are enough!

You are amazing!

You are NOT crazy!

You are not responsible for the one who betrayed you!

You are moving forward!

**You won't stay stuck in the mud if you keep showing up for yourself and take one step at a time.**

*Regardless of where you find yourself today, I believe you will find your way. As long as you are committed to your healing process, you'll gain insight and wisdom to help you explore options and make informed decisions according to what's best for you.*

Holler if you need support or have any questions!

Holding hope for your heart,

Karen

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Disclaimer:

This guide is not meant to replace therapy or coaching or any professional help. It's solely for the purpose of reflection and self-awareness.