



# Pre-Workshop Homework Packet for Couples





## **Disclaimer**

The materials and services provided by Mend Infidelity and Rebuilding Trust workshops are intended for educational purposes only and are in no way meant to substitute for individualized mental health or coaching services provided by trained professionals.

Our goal during Rebuilding Trust workshops is to assist people in understanding how to go about rebuilding trust in the face of infidelity. Our services and materials IN NO WAY substitute for individualized therapy or coaching. We make no claim to cure, treat, diagnose, or otherwise provide mental or behavioral healthcare and it is no way implied by our services and materials.

It is important to understand that Matt and Laura Burton are certified and trained professional coaches and are not licensed counselors.

If you have continued problems in your partnership or are not sure how to handle difficult situations, please contact a mental health professional or sign up for an individualized intensive from Mend Infidelity. If there is an IMMEDIATE CRISIS such as abuse, suicidal or homicidal thoughts or actions, or any other mental health emergency, please DIAL 911. Mend Infidelity is not equipped to handle mental health crises.



## **Welcome**

Congratulations on taking your first step toward recovering from infidelity. Whether you are recovering from physical infidelity, emotional infidelity, infidelity through sex or pornography, or infidelity through withholding (intimacy avoidance or intimacy anorexia®), we welcome you.

We are so excited that you've made the commitment to attend a Rebuilding Trust workshop or that you're thinking about joining us for one! We look forward to giving you the tools and information you need to help rebuild your relationship after the devastation of infidelity.

We have designed this pre-workshop homework packet for couples to help you get the most out of your experience, or to sample the type of work you will be doing at a Rebuilding Trust workshop.



## Rules for Completing the Homework Packet

Before you begin, there are a few simple RULES to understand prior to completing this pre-workshop homework packet:

- 1.** Print off 2 copies of this packet—one for each of you.
- 2.** If one of you gets emotionally overwhelmed at any time, take a 15-20-minute time-out and then come back to the work.
- 3.** When your partner shares their answers, please don't comment. To acknowledge their response, a simple “thank you” after they share would be best.
- 4.** Agree upon a set time to answer the questions in the pre-workshop packet. Do not discuss anything except the assignments during the designated time. If you need to discuss your relationship, please allot other time for those discussions.
- 5.** If a question is marked as “INDIVIDUAL,” then it is meant to be answered by you and your partner individually. Please do not share answers to individual questions with each other unless instructed to do so.



**6.**

If a question is marked as “PARTNERS,” then it is meant to be discussed between the two of you until you arrive at a joint answer.

**7.**

It is okay to take several days to complete this assignment. However, it will need to be completed prior to attending your Rebuilding Trust workshop.



## **A) Individual**

What are your reasons for wanting to attend a Rebuilding Trust workshop?

## **B) Individual**

At the end of the workshop, what would you want to have accomplished or gained?

## **C) Partners**

Discuss with your partner which topics are the most important to each of you. If progress needs to be made in those areas, discuss what that would look like.



## Understanding Your "WHY"

It is important for both partners to understand why it is that they want to move forward with the hard work of rebuilding trust after infidelity. Early on, it is not uncommon for either party (or even both parties) to feel ambivalent about moving forward.

The definition of ambivalence is “the state of having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone.” Ambivalence frequently becomes a problem in relationships when infidelity is present because there is a mixture of remembering what was good about the relationship combined with extreme pain and discomfort. The combination of these opposing thoughts creates a “zero-sum game,” or a net benefit of zero. For wounded partners, this may be the conflict between still having romantic feelings for the wounding partner and being extremely angry at them. For wounded partners, this may be the conflict between still loving their partner and feeling stressed out at having to face a daily reminder of what they have done.

For couples who are trying to rebuild trust, overcoming feelings of ambivalence is essential. It is extremely important for both parties to identify their reasons for staying in the relationship as well as understand the benefits for doing so.

The following exercises are designed to help each partner resolve ambivalence if it is present. However, even if you are positive that you want to save the relationship, completing these exercises will still likely give you beneficial insight into possible resentments you may be carrying that could hinder reconciliation later on. These exercises will also help you understand your “why” of doing the hard work to rebuild trust in your relationship.

### A) Individual

Make a list of at least 5 reasons that you might want to leave the relationship.



## **B) Individual**

Make a list of at least 5 reasons that your partner might want to leave the relationship.

## **C) Partners**

Make a list of at least 5 outcomes you can agree on. These may or may not have to do with rebuilding trust in your relationship. For example, an outcome that has nothing to do with reconciliation could be that you both may want safety for the kids. An outcome that has to do with reconciliation could be that both of you want to get through the day without resorting to name calling.

## **D) Individual**

List at least 5 reasons that might make you wish to reconcile with your partner.





## **E) Partners**

List at least one fear each of you has about the future of your partnership.

## **F) Partners**

List at least one strength that each of you sees in your relationship that may help you overcome the fears listed in Part E.



## E) Partners

List at least one hope that each of you has for your relationship.



## Attachment

Human beings are made to be in relationship with each other. Studies have shown that social bonds are adaptive and crucial for human survival. Our connections to others heavily influence our longevity and health, and lack of meaningful attachments qualifies as a risk factor for premature mortality. Attachment is a primal need.

Infidelity shatters attachment between partners. For the wounded partner, the pain is excruciating. We've often heard wounded partners liken the pain of infidelity to being physically cut open. Because of the severity of the situation, there are several things that need to happen along the path of healing when there is shattered attachment caused by infidelity:

- Getting Honest
- Creating Safety
- Being Consistent
- Cultivating Intimacy

### A) Individual

Out of the above-listed topics, choose 3 things that are most important to you to work on during your time at the workshop.



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- Getting Honest
- Creating Safety
- Being Consistent
- Cultivating Intimacy

**Getting Honest** includes things like complete disclosure of the details around the infidelity, owning up to gaslighting in the pre-disclosure/pre-discovery phase, and stopping the behavior (including ending the affair).

**Creating Safety** includes things like agreeing to ground rules regarding respectful communication, committing to be open to the ideas of forgiveness, trust, and reconciliation, developing a recovery plan, showing empathy, not minimizing the wounded partner's pain, and drawing healthy boundaries around risk and unacceptable behavior.

**Being Consistent** includes things like patiently and lovingly answering the wounded partner's questions, weekly check-ins, regularly attending group, and adhering to plans around recovery and communication.

**Cultivating Intimacy** includes things like reestablishing connection rituals, connecting emotionally, resuming safe physical (non-sexual) touch, and reestablishing connected, sexual intimacy.

**All of these things (and more) will be covered during the Rebuilding Trust workshop**



## **A) Individual**

Out of the above-listed topics, choose 3 things that are most important to you to work on during your time at the workshop.

## **B) Partners**

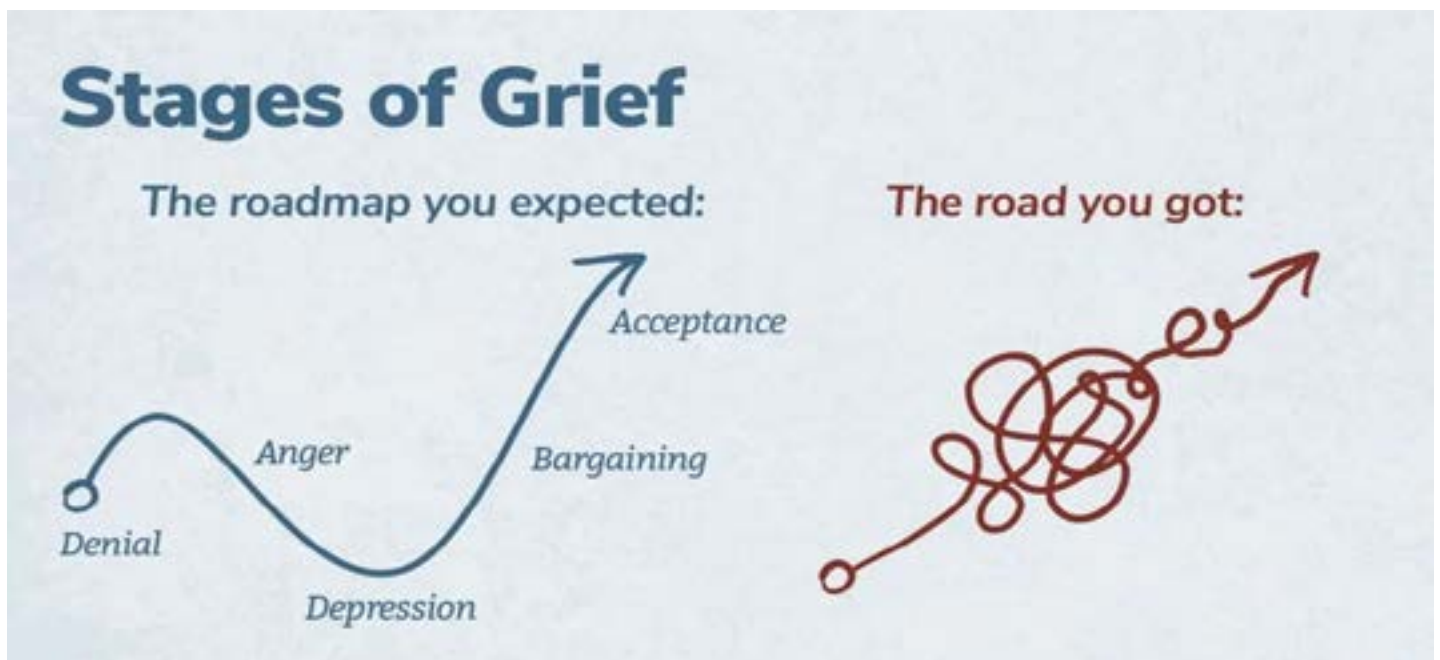
Discuss which 3 topics are the most important to you as a couple and why. Which ones are they? What would progress in these areas look like?



## Recovery Timeline

One of the most important things for couples to grasp when trying to rebuild trust is a realistic timeline. Staying the course will be much easier if each of you understands, at least approximately, how long it actually takes to rebuild trust. Without a clear understanding of what the process looks like, couples often feel that they are failing and may give in to feelings of hopelessness.

If you pin your hopes for success on the day-to-day ups and downs of this process, one or both of you is sure to want to throw in the towel quite often. Additionally, if you expect this process to be linear, you'll soon be disappointed. In actuality, what you can expect will be something like this diagram of the stages of grief:



Rebuilding trust is a complicated process that involves grieving along with many other things. This process is messy, and it won't always seem like you're making progress. At times, it may even seem like you're going backward. However, just like in the diagram, you will eventually find your way out if you stay the course.

**Tip:** As a reminder to stay the course even when the going is rough, you can print as many copies of the diagram above as you need and place them in areas you can see them throughout the day.

Each couple will travel at their own pace, so take the following timeline with a grain of salt. However, in our experience, the majority of couples who are working diligently



toward rebuilding trust fall within this timeline. We stress the words “working diligently” because, in order to rebuild trust, both parties have to be doing their share of the work. We cannot stress enough that if both parties aren’t willing to do the work and/or trust is re-broken at any point, the timeline will be extended.

Please, don’t be discouraged that this process will take longer than just the 2 ½ days spent at the Rebuilding Trust workshop. If you continue to use the tools given to you, you will likely begin seeing improvements in your relationship all along the way to help keep you motivated.

## **Rebuilding Trust Stages and Approximate Timeline**

### **I. The “Getting Honest” Stage**

In this stage, the wounded partner is learning the details of the infidelity. It is frequently characterized by shock and emotional instability. The purpose of this stage is to establish WHAT has happened. It is essential that complete disclosure take place. (See the next section on disclosure for details.)

Without total honesty about what has happened, it is nearly impossible for a couple to move forward in the rebuilding trust process. It is important to note that the longer it takes to get the wounding partner to get honest, the less chance that the partnership has of recovering. Prolonged disclosure, or “dribble disclosure”, severely increases the chance that the wounded partner will not recover quickly enough for trust to be re-established.

Once complete disclosure has taken place, the couple moves on to the next step in the rebuilding trust process. Although this stage can drag out indefinitely with some couples, the estimated timeline is 0-6 weeks.

### **II. The “Creating Safety” Stage**

During this stage, both parties are working hard at creating safety so that the relationship can begin to mend. Of utmost importance is that the wounded partner feels that the wounding partner cares about what has happened to them and has remorse for what they have done. Therefore, much attention needs to be placed on apology language, overall listening and communication skills, not defending or justifying behavior, and empathy development. A shared understanding of “WHY” this happened also needs to be established before moving forward.



An emphasis needs to be placed on emotional regulation as well as self-care. Both parties will likely be grieving over what was lost, especially the wounded partner. The wounding partner will need to put a recovery plan in place and strictly adhere to it if they are to minimize the risk of infidelity happening again in the future. The approximate length of this stage is 6 months.

## **A Word About Anniversaries**

You may notice a sharp increase in triggers and reminders around anniversaries of events, resulting in an increase in overall tension in your relationship. This is normal. Anniversaries of painful events can rattle you but don't be discouraged. It may feel like you're suddenly sliding backwards. Just realize that this is a normal part of rebuilding trust and is related to trauma. If you adhere to your plan and use the tools you were given, this phase can pass by rather quickly. Reverting back to old communication patterns will set your relationship back.

Anniversary triggers and reminders usually last between 1 and 4 weeks. Although they are not guaranteed to ever happen, it is not uncommon for them to happen every year for a number of years.

## **III. The “Being Consistent” Stage**

This stage is all about working your recovery. Doing your weekly check-ins, adhering to trigger and communication plans, attending group, and the wounding partner being where they said they would be when they said they would be are all important parts of this stage. Of course, no one is perfect. If minor failures occur, analyze what went wrong, promptly admit mistakes, and get back on track. During this stage, the couple is starting to gain a lot of ground and trust is starting to be reestablished. The approximate length of this stage is 6-12 months.

## **IV. The “Cultivating Intimacy” Stage**

This stage can take place simultaneously with other stages. Although it is not uncommon for stages to overlap, there is usually a critical point at which the couple contemplates how to move forward with physical, emotional, and sexual intimacy.

This stage can be frustrating for the wounding partner because they are usually willing to resume intimacy (particularly sexual intimacy) long before the wounded partner is. It is important that the wounded partner feel safe regarding interactions with the wounding partner that require vulnerability.





The wounding partner should be careful to show empathy and understanding if they are met with resistance at any point. The approximate length of this stage is 6-12 months.

### **A) Individual**

Identify which stage you believe that you are in. How do you feel about being there? If you are still in the “getting honest” stage, be sure to give yourself grace during this time. It is the most turbulent of the stages.

### **B) Individual**

Which part(s) of this process do you think may be the most difficult for you personally? Why?



### **C) Individual**

List one strength that you possess that you feel will help you overcome the difficulties mentioned in question B.

### **D) Individual**

Which part(s) of this process do you think might be the most difficult for your partner? Why?

### **E) Individual**

List one strength that your partner possesses that you feel will help them overcome the difficulties mentioned in question D.



## F) Partners

Talk about where you both think that you're at in the process. Don't argue if you both feel that you're at different stages. This is normal. Try to understand why your partner feels the relationship is at a different stage than you do. Write down any insights that you've gained from the discussion.

# THANK YOU

Thank you for completing the pre-workshop homework packet for couples. We hope it has been helpful and has better prepared you to be part of your Rebuilding Trust workshop. We look forward to seeing you soon and are honored to be a part of your recovery journey. If you haven't signed up for the workshop yet and are considering it, please know that space is limited.

[Visit our website at  
https://www.becomingwellinstitute.com/ads-workshop/ to  
sign up today.](https://www.becomingwellinstitute.com/ads-workshop/)



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message.](tel:928-862-2892)

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