



## **Blindsided By Betrayal - From Surviving to Thriving**

Have you been blindsided by betrayal? Devastated by deceit? Are you tortured by distrust? Does it feel like your whole world is crumbling and you don't know who to turn to, who to trust or what to do next?

You may have been hurt by your closest friend, or lied to by the one person you thought you could always trust. You may have thought you had a secure future with your partner and suddenly realised it wasn't "happily ever after", but instead your worst nightmare. Do you need guidance about how to get through this tumultuous time?

You may be frightened for your future, and if you're a parent, for the future of your children. You may have assumed your partner would always choose you and your family to love and cherish, but now you feel alone and it feels like all the love in the world has gone.

If any of this strikes a chord in your life, then I want you to know I am sorry this has happened to you. I am sorry that you are in pain right now and life seems overwhelming and hopeless. I am sorry for that feeling of rejection deep inside you that sits in your heart like an open wound, painful and festering. I want you to know that it's not OK that someone betrayed your trust, your love and your friendship. It's not OK that someone destroyed the vows they made to you or broke the commitment you made to each other.

It's not OK that your partner went behind your back with someone else. It's not OK that the person you loved just threw you away callously, without even caring enough to communicate anything to you. It's not OK that your partner treated you with such disrespect and contempt. It's not OK that your partner did not honour you enough to give you a chance to discuss things, to allow your relationship the healing it needed or the time for it to be amicably dissolved. It is not fair that you've been put in such a powerless position.

I want you to know that you are going to be OK. I want you to know there is a way through this terribly devastating time. I want you to know there is a roadmap you can use to navigate your way through this; there are steps you can follow to find your way again. This time will pass, you will heal and your life's direction will become clearer. I want you to know that you can have a future that you can trust, a future where you will feel secure and a future you can look forward to with hope.

Here are some steps to guide you through.

### **Step 1 - Safety**

Ensure you are safe, and if you have children, ensure that they are safe. Think about both physical and mental safety. Consult a health professional if required.



## Step 2 - Understand your body's reaction.

You may be experiencing whirls of fogginess floating throughout your mind and body, you may be feeling faintness, lightheadedness, or a churning rush through your body. Surges of adrenaline will likely be coursing throughout your body. You may never before have experienced so much adrenaline and you may wonder what it is. It's your body responding to your state of emergency. Your limbic system is in overdrive; you are experiencing your body's "fight or flight (or freeze)" response. This is OK. It means your body is responding. Just breathe: you have everything inside of you to get through this. You will be OK.

## Step 3 - Sexual health check

Get a full screening test for sexual diseases. Under no circumstances should you believe your partner about who they've been with, what they've done or what safe sex practices they've used. If they've cheated on you, it's shown you they are very capable of lying. If they are able to lie to you, do not accept their word when it comes to your sexual health. If possible, get someone to go with you to the testing appointment for support. If you've never experienced such testing, because you have only had sex inside of a monogamous, committed relationship, you may be feeling overwhelmed by the unexpected invasion of your privacy. By bringing someone with you who understands why you are going, you will be able to alleviate any negative thoughts associated with this experience. Explain the full extent of the situation to your healthcare professional. They are there to support you. Accept any help.

## Step 4 - Ask for help.

Tell someone what has happened. You need support. Your world is in turmoil right now and support is what you need. Allow the kids to have support even if they don't know what's happening yet. Even if they don't know anything about what has happened in your relationship, they will still be able to feel in their body that something is wrong. Maybe arrange a playdate or a fun day out with someone. This is not the time for you to spend your limited energy on cleaning or cooking (unless these activities are soothing for you). Generally speaking, try to outsource these activities as much as you can, so all your energy can be used to heal you.

## Step 5 - Nourishment and Sleep

Remember to eat food and drink water. Set alarms to remind yourself to eat. Your body is in crisis and you may not feel hungry. You need your energy. Water will refresh you and change your emotional state, and food will nourish you. Ensure you get enough sleep: this is the beginning of a long journey. You may be thinking about only today and how to survive



each moment, minute or hour, but you need to ensure you get enough sleep to sustain you through the long haul.

#### Step 6 - Connection and routines

Stay connected with family and friends. It is easy at this time to withdraw from friends and life. Connections and routines will help you to maintain a sense of normalcy. It will help you continue, it will give you things to get up for in the mornings when you feel overwhelmed and don't feel like doing anything. Connection and routines will help you keep going.

#### Step 7 - Emotional healing

Part of the healing process involves giving yourself time and space to grieve, to get in touch with and sit with your emotions around the betrayal. You will want to allow yourself to fully feel and process all those painful emotions in your body, not just in your head. This requires knowledge, time and effort, and space does not permit a full discussion of it here. For more details, you can refer to my article on emotional intimacy.

#### Step 8 - Choose who you want to be

It's time to choose! You have a choice about how you want to approach life: a victim or a victor. Many people do not spend time contemplating the way they think. Most people will only automatically react to the situation. It is time to thoughtfully respond. Take the time to figure out who you want to be. Do not let this situation define you. Betrayal is about something that was done to you. It took away your options and made you feel powerless and rejected. But you don't have to live the rest of your life like that: over time, you can take back the power to live your own life on your terms. Many people allow the betrayal to become their life: they talk about it excessively and spend their life either reliving it or fleeing from it, but essentially it owns their life. You don't need to let that happen to you. Don't let betrayal define you, don't let someone else strip you of your right to experience love and joy.

It is empowering to determine what mindset you will adopt, and to make decisions that are in your best interest from this moment on. For example, one way to take back control of your life might be to allocate 15 minutes each day, preferably at the same time each day, solely to think about the betrayal. Then for the rest of the day, you have the freedom to not think about it. This strategy allows you to recognise what happened to you, but allows you to take control of the rest of your day.

Recovery from betrayal takes time. To move from surviving to thriving you need expert support and strategies. Choose to heal. Choose you. Choose the life you want. Choose who you want to be. Call Kath for a free discovery session.

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