

# Recommit To Each Other: Renewal Vows

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Basics:

- 1) Do not to recommit to a relationship that is unsafe or unhealthy.
- 2) Recommitment takes place far into the recovery process - typically after 18 months into recovery, after both parties have shown an ongoing dedication to recovery and have been doing well. The average time to recovery is roughly 24 months. Sometimes it takes longer.
- 3) Recommitment isn't always possible. In order for a marriage to thrive after infidelity, it takes the effort of both parties to begin to achieve life's potential.

## WHAT IS RECOMMITMENT?

If a couple takes responsibility for healing both as individuals and as a couple, there is one last barrier that happens toward the end of the process. Will they choose to be married? Surviving infidelity isn't just the goal. The goal is to help people find a new and extraordinary life of meaning and purpose. This is a critical step toward that end.

Infidelity shatters the vows we once made and leaves us adrift with no sure direction. What is the nature of our relationship? Do I choose to love you till death do us part or am I going to have nothing to do with you? Are we trying to restore the old marriage, or build a new one? Even more I have to decide whether I can ever fully give myself to you again and afford you the opportunity to once again hurt me? As the old saying goes, "Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice shame on me". To say the least recommitting is difficult.

However, failing to take the final step of recommitting can leave couples stuck for decades. Couples can remain in a position of being emotionally divorced while still living in a sham of a marriage. They settle for something neither of them want.

In Western culture marriages are not arranged, rather they are based on decisions made by both parties because they choose to share their lives one with another. Vows are made expressing love and their intent to be faithful till death do us part. Once these vows are broken what is the nature of the relationship? In the beginning stages of recovery, it's difficult to know. Both parties are confused and hurting, and don't know if they can ever again trust their mate. The hurt spouse questions whether or not their mate is willing to do the necessary work to prevent this from happening again. They somehow have to determine whether they matter to their mate and if they could ever feel safe with them again. Frequently, they have to grieve the pain and forgive the offense before they can even see positive traits in their mate. The unfaithful spouse worries

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whether their mate can ever forgive them. Oftentimes, they fear that this will be held over their head for the remainder of their life. Love is called into question. Feelings for their mate frequently disappear and doubts arise as to whether love could ever return. You can understand why it takes time for both parties to feel secure enough in their progress to begin considering recommitment.

There does come a time however when the couple needs to decide to be married and reestablish the context of their marriage as opposed to just surviving infidelity. Typically, this proposal needs to be initiated by the one who initially broke the vows. Obviously, this should only be done not out of obligation, but out of a heart felt desire to spend the rest of their life with their mate. If that's their passion, then I believe it's appropriate to propose to their mate, asking for their hand in marriage.

## PERSONAL STORY:

I'll never forget the second time Stephanie stated she wanted to marry me again. When she began to tell me she was thankful she had married me. That she was grateful to be with me. When she chose once again to be *all in*. It wasn't anything like the first time. This time I felt she chose me, not for who I had presented myself to be, but fully knowing all of me; the good, the bad and the ugly.

This action represents the end of the questioning. This was the moment in time where we chose to stop spinning around what happened and begin living from what happened. Hopefully with more humility, wisdom and maturity.

## PERSONAL STORY:

There was a Texas couple where the husband had multiple affairs with women at work. Somehow his wife found the grace to at least explore the possibility of saving their marriage, but the thought of his continuing to work with his affair partners was more than she could handle. He was of the same mind and desperate to leave the current job, and immediately begin searching for a new position. He finally found employment with a company in New York that allowed them to stay in Texas. After he was hired, the company informed him of a four week on the job training trip in New York. He immediately asked his supervisor if he could fly his wife up to New York to spend some time with him while he was away. He was informed that was against company policy. He repeated his request and told his supervisor this was really important to him. When the supervisor asked why, the man told the truth about cheating on his wife during his previous job and expressed his concern about being separated from her for so long since he was afraid it would make her anxious and potentially make him vulnerable. His supervisor said he'd have to check it out with the boss and left the room to call the company CEO. The poor man's anxiety went through the stratosphere as he waited for his bosses return. "What have I done?" he asked himself. "Are they going to see me as a liability and let me go?" There

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was a welcomed relief the moment he saw the smile on his boss's face as he walked back down the hall. "Not only has the CEO approved the trip for your wife, but he's offered to rent a limo for an entire day for the two of them to visit to New York City."

On their trip to the city, he took his wife to ground zero. There he got down on his knees, held out a new ring and told the story of his failure and explained how his actions had the same effects as the terrorist who flew the planes into the twin towers. He told her that he certainly understood if she didn't feel it was possible for her to do this, but told her there was nothing he wanted more than for her to join him in building a new life for the two of them. She said yes. At that moment, surviving infidelity was transformed into recommitment.

Here are some tips on overcoming the barriers to recommit:

1. **Seek Community:** Talk with other couples who are three to four years down the line in their recovery. Find out from them specifically what's worked and what hasn't worked. How did they work through the issues of re-commitment? What's been helpful for them?
2. **Consider whether you're willing to be all in:** What do you need to get to that point? How would you be different if you were to come to that point? What are your barriers to doing that?
3. **Review the vows you once made:** Look to see if this is what you're committed to or if there are things you'd want to add or change.
4. **Explore Symbolism:** Consider getting new rings to symbolize the new relationship. Setup a ritual that puts a mark in the sand, a stake in time. You might even want to consider a ceremony to renew your vows.
5. **Safety and Forgiveness:** Demonstrate recommitment through actions for a safe relationship. Allow the betrayed spouse to be the one who invites the mate back in for recommitment. Pray for guidance on recommitment

One final note: If your mate says no or they are not ready, don't lose heart. Open up the discussion and see if they are at least willing to discuss what needs to happen as the two of you move forward.

## Sample Vow – After an Infidelity

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On our wedding day, I pledged many things to you, including my faithfulness. With great sorrow and regret, I acknowledge that I broke that vow but I realize now the enormity of my mistake. Others come and go, but you are the constant in my life whom I will always love. I believe in this marriage more than ever, and I reaffirm my love and commitment to you.

On our wedding day, I pledged to love you in sickness and in health, and for better or worse. The past year has tested those vows, but our enduring love for one another has prevailed. I come here today to make a fresh start, to renew our vows of love, honor, and fidelity, and to reaffirm my love for you.

X years ago, I promised to love you for as long as we both should live. I never imagined that I would face losing you so soon, or the depths of despair I would feel at that prospect. Today, we have made it through the darkness, and I am so honored that I get to continue life's journey by your side. Once again, I promise to love you, honor you and keep you, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, for as long as we both shall live.